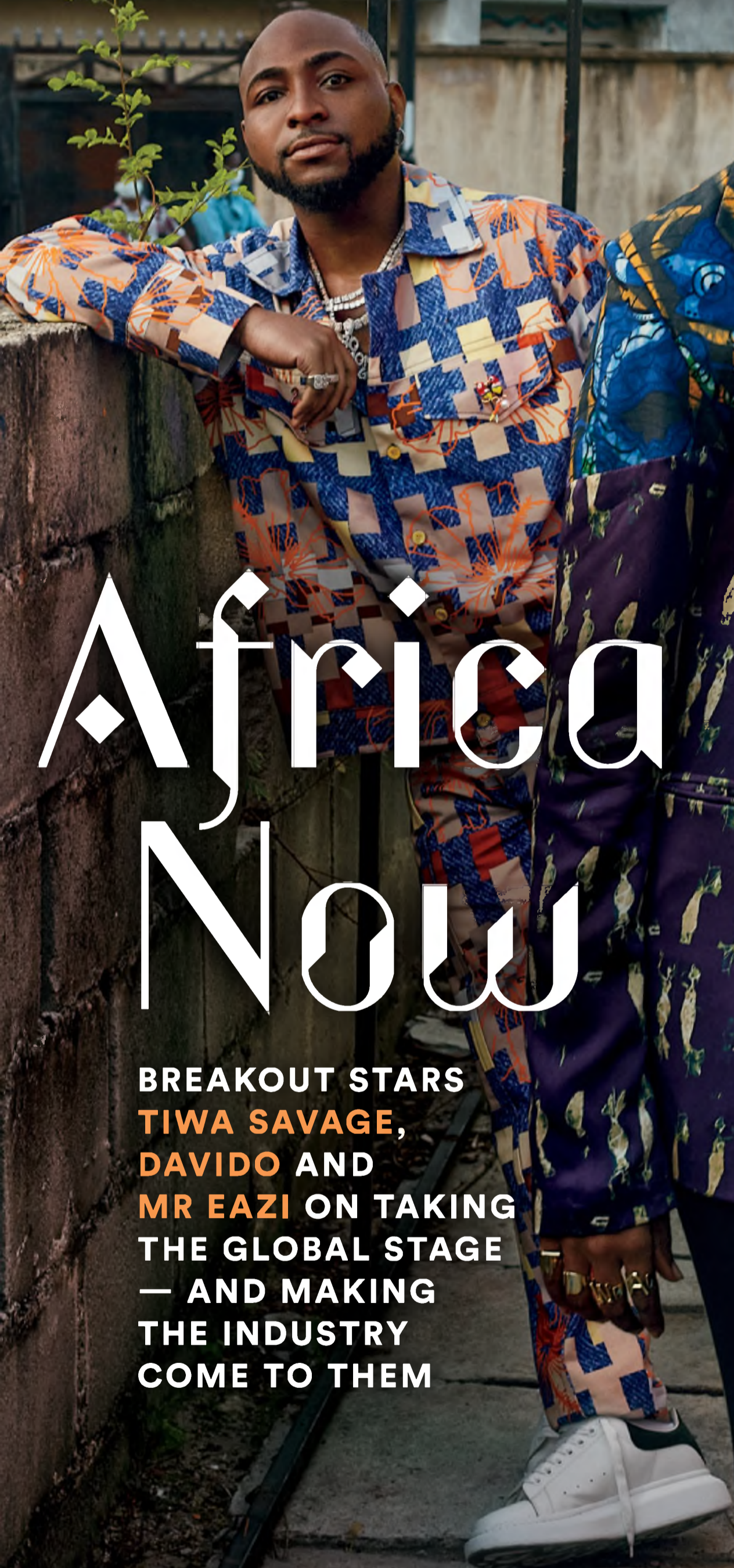


billboard

MAY 23, 2020 • BILLBOARD.COM



Africa Now

**BREAKOUT STARS
TIWA SAVAGE,
DAVIDO AND
MR EAZI ON TAKING
THE GLOBAL STAGE
— AND MAKING
THE INDUSTRY
COME TO THEM**

**BOOMPLAY VS.
THE BIG GUYS**
WHO WILL STREAM
SUPREME?

APPLE ROLLS IN
CAN PLATOON
HELP ARTISTS
STAY INDIE?

**MADAME X MEETS
CAPE VERDE**
MADONNA ON
THE FEMALE
DRUMMERS THAT
CHANGED HER LIFE

Davido (left) and Tiwa Savage
in Lagos, Nigeria

A black and white portrait of Andre Harrell, a man with glasses and a mustache, smiling. He is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt over a dark collared shirt. The background is dark.

ANDRE HARRELL

1960-2020

LEGEND. VISIONARY. FRIEND.
WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOU.



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

billboard Hot 100



Grande (left) and Bieber

'Stuck' In First Gear: Grande & Bieber Bow

WE JUST WANTED TO MAKE SOMETHING FUN THAT ALSO makes people feel less alone," Ariana Grande told Apple Music's Zane Lowe on May 13 of "Stuck With U," her new duet with Justin Bieber. Net proceeds from the song's streams and sales (for its first year of release) will benefit the First Responders Children's Fund amid the coronavirus pandemic. "We wanted to put music out because music is the thing that speaks most to people's spirits."

Released May 8, the single debuts atop the Billboard Hot 100 with 28.1 million U.S. streams, 26.3 million airplay audience impressions and 108,000 sold — the best sales total in over a year (aided by physical/digital offers, including autographed copies) — according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data.

The duet launches as Grande's third Hot 100 No. 1 and Bieber's sixth, as he becomes the 25th artist in the chart's history with at least six leaders. Meanwhile, Grande and Bieber debut at No. 1 for a third time each, joining Mariah Carey and Drake as the only artists with three chart-topping starts apiece.

Notably, one of the writers of "Stuck With U" is Scooter Braun — more famously known, among other endeavors, as Grande and Bieber's manager — who earns his first No. 1 Hot 100 writing credit.

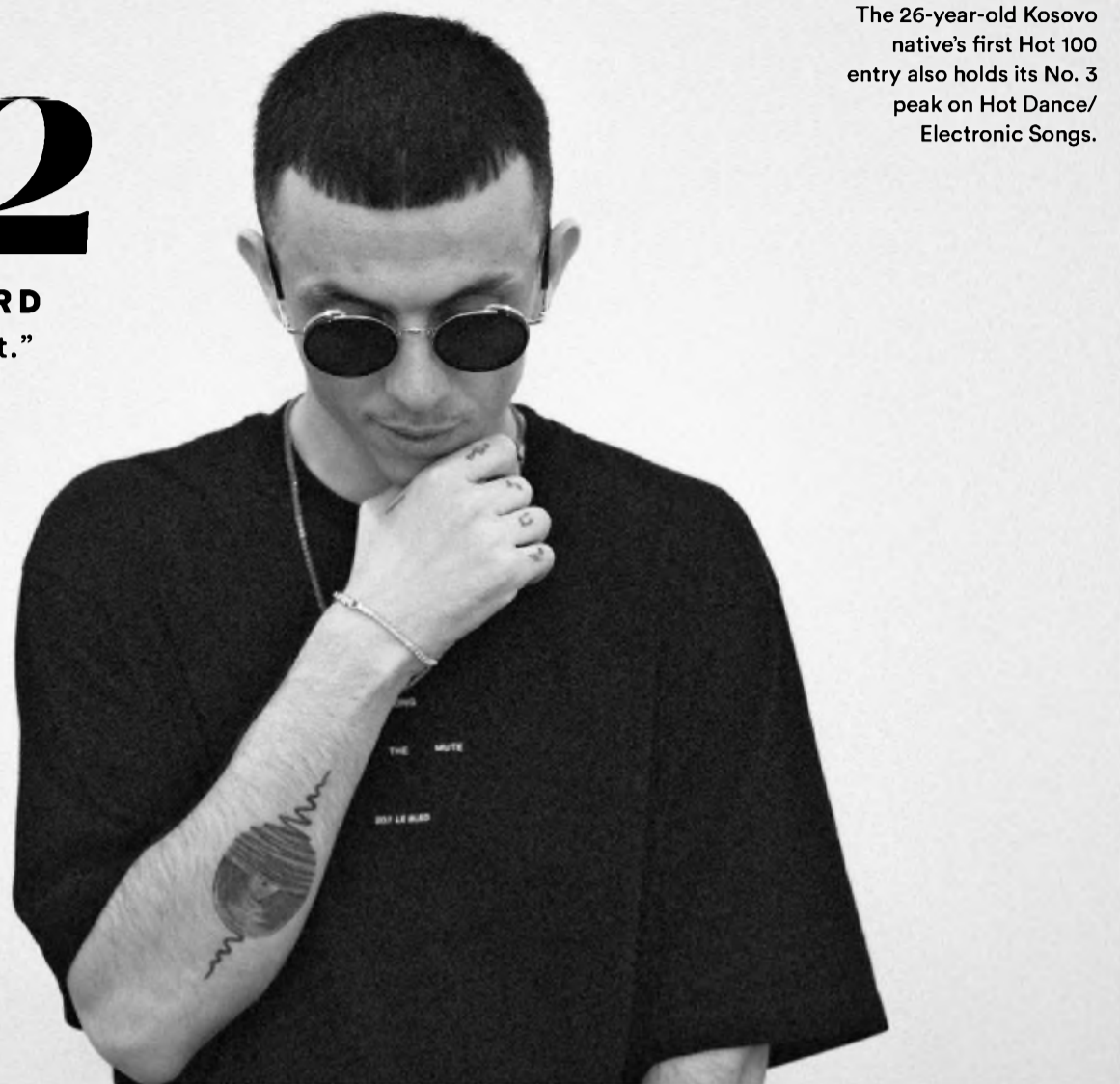
— GARY TRUST

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	CERTIFICATION	Artist IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
		1	#1 STUCK WITH U G.M. STONE (A. GRANDE, J.D. BIEBER, F.WEXLER, G.M. STONE, S. STONESTREET, W. PHILLIPS, S. BRAUN)		Ariana Grande & Justin Bieber SB PROJECTS/ REPUBLIC/DEF JAM	1	1
6	1	2	SAY SO TYSON TRAX (A.Z. DLAMINI, L. GOTTFELD, L. ASRAT, D. SPRECHER, O.T. MARAJ, PETTY)		Doja Cat Feat. Nicki Minaj KEMOSABE/RCA	1	19
		3	GOOBA J. CLARKE, H. SOREBO (6IX9INE, A. GREEN, J. CLARKE, H. SOREBO)		6ix9ine SCUMBANG	3	1
2	3	4	BLINDING LIGHTS MAX MARTIN, O.T. HOLTER, THE WEEKND (A. TEFAYE, A. BALSHE, J. QUENNEVILLE, MAX MARTIN, O.T. HOLTER)		The Weeknd XO/REPUBLIC	1	24
4	2	5	AIR SAVAGE J. WHITE, D. D. I. M. J. PETE, J. WHITE, B. SESSION, JR. B. G. KNOWLES, CARTER, T. NASH, J. K. LANIER, THORPE, B. THAZZARD, DERRICK M., AND, S. C. CARTER	1501 CERTIFIED/300	Megan Thee Stallion Feat. Beyoncé	2	9
3	4	6	TOOSIE SLIDE OZ (A. GRAHAM, O. YILDIRM)		Drake OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	1	6
5	5	7	THE BOX 30ROC (R.W. MOORE, JR., S. GLOADE, A. MORAGNE, A. Q. TATE)		Roddy Ricch BIRD VISION/ ATLANTIC	1	23
14	9	8	STM ROCKSTAR SETH IN THE KITCHEN (J.L. KIRK, R.W. MOORE, JR., R.J. PARTARD IV)		DaBaby Feat. Roddy Ricch SOUTHCOAST/ INTERSCOPE	8	4
7	6	9	DON'T START NOW I. KIRKPATRICK (C. AILIN, I. KIRKPATRICK, E.W. SCHWARTZ, D. LIPA)		Dua Lipa WARNER	2	28
8	8	10	CIRCLES POST MALONE, FRANK DUKES, L. BELL (L. B. BELL, A. R. POST, A. FEENY, W.T. WALSH, K. GUNESBERK)		Post Malone REPUBLIC	1	37

GRANDE: BRAD WAGE/SHUTTERSTOCK; BIEBER: CINDY ORO/GETTY IMAGES
THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR CURRENT SONGS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, SALES DATA AS COMPILED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA AND STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA BY ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA. SONGS ARE DEFINED AS CURRENT IF THEY ARE NEWLY RELEASED TITLES, OR SONGS RECEIVING WIDESPREAD AIRPLAY AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FOR THE FIRST TIME. SEE CHARTS. LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM/BIZ FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2020, PROMETHEUS GLOBAL MEDIA, LLC AND NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
SALES, AIRPLAY & STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY

62

REGARD
"Ride It."



The 26-year-old Kosovo native's first Hot 100 entry also holds its No. 3 peak on Hot Dance/Electronic Songs.

How did you get started as a DJ in Kosovo?

I started as a DJ in 2010. After two years, I started [making] remixes as a technique to develop myself. I created my sound [by] doing more than 500 remixes. My first upload on YouTube was five years ago: [I remixed] Calvin Harris' "How Deep Is Your Love." It took a few years to come together [because] I always want to make my own sound that's clean and original.

How did your remix of Jay Sean's 2008 song "Ride It" first come together?

I was in Croatia doing a performance, and [after] getting back to my hotel with my manager, "Ride It" was on the radio. The same night, I started to make the basic idea. It took two more days to finish it. I released the remix on YouTube three years ago, but it was copyright-stricken three times. Every time, I had reached a million views [first].

How has TikTok propelled the song to new heights?

By 50,000 uses, my management was in touch with a few influencers. When we had 600,000 uses, an A&R [executive] at Ministry of Sound reached out to do a record deal [excluding the United States]. They were able to license "Ride It" for official release [last July]. I was never in touch with Jay Sean before that. I'm so thankful to him and every TikTok supporter. —JOSH GLICKSMAN



3
6IX9INE
"Gooba"

The track vaults in as the rapper's first No. 1 on Streaming Songs with 55.3 million U.S. streams. He adds his second Hot 100 top 10 after fellow No. 3 hit "FEFE" (featuring Nicki Minaj and Murda Beatz) in 2018.

WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
9	10	11	INTENTIONS ▲		POD BEAR, THE AUDIBLES (J.D. BIBER, J. BOYD, Q.K. MARSHALL, D. JORDAN, J. GIANNOS)	Justin Bieber Feat. Quavo	QUALITY CONTROL/SCHOLBOY/MOTOWN/REPUBLIC	8	14
10	11	12	ADORE YOU ▲		KID HARPOON, T. JOHNSON (H. STYLES, T. HULL, A.R. ALLEN, T. JOHNSON)	Harry Styles	ERSKINE/COLUMBIA	6	23
12	13	13	LIFE IS GOOD ▲		OZ.D HILL (N.D. WILBURN, A. GRAHAM, D. HILL, O. YILDIRIM, M.D. LIYEW)	Future Feat. Drake	FREEBANDZ/EPIC	2	18
15	15	14	THE BONES ▲		G. KURSTIN (M. MORRIS, J.M. ROBBINS, L.J. VELTZ)	Maren Morris	COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/COLUMBIA	12	34
1	12	15	SAL ▲		THE SCOTTS (K.C. CABELLO, A. FEENEY, L.B. BELL, S. KOTECHA, A. CLEMONS, JR., J.L. KIRK)	THE SCOTTS, Travis Scott & Kid Cudi	WICKED AWESOME/REPUBLIC	1	3
23	20	16	ROSES (IMANBEK REMIX) ●		F.A.L.L.E.N. (C.ST. JOHN, L. STASHENKO)	SAINT JHN	GODD COMPLEX/HITCO	16	8
13	16	17	MY OH MY ▲		FRANK DUKES (K.C. CABELLO, A. FEENEY, L.B. BELL, S. KOTECHA, A. CLEMONS, JR., J.L. KIRK)	Camila Cabello Feat. DaBaby	SYCO/EPIC	12	23
17	18	18	SOMEONE YOU LOVED ▲		T.M.S. (L. CAPALDI, R. ROMANS, B. KOHN, P. KELLEHER, T. BARNES)	Lewis Capaldi	VERTIGO/CAPITOL	1	53
16	17	19	EVERYTHING I WANTED ▲		FINNEAS (F.B. O'CONNELL, B.E. O'CONNELL)	Billie Eilish	DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE	8	27
20	22	20	BLUEBERRY FAYGO ▲		CALLAN (L. ECHOLS, C. WONG, BABYFACE, L.A. REID, D. SIMMONS, J. GILL)	Lil Mosey	MOGUL VISION/INTERSCOPE	16	14

WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
22	23	21	CHASIN' YOU ●		J. MOI (J. MOORE, M. WALLEEN, C. WISEMAN)	Morgan Wallen	BIG LOUD	21	16
24	28	22	FALLING ▲		KC SUPREME, CHARLIE HANDSOME, TAZ TAYLOR (T. NEILL, TAZ TAYLOR, CHARLIE HANDSOME, K. CANDILORA II)	Trevor Daniel	ALAMO/INTERSCOPE	22	26
19	21	23	I HOPE ▲		R. COPPERMAN (Z. KALE, J.M. NITE, G. BARRETT)	Gabby Barrett	WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WAR	16	20
21	26	24	MEMORIES ▲		A. LEVINE, THE MONSTERS & STRANGERZ (A. LEVINE, M.R. POLLACK, J.D. BELLION, J.K. JOHNSON, S. JOHNSON, J.K. HINDLIN)	Maroon 5	222/INTERSCOPE	2	34
18	24	25	NOBODY BUT YOU ●		S. HENDRICKS (T.L. JAMES, R. COPPERMAN, S. MCANALLY, J. OSBORNE)	Blake Shelton Duet With Gwen Stefani	WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	18	18
25	33	26	HIGH FASHION ▲		MUSTARD, GYLT TRYPP (R. W. MOORE, JR., D.I. MCFARLANE, S.R. KHAN, ZAMANK KHAN)	Roddy Ricch Feat. Mustard	BIRD VISION/ATLANTIC	20	20
26	31	27	DEATH BED ●		OTTERPOP (I. FABER, B. LAUS, O. LANG)	Powfu Feat. beabadoobee	ROBOTS AND HUMANS/COLUMBIA	26	9
30	36	28	DOES TO ME ▲		S. MOFFATT (L. COMBS, R.M.L. FULCHER, T.M. REEVE)	Luke Combs Feat. Eric Church	RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE	28	9
28	37	29	SUNDAY BEST ●		F. FRANK, C. PADALECKI (C. PADALECKI, F. FRANK)	Surfaces	SURFACES/TENTH THOUSAND PROJECTS/CAPITOL	28	11
29	38	30	RITMO (BAD BOYS FOR LIFE) ▲		WILL I AM, K. HARRIS (W. ADAMS, A. PINEDA, K. HARRIS, J.A. OSORIO, B. BALVIN, F. BONTEMPI, M. GAFFEY, P.W. GLENISTER, A. GORDON, G. SPAGNER)	The Black Eyed Peas X J Balvin	BEP/WE THE BEST/EPIC	26	25
36	40	31	BREAK MY HEART ▲		ANDREW WATT, THE MONSTERS & STRANGERZ (A. TAMPOSI, S. JOHNSON, M. HUTCHENCE, J.K. JOHNSON, D. LIPA, A. WOTMAN, A. FARRISS)	Dua Lipa	WARNER	21	7
35	44	32	WHATS POPPIN ●		JETSON MADE, PODOH BEATZ (J. HARLOW, T. MORGAN, D. CLEMONS, J.W. LUCAS)	Jack Harlow	GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC	32	14
-	29	33	BE KIND ▲		MARSHMELLO (MARSHMELLO, G.M. STONE, A. FRANGIPANE, A.R. ALLEN, F. WEXLER)	Marshmello & Halsey	JOY TIME COLLECTIVE/ASTRALWERKS/CAPITOL	29	2
39	50	34	I HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY NOW ●		BUSBEE (C. PEARCE, L. COMBS, R. MONTANA, J. SINGLETON)	Carly Pearce & Lee Brice	CURB/BIG MACHINE	34	19
27	43	35	HOT GIRL BUMMER ▲		A.M. GOLDSTEIN, BLACK BEAR (A.M. GOLDSTEIN, M.T. MUSTO)	blackbear	BEATRAP/ALAMO/INTERSCOPE	11	35
40	41	36	BEER CAN'T FIX ▲		D. HUFF, J. BUNETTA, THOMAS RHETT (THOMAS RHETT, J. BUNETTA, Z. SKELTON, R.B. TEDDER)	Thomas Rhett Feat. Jon Pardi	VALDRY	36	9
50	53	37	BEFORE YOU GO ▲		T.M.S. (L. CAPALDI, T. BARNES, P. KELLEHER, B. KOHN, P. PLESTED)	Lewis Capaldi	VERTIGO/CAPITOL	37	15
44	48	38	AFTER A FEW ▲		J.S. STOVER (T. DENNING, K. ARCHER, J. WEAVER)	Travis Denning	MERCURY NASHVILLE	38	7
48	54	39	SUPALONELY ▲		J. FOUNTAIN (J.M. FOUNTAIN, B.P. RICE, S.R. BENNETT, J. ANDREWS)	BENEE Feat. Gus Dapperton	REPUBLIC	39	9
31	46	40	HEART ON ICE ▲		SPEAKER BANGERZ, MALIK, DICAPRIO BEATZ (R. GREEN, D. BANKS, L.D. BLEDSOE, M.W. BYNDE, FISHER, J. SMITH, S. SERVICE)	Rod Wave	ALAMO/INTERSCOPE	25	27
32	47	41	BALLIN' ▲		MUSTARD, GYLT TRYPP (D.I. MCFARLANE, S.R. KHAN, ZAMANK KHAN, R.W. MOORE, JR., D. JONES, E. J. ASGHEDOM, J.A. WEST)	Mustard & Roddy Ricch	ID SUMMERS/INTERSCOPE	11	43
34	49	42	DANCE MONKEY ▲		K. KERSTING (T. WATSON)	Tones And I	BAD BATCH/ELEKTRA/EMG	4	32
NEW	NEW	43	3 HEADED GOAT ▲		CICERO, AVIATOR KEY YZ (D. BANKS, R. KYLES, K. GILMORE, D. JONES, T.T. BARTLETT)	Lil Durk Feat. Lil Baby & Polo G	ALAMO/GEFFEN/INTERSCOPE	43	1
47	55	44	HARD TO FORGET ▲		Z. CROWELL, L. LAIRD (S.L. HUNT, A. GORLEY, L. LAIRD, S. MCANALLY, J. OSBORNE, A. GRISHAM, M.J. SHURTZ, R. HULL)	Sam Hunt	MCA NASHVILLE	40	7
53	57	45	SUM 2 PROVE ▲		TWYSTED GENIUS (D. JONES, D. PORTIS)	Lil Baby	QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	16	18
-	14	46	CHICAGO FREESTYLE ▲		NOEL (A. GRAHAM, NOEL, R. THOMAS, JR., G. EVANS, M. MATHERS III, J. BASS, S. KING)	Drake Feat. Giveon	OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	14	2
41	60	47	LEVEL OF CONCERN ▲		T. JOSEPH, P. MEANY (T. JOSEPH)	twenty one pilots	FUELED BY RAMEN/EMG	23	5
84	64	48	PARTY GIRL ▲		NASHI (D. FIGUEROA, E. BUSTOS)	StaySolidRocky	COLUMBIA	48	3
11	42	49	RIGHTEOUS ▲		N. MIRA, CHARLIE HANDSOME (N. MIRA, J.A. HIGGINS, CHARLIE HANDSOME)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	11	3
NEW	NEW	50	CAN I ▲		POP JAKE ONE, SOME RANDOMS (K.A. PARRISH, A. WANSEL, J.B. DUTTON, D. KLEIN, M. CAMPFIELD, D. PETERSON, P.A. ALEXANDER, K. HICKS, B.M. COX, J. AUSTIN)	Kehlani Feat. Tory Lanez	TSUNAMI MOB/ATLANTIC	50	1

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21 | Morgan Wallen "Chasin' You"

Wallen's latest hit, at No. 21 on the Hot 100, ascends 2-1 on the Country Airplay chart, becoming his third leader on the list. "Whiskey Glasses" reigned for three weeks last June after "Up Down" (featuring Florida Georgia Line) ruled for a week in June 2018. All three singles are from his debut 2018 album, *If I Know Me*. "It's one of the first songs I wrote," says Wallen of "Chasin' You," which he penned with Jamie Moore and Craig Wiseman, the latter of whom he calls "one of my mentors, so that only adds to its meaning." —JIM ASKER



37 | LEWIS CAPALDI "Before You Go"

The ballad becomes the singer-songwriter's second top 40 Hot 100 hit. "Someone Like You" reigned for three weeks last November and concurrently marks over a year spent on the chart at No. 18.



39 | BENEE FEAT. GUS DAPPERTON "Supalonely"

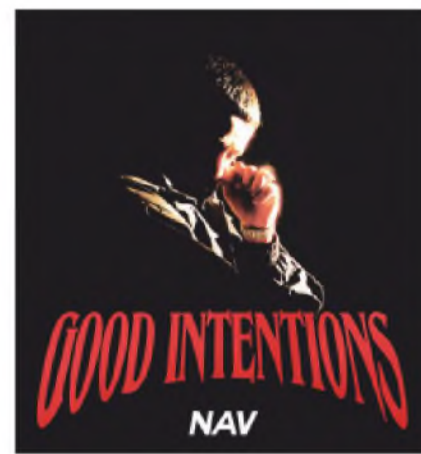
Parent album *Stella & Steve* — BENEE's birth name is Stella Bennett; "Steve" is what she calls her car, among other items — hits No. 1 on Heatseekers Albums, marking her first leader on a *Billboard* chart.

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	CERTIFICATION	Artist IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
-	7	51	PAIN 1993 PIERRE BOURNE (A. GRAHAM, J.T. JENKS, J. CARTER)		Drake Feat. Playboi Carti OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	7	2
56	67	52	WALK EM DOWN CASHMONEY YAP, L. SHENDRIX (B.L. POTTS, C.D. MUNOZ, A. PETIT, R.W. MOORE, JR.)		NLE Choppa Feat. Roddy Ricch NLE CHOPPA/WARNER	52	8
52	63	53	DIOR ▲ 808MELOBEATS (A. LOBLACK, B.B. JACKSON)		Pop Smoke VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC	30	13
51	62	54	IN YOUR EYES MAX MARTIN, O.T. HOLTER, THE WEEKND (A. TEFAYE, A. BALSHE, MAX MARTIN, O.T. HOLTER)		The Weeknd XO/REPUBLIC	16	8
-	61	55	WE PAID SECTION 8 (D. JONES, R. WILLIAMS, D.M. HAYES)		Lil Baby & 42 Dugg QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	55	2
71	56	56	EMOTIONALLY SCARRED ● TWYSTED GENIUS (D. JONES, D. PORTIS)		Lil Baby QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	31	11
70	76	57	BLUEBIRD J. JOYCE (M. LAMBERT, L. DICK, N. HEMBY)		Miranda Lambert VANNER/RCA NASHVILLE	57	6
57	66	58	HEARTLESS ▲ DIPLO, KING HENRY, CHARLIE HANDSOME, J. MOI (T.W. PENTZ, H.A. ALLEN, M. WALLEN, E.K. SMITH, R.J. HURD, CHARLIE HANDSOME)		Diplo Presents Thomas Wesley Feat. Morgan Wallen MAD DECENT/COLUMBIA	57	16
73	68	59	HERE AND NOW B. CANNON, K. CHESNEY (C. WISEMAN, D.L. MURPHY, D.A. GARCIA)		Kenny Chesney BLUE CHAIR/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WEA	59	6
74	91	60	TURKS WHEEZY (N.S. GORAYA, S.G. KITCHENS, W.T. GLASS, TRAVIS SCOTT, A. ESMAILIAN)		NAV, Gunna & Travis Scott XO/REPUBLIC	17	7
59	71	61	IF THE WORLD WAS ENDING ▲ FINNEAS (J.P. STARKER SAXE, JULIA MICHAELS)		JP Saxe Feat. Julia Michaels ARISTA	59	7
80	74	62	RIDE IT. REGARD (JAY SEAN, A. SAMPSON)		Regard MINISTRY OF SOUND/EPIC	62	5
78	84	63	AFTER PARTY SONNY DIGITAL, M.G. DEAN (C.Z. TOLIVER, S.C. UWAEZUOKE, TRAVIS SCOTT, M.G. DEAN)		Don Toliver CACTUS JACK/ATLANTIC	63	4
62	73	64	YO PERRO SOLA TAINY, SUBELO NEÓ, BAD BUNNY (B.A. MARTINEZ OCASIO, G. RIOS SERRANO, M.E. MASIS FERNANDEZ, J.C. CRUZ, F. MONTALVO ALICEA)		Bad Bunny RIMAS	53	9
NEW		65	ZOO YORK BORDEAUX, NON NATIVE (LIL TJAY, FIVIO FOREIGN, B.B. JACKSON, L. BORDEAUX, B. WALSH)		Lil Tjay Feat. Fivio Foreign & Pop Smoke COLUMBIA	65	1
64	79	66	P*\$\$\$ FAIRY (OTW) ● LEJKEYS (J.A.E. CHILOMBO, J. Q. VIET LE, M. POWELL)		Jhene Aiko DEF JAM	40	17
60	77	67	OUT WEST BUDDAHBLESS, JABZ (TRAVIS SCOTT, T.B. DOUGLAS, SR., J. BAKER, J.L. WILLIAMS)		JACKBOYS Feat. Young Thug CACTUS JACK/EPIC	38	18
NEW		68	TOXIC G. RY, K. BEAZY (K.A. PARRISH, R.A. MARTINEZ, K. BACH)		Kehlani TSUNAMI MOB/ATLANTIC	68	1
-	87	69	ONE MARGARITA J. STEVENS, J. STEVENS (M.R. CARTER, M. DRAGSTREM, J. THOMPSON)		Luke Bryan ROW CROP/CAPITOL NASHVILLE	69	2
69	80	70	BELIEVE IT BIZNESS BOI, CARDIAK, NINETYFOUR (J.A. BRATHWAITE, R. FENTY, A.C. ROBERTSON, C.E. MCCORMICK, E. DUGAR)		PARTYNEXTDOOR & Rihanna OVO SOUND/WARNER	23	7
63	72	71	I'M READY ILYA (S. SMITH, D. LOVATO, S. KOTECHEA, I. SALMANZADEH, P. SVENSSON)		Sam Smith & Demi Lovato CAPITOL	36	4
82	85	72	IN BETWEEN F. ROGERS (S. MCCREERY, F. ROGERS, J.L. ALEXANDER, J. SINGLETON)		Scotty McCreery TRIPLE TIGERS	72	5
43	69	73	MORE HEARTS THAN MINE ● S. ELLIS, I. ANDRESS (I. ANDRESS, S. ELLIS, D. SOUTHERLAND)		Ingrid Andress ATLANTIC/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WEA	30	20
95	99	74	I LOVE MY COUNTRY C. CROWDER, FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE (C. CROWDER, E.K. SMITH, CHARLIE HANDSOME)		Florida Georgia Line BMLG	74	4
42	70	75	I LOVE ME DAKWUD, TEN4, ALEX NICE (D. LOVATO, S.M. DOUGLAS, K. SORRELLS, A.V. NICEFORO, J. DECILVEO, A.M. NICHOLSON, W. FELDER)		Demi Lovato ISLAND/REPUBLIC	18	10
NEW		76	GO CRAZY SANTANA, D. J. KELVIN, CRISTIAN, MURPHY (D. C. M. BROWN, L. WILLIAMS, S. ADRIANO, J. KLEVIN, CRISTIANA, D. C. MURPHY, T. SAMUELS, S. BENJELLOUN, N. SAMUELS, D. ANILLO, U. Z. HARBO, P. P. QUAPPOCO)		Chris Brown & Young Thug 300/CBE/RCA	76	1
-	19	77	D4L J. LUELLEN (A. GRAHAM, N.D. WILBURN)		Future, Drake & Young Thug OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	19	2
66	82	78	GODZILLA D.A. DOMAN (M. MATHERS III, L.E. RESTO, D.L. DOMAN, J.A. HIGGINS, A. VILLASANA)		Eminem Feat. Juice WRLD SHADY/ATLANTIC	3	17
45	59	79	ALL IN QUAY GLOBAL (D. JONES, C. ROSSER)		Lil Baby QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	45	3
NEW		80	CHANGE YOUR LIFE POP, DAKWUD, THE ORPHANAGE, TEN4 (K.A. PARRISH, A. WANSEL, W. FELDER, A.V. NICEFORO, K. SORRELLS, J.A.E. CHILOMBO)		Kehlani Feat. Jhene Aiko TSUNAMI MOB/ATLANTIC	80	1

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	CERTIFICATION	Artist IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
81	89	81	GOD WHISPERED YOUR NAME K. URBAN, D. MCCARROLL (C. AUGUST, M. CARTER, SHY CARTER, J.T. SLATER)		Keith Urban HIT RED/CAPITOL NASHVILLE	81	4
85	94	82	DIE FROM A BROKEN HEART ● J.M. ROBBINS, D. WELLS (M. MARLOW, T. DYE, J. SINGLETON, D. RUTTAN)		Maddie & Tae MERCURY NASHVILLE	80	5
55	78	83	CATCH ● D. HUFF (B. YOUNG, R. COPPERMAN, A. GORLEY)		Brett Young BMLG	29	16
-	100	84	DON'T RUSH GRADES (R. TUCKER, A. ADEWUYI, I. ADJEI)		Young T & Bugsey Feat. Headie One BLACK BUTTER/EPIC	84	2
-	27	85	DESIRES D. HILL, NOEL (A. GRAHAM, N.D. WILBURN, D. HILL)		Drake Feat. Future OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	27	2
75	95	86	BEALIGHT D. HUFF (THOMAS RHETT, M. DRAGSTREM, J. MILLER, J. THOMPSON)		Thomas Rhett Feat. Reba McEntire, Hillary Scott, Chris Tomlin & Keith Urban VALORY	71	6
58	83	87	JUMP D.J. K.I.D. ROCCO DID IT AGAIN! (J.L. KIRK, K.D. GAULDEN, D. DUNWOOD, R. VALDES)		DaBaby Feat. YoungBoy Never Broke Again SOUTHCOAST/INTERSCOPE	17	4
NEW		88	ME VS ME Y.C. (C. PEARSON, D.D. WHITE, JR.)		Moneybagg Yo N-LESS/INTERSCOPE	88	1
RE-ENTRY		89	DRINKING ALONE D. GARCIA, C. UNDERWOOD (C. UNDERWOOD, D.A. GARCIA, BRETT JAMES)		Carrie Underwood CAPITOL NASHVILLE	89	2
-	58	90	SIX FEET APART C. MATTHEWS, L. COMBS (L. COMBS, B. COBB, R. SNYDER)		Luke Combs RIVERHOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE	58	2
NEW		91	VIRAL MOMENT TOUCH OF TRENT, UNCLE CAMERON (D. BANKS, T. TURNER, C. HUBLER)		Lil Durk ALAMO/GEFFEN/INTERSCOPE	91	1
RE-ENTRY		92	SIGUES CON EL DIMELO FLOW, KEY TIN, JOY BOY (A.A. SANTOS, C.I. MORALES, WILLIAMS, D. MALDONADO RIVERA, J.C. VARGAS, J.J. MENDEZ)		Arcangel x Sech RIMAS	78	2
79	92	93	HOMEMADE J. MOI, D. COHEN (B. GOLDSMITH, J. MULLINS, D. PARKER, B. PINSON)		Jake Owen BIG LOUD	39	16
-	30	94	TIME FLIES OZ (A. GRAHAM, D. YILDRIM)		Drake OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	30	2
-	88	95	GRACE ● BUDDA BEATS (D. JONES, Z. THOMAS, D.M. HAYES)		Lil Baby & 42 Dugg QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	48	9
76	90	96	SLOW DANCE IN A PARKING LOT P. DIGIOVANNI (J. DAVIS, L.L. FOWLER)		Jordan Davis MCA NASHVILLE	37	19
72	93	97	YOU SHOULD BE SAD ● G. KURSTIN (G. KURSTIN, A. FRANGIPANE)		Halsey CAPITOL	26	18
RE-ENTRY		98	THAT WAY SUPAH MARIO, FELIPE SPAIN, YUNG LAN (S. WOODS, J.D. PRIESTER, A.F. ESPANA, M.S. MODIA, M. CARLSSON, MAX MARTIN)		Lil Uzi Vert GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC	20	10
-	34	99	DEMONS JB MADE IT (A. GRAHAM, M. RYLES, J. MADISON, JB MADE IT)		Drake Feat. Fivio Foreign & Sosa Geek OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	34	2
RE-ENTRY		100	JULY ▲ M. SONIER (N. CYRUS, P.J. HARDING, M. SONIER)		Noah Cyrus & Leon Bridges RECORDS/COLUMBIA	85	10

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
	1	#1 NAV XO/REPUBLIC	Good Intentions	1	1
NEW	2	KEHLANI TSUNAMI MOB/ATLANTIC/AG	It Was Good Until It Wasn't	2	1
2	3	DRAKE OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	Dark Lane Demo Tapes	2	2
3	4	LIL BABY QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	My Turn	1	11
NEW	5	LIL DURK ALAMO/GEFFEN/IGA	Just Cause Y'all Waited 2	5	1
4	6	DABABY SOUTHCOAST/INTERSCOPE/IGA	BLAME IT ON BABY	1	4
NEW	7	BAD BUNNY RIMAS	Las Que No Iban A Salir	7	1
5	8	LIL UZI VERT GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG	Eternal Atake	1	10
6	9	THE WEEKND XO/REPUBLIC	After Hours	1	8
8	10	POST MALONE REPUBLIC	Hollywood's Bleeding	1	36
10	11	BAD BUNNY RIMAS	YHLQMDLG	2	11
9	12	DOJA CAT KEMOSABE/RCA	Hot Pink	9	28
11	13	RODDY RICCH BIRD VISION/ATLANTIC/AG	Please Excuse Me For Being Antisocial	1	23
7	14	MEGAN THEE STALLION 1501 CERTIFIED/300/AG	Suga	7	10
12	15	LUKE COMBS RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN	What You See Is What You Get	1	27
14	16	BILLIE EILISH DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/IGA	When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?	1	59
16	17	DUA LIPA WARNER	Future Nostalgia	4	7
NEW	18	HAYLEY WILLIAMS ATLANTIC/AG	Petals For Armor	18	1
19	19	HARRY STYLES ERSKINE/COLUMBIA	Fine Line	1	22
17	20	LUKE COMBS RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN	This One's For You	4	154
18	21	ROD WAVE ALAMO/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Pray 4 Love	2	6
21	22	MORGAN WALLEN BIG LOUD	If I Know Me	18	85
13	23	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG	38 Baby 2	1	3
55	24	GG CHRIS BROWN & YOUNG THUG 300/CBE/RCA	Slime & B	24	2
15	25	JHENE AIKO DEF JAM	Chilombo	2	10
20	26	TRAVIS SCOTT CACTUS JACK/GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC	ASTROWORLD	1	93
23	27	JUSTIN BIEBER SCHOOLBOY/RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM	Changes	1	13
24	28	SOUNDTRACK WALT DISNEY	Frozen II	1	26
26	29	QUEEN HOLLYWOOD	Greatest Hits	11	386
27	30	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Goodbye & Good Riddance	4	104
NEW	31	LIL TJAY COLUMBIA	State Of Emergency	31	1
25	32	POST MALONE REPUBLIC	beerbongs & bentleys	1	107
29	33	LEWIS CAPALDI VERTIGO/CAPITOL	Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent	20	52
32	34	TAYLOR SWIFT REPUBLIC	Lover	1	38
31	35	SUMMER WALKER LVRN/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Over It	2	32
30	36	POP SMOKE VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC	Meet The Woo, V.2	7	14
28	37	SAM HUNT MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN	SOUTHSIDE	5	6
1	38	KENNY CHESNEY BLUE CHAIR/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	Here And Now	1	2
35	39	BLAKE SHELTON WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	Fully Loaded: God's Country	2	22
42	40	ELTON JOHN ROCKET/ISLAND/UME	Diamonds	7	131
39	41	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Death Race For Love	1	62
44	42	ROD WAVE ALAMO/IGA	Ghetto Gospel	10	28
36	43	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	Scorpion	1	98
45	44	HALSEY CAPITOL	Manic	2	17
41	45	BTS BIGHIT ENTERTAINMENT	MAP OF THE SOUL : 7	1	12
46	46	DABABY SOUTHCOAST/INTERSCOPE/IGA	KIRK	1	33
51	47	DON TOLIVER CACTUS JACK/ATLANTIC/AG	Heaven Or Hell	7	9
37	48	JACKBOYS CACTUS JACK/EPIC	JACKBOYS	1	20
48	49	POST MALONE REPUBLIC	Stoney	4	179
40	50	BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS TUFF GONG/ISLAND/UME	Legend: The Best Of...	5	626

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
47	51	BILLIE EILISH DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Dont Smile At Me	14	125
50	52	EMINEM SHADY/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Music To Be Murdered By	1	17
38	53	TORY LANEZ INTERSCOPE/IGA	The New Toronto 3	2	5
52	54	LIL MOSEY MOGUL VISION/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Certified Hitmaker	12	24
49	55	LIZZO NICE LIFE/ATLANTIC/AG	Cuz I Love You	4	56
53	56	CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL FANTASY/CONCORD	Chronicle The 20 Greatest Hits	22	471
58	57	JOURNEY COLUMBIA/LEGACY	Journey's Greatest Hits	10	616
57	58	YOUNG THUG YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/ATLANTIC/AG	So Much Fun	1	39
59	59	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG	AI YoungBoy 2	1	31
76	60	ORIGINAL BROADWAY CAST HAMILTON UPTOWN/ATLANTIC/AG	Hamilton: An American Musical	3	242
56	61	A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE HIGHBRIDGE THE LABEL/ATLANTIC/AG	Artist 2.0	2	13
60	62	FLEETWOOD MAC WARNER BROS./RHINO	Rumours	1	372
61	63	SAINT JHN GODD COMPLEX/HITCO	Collection One	61	8
64	64	TRIPPIE REDD TENTHOUSAND PROJECTS	A Love Letter To You 4	1	25
68	65	ARIANA GRANDE REPUBLIC	Thank U, Next	1	66
62	66	KHALID RIGHT HAND/RCA	Free Spirit	1	58
66	67	XXXTENTACION BAD VIBES FOREVER	?	1	113
65	68	CHRIS STAPLETON MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN	Traveller	1	244
69	69	KHALID RIGHT HAND/RCA	American Teen	4	167
73	70	THE BEATLES APPLE/CAPITOL/UME	1	1	420
54	71	SOUNDTRACK VILLA 40/DREAMWORKS/RCA	TROLLS: World Tour	15	6
71	72	ED SHEERAN ATLANTIC/AG	÷ (Divide)	1	167
75	73	SOUNDTRACK WALT DISNEY	Moana	2	181
63	74	CAMILA CABELLO SYCO/EPIC	Romance	3	23
67	75	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG	Still Flexin, Still Steppin	2	12
72	76	MAREN MORRIS COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN	GIRL	4	62
89	77	2PAC AMARU/DEATH ROW/INTERSCOPE/UME	Greatest Hits	3	324
70	78	CHRIS BROWN CBE/RCA	Indigo	1	46
79	79	BILLY JOEL COLUMBIA/LEGACY	The Essential Billy Joel	15	191
77	80	TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS MCA/GEFFEN/UME	Greatest Hits	2	357
86	81	SOUNDTRACK FOX/20TH CENTURY FOX/ATLANTIC/AG	The Greatest Showman	1	127
80	82	CARDI B THE KSR GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG	Invasion Of Privacy	1	110
83	83	LIL UZI VERT GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG	Luv Is Rage 2	1	142
82	84	THE BEATLES APPLE/CAPITOL/UME	Abbey Road	1	361
84	85	JACK HARLOW GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG	Sweet Action	36	9
74	86	TRAVIS SCOTT GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC	Birds In The Trap Sing McKnight	1	192
81	87	ED SHEERAN ATLANTIC/AG	No.6 Collaborations Project	1	44
RE	88	GIX9INE SCUMBANG/CREATE MUSIC GROUP	DUMMY BOY	2	25
87	89	MUSTARD 10 SUMMERS/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Perfect Ten	8	46
78	90	SELENA GOMEZ INTERSCOPE/IGA	Rare	1	18
98	91	MELANIE MARTINEZ ATLANTIC/AG	Cry Baby	6	120
86	92	GUNS N' ROSES GEFFEN/UME	Appetite For Destruction	1	227
91	93	KANE BROWN ZONE 4/RCA NASHVILLE/SMN	Experiment	1	79
93	94	LIL TJAY COLUMBIA	True 2 Myself	5	31
103	95	NF NF REAL MUSIC/CAROLINE	The Search	1	42
104	96	LAUREN DAIGLE CENTRICITY/12TONE	Look Up Child	3	88
94	97	LIL NAS X COLUMBIA	7 (EP)	2	47
99	98	VARIOUS ARTISTS DREAMVILLE/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Dreamville & J. Cole: Revenge Of The Dreamers III	1	45
101	99	MONEYBAGG YO N-LESS/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Time Served	3	18
102	100	KENDRICK LAMAR TOP DAWG/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA	DAMN.	1	161



NAV Makes Good

NAV nabs his second No. 1 on the Billboard 200 as *Good Intentions* (XO/Republic) starts atop the tally with 135,000 equivalent album units earned in the week ending May 14, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. Of that sum, 73,000 are in album sales, nearly all from 100 merchandise/album bundles sold via NAV's web store. NAV notched his first No. 1 in 2019 with *Bad Habits*.

Good Intentions is the second No. 1 for XO Records in 2020 following The Weeknd's *After Hours*. The latter opened atop the April 4 chart with the year's largest week earned for an album, 444,000 units (with 275,000 of that sum in album sales). Like *Good Intentions*, *After Hours* also had merch/album bundles on its side in its first week (over 85 by the end of its first week of availability).

—KEITH CAULFIELD

B R I N G I N G Y O U



YEMI ALADE: BOYZ
RELEASE DATE: 29 MAY 2020



SAUTI SOL: MIDNIGHT TRAIN
RELEASE DATE: 5 JUNE 2020



TIWA SAVAGE: DANGEROUS LOVE
SINGLE LOADING

T H E A F R I C A N



TEKNO: SUDDEN
RELEASE DATE: 1 MAY 2020



MI CASA: WE MADE IT
RELEASE DATE: 3 JULY 2020

S T A T E O F M I N D



CASSPER NYOVEST
ALBUM LOADING



NASTY C: EAZY
RELEASE DATE: 12 JUNE 2020



VECTOR: TESLIM
ALBUM LOADING

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
95	101	AC/DC COLUMBIA/LEGACY	25	Back In Black	4	411
100	102	THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G. BAD BOY/RHINO	▲	Greatest Hits	1	222
90	103	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	6	Take Care	1	376
109	104	THOMAS RHETT VALORY/BMLG	●	Center Point Road	1	49
96	105	DAN + SHAY WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	▲	Dan + Shay	6	99
116	106	A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE HIGHBRIDGE THE LABEL/ATLANTIC/AG	▲	Hoodie SZN	1	73
105	107	YNW MELLY YNW MELLY/300/AG	▲	Melly vs. Melvin	8	25
97	108	PARTYNEXTDOOR OVO/SOUND/WARNER	▲	PARTYMOBILE	8	7
108	109	LYNYRD SKYNYRD MCA/GEFFEN/UME	▲	All Time Greatest Hits	56	80
92	110	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	6	Views	1	211
106	111	SHAWN MENDES ISLAND/REPUBLIC	▲	Shawn Mendes	1	103
117	112	SURFACES SURFACES/TENTHousand PROJECTS	▲	Where The Light Is	112	12
115	113	THE WEEKND XO/REPUBLIC	3	Starboy	1	181
118	114	THE BEACH BOYS CAPITOL/UME	3	Sounds Of Summer: The Very Best Of The Beach Boys	16	210
119	115	THE WEEKND XO/REPUBLIC	4	Beauty Behind The Madness	1	245
107	116	JOYNER LUCAS TWENTY NINE/TULLY	▲	ADHD	10	7
110	117	OLD DOMINION RCA NASHVILLE/SMN	▲	Old Dominion	9	29
114	118	KANE BROWN ZONE 4/RCA NASHVILLE/SMN	2	Kane Brown	5	180
113	119	TONES AND I BAD BATCH/ELEKTRA/EMG	▲	The Kids Are Coming (EP)	30	32
125	120	MICHAEL JACKSON EPIC/LEGACY	4	The Essential Michael Jackson	31	324
128	121	J. COLE DREAMVILLE/ROC NATION/COLUMBIA	3	2014 Forest Hills Drive	1	284
126	122	KENDRICK LAMAR TOP DAWG/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA	3	good kid, m.A.A.d city	2	394
122	123	JONAS BROTHERS REPUBLIC	▲	Happiness Begins	1	49
124	124	EAGLES ASYLUM/ELEKTRA/RHINO	38	Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975	1	326
120	125	MAC MILLER WARNER	▲	Circles	3	17
142	126	MICHAEL JACKSON EPIC/LEGACY	33	Thriller	1	418
173	127	PS STEVIE WONDER MOTOWN/UTV/UME	▲	The Definitive Collection	35	92
138	128	TAYLOR SWIFT BIG MACHINE/BMLG	9	1989	1	283
111	129	ZAC BROWN BAND ROAD/SOUTHERN GROUND/ATLANTIC/AG	▲	Greatest Hits So Far...	20	257
145	130	POLO G COLUMBIA	●	Die A Legend	6	49
135	131	XXXTENTACION BAD VIBES FOREVER/EMPIRE	▲	17	2	142
121	132	KELSEA BALLERINI BLACK RIVER	▲	kelsea	12	8
130	133	IMAGINE DRAGONS KIDINAKORNER/INTERSCOPE/IGA	2	Evolve	2	151
137	134	LAUV LAUV/AWAL-KOBALT	▲	-how i'm feeling-	16	10
134	135	EMINEM WEB/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/UME	10	The Eminem Show	1	377
85	136	K CAMP RARE SOUND/INTERSCOPE/IGA	▲	Kiss 5	29	3
143	137	BRUNO MARS ELEKTRA/EMG	5	Doo-Wops & Hooligans	3	470
157	138	ELVIS PRESLEY RCA/SONY STRATEGIC MARKETING GROUP/LEGACY	▲	The Essential Elvis Presley	42	46
134	139	DABABY SOUTHCOST/INTERSCOPE/IGA	●	Baby On Baby	7	63
127	140	G HERBO EPIC/MACHINE ENTERTAINMENT GROUP	▲	PTSD	7	11
167	141	LADY GAGA & BRADLEY COOPER INTERSCOPE/IGA	2	A Star Is Born (Soundtrack)	1	84
140	142	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS WARNER	2	Greatest Hits	18	239
RE	143	TREVOR DANIEL ALAMO/INTERSCOPE/IGA	▲	Nicotine	79	5
146	144	BAD BUNNY RIMAS	▲	X100PRE	11	73
136	145	BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND HIDEOUT/CAPITOL/UME	10	Greatest Hits	8	329
129	146	J BALVIN UNIVERSAL MUSIC/LATINO/UMLE	▲	Colores	15	8
169	147	ADELE XL/COLUMBIA	14	21	1	465
139	148	THE ROLLING STONES ABKCO	12	Hot Rocks 1964-1971	4	332
NEW	149	JASON ISBELL AND THE 400 UNIT SOUTHEASTERN/THIRTY TIGERS	▲	Reunions	149	1
131	150	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	▲	More Life	1	164



2

KEHLANI
It Was Good Until It Wasn't

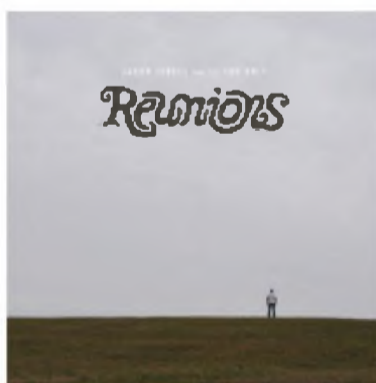
Kehlani achieves her highest-charting album and biggest week ever in total units earned, as her latest release debuts with 83,000 equivalent album units. On Top R&B Albums, it marks her third straight leader.



7

BAD BUNNY
Las Que No Iban a Salir

Bad Bunny achieves his third top 10 album in under a year as his surprise release debuts at No. 7 with 42,000 equivalent album units earned from less than five days of activity. The set arrived Sunday, May 10.



149

JASON ISBELL & THE 400 UNIT
Reunions

Released a week early on May 8, only via independent stores on CD and vinyl, it debuts with 7,000 units (all from album sales). It also bows at No. 1 on Vinyl Albums and Tastemakers (the latter ranks the bestselling albums at indie and small-chain retailers).

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
152	151	FRANK OCEAN BOYS DON'T CRY	▲	Blonde	1	178
43	152	MOZZY MOZZY/EMPIRE	▲	Beyond Bulletproof	43	2
158	153	TIM MCGRAW CURB	▲	Number One Hits	27	150
149	154	5 SECONDS OF SUMMER 5 SECONDS OF SUMMER/INTERSCOPE/IGA	▲	CALM	2	8
147	155	SZA TOP DAWG/RCA	▲	Ctrl	3	153
159	156	LIL TECCA GALACTIC/REPUBLIC	●	We Love You Tecca	4	37
162	157	NIPSEY HUSSLE ALL MONEY IN NO MONEY OUT/ATLANTIC/AG	▲	Victory Lap	2	68
164	158	METALLICA BLACKENED/RHINO	16	Metallica	1	572
154	159	GEORGE STRAIT MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN	7	50 Number Ones	1	139
34	160	ELEVATION WORSHIP ELEVATION WORSHIP/PLG	▲	Graves Into Gardens	34	2
149	161	DARYL HALL JOHN OATES RCA/LEGACY	▲	The Very Best Of Daryl Hall John Oates	34	85
151	162	KACEY MUSGRAVES MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN	●	Golden Hour	4	91
153	163	MAC MILLER WARNER	●	Swimming	3	93
NEW	164	JHAY CORTEZ MCA/UNIVERSAL MUSIC LATINO/UMLE	▲	Famouz	164	1
179	165	BTS BIG HIT ENTERTAINMENT	▲	Love Yourself: Answer	1	72
163	166	MEEK MILL MAYBACH/ATLANTIC/AG	▲	Championships	1	76
168	167	BLAKE SHELTON WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	▲	Reloaded: 20 #1 Hits	5	185
156	168	SOUNDTRACK DC/ATLANTIC/AG	▲	Birds Of Prey: The Album	23	14
170	169	LIL BABY & GUNNA YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/AG/CAPITOL	▲	Drip Harder	4	84
186	170	KID CUDI DREAM ON/GOOD/REPUBLIC	●	Man On The Moon: The End Of Day	4	124
161	171	KEVIN GATES BREAD WINNERS' ASSOCIATION/ATLANTIC/AG	▲	I'm Him	4	33
197	172	FRANK SINATRA FRANK SINATRA ENTERPRISES/CAPITOL/UME	▲	Ultimate Sinatra	32	109
155	173	NIRVANA SUB POP/DGC/GEFFEN/UME	10	Nevermind	1	473
175	174	TWENTY ONE PILOTS FUELED BY RAMEN/EMG	4	Blurryface	1	261
171	175	EMINEM SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA	7	Curtain Call: The Hits	1	492
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Mr Eazi photographed by Seye Isikalu on May 6 outside of London.

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CELEBRATING ARTISTS FROM ACROSS AFRICA



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Africa Now

ADMIT IT: YOU'VE BEEN WORKING from home for over two months, as music companies slow spending and stop traveling, and you're going a little stir-crazy. So in this issue, we wanted to take you to the world's most exciting music market, where the industry's momentum has only accelerated — even under lockdown.

In late April, Apple Music announced its expansion into 25 African countries while Warner Music Group partnered with South Africa-based digital distributor Africori. In May, Downtown Music Holdings acquired South Africa-based Sheer Publishing. And Universal Music Group is now launching Def Jam Africa and a new joint-venture label, Afroforce1, after inking a deal with Nigeria's Aristokrat Group.

Africa has always been rich with talent, of course, but for years much of its music was marketed in the United States as wholesome “world music” to vinyl geeks. Now it's available on streaming services. And, more importantly, it's pop, with artists command-

ing major-league marketing budgets, big-name guest features and global deals. A new generation of entrepreneurs is supporting their careers.

The continent is also glowing brighter than ever as a source of potential music-service subscribers, as smartphones become ubiquitous, mobile connectivity improves and average income rises.

Africa faces its own daunting challenges as it battles the coronavirus, with less infrastructure and fewer healthcare resources in some of its nations than in other parts of the world. But in some cases, the new music companies in town are helping local artists weather the storm: Apple's Platoon, for instance, has been offering advances on royalties, and in May it extended healthcare coverage to 30 of its acts in South Africa, with an aim to roll out the program more widely soon.

Given Africa's vast scale and musical diversity, we couldn't possibly do justice to it in one issue. So we invite you to immerse yourself further into

the African market with our next Deep Dive, available online at billboard.com/deep-dive for Billboard Pro members on June 1. The online package includes more detailed analysis of Africa's music landscape, instructions for navigating its collecting societies, an inside look at a Nigerian beatmaking academy and an interactive map that we hope will both transport and connect you to Africa's key industry gatekeepers — even if you are still stuck on your couch.



Hannah Karp

Hannah Karp

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From left: Tiwa Savage and Davido photographed by Lakin Ogunbanwo on May 5 in Lagos, Nigeria. Mr Eazi photographed by Seye Isikalu on May 6 outside of London.



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The Market

PG. 17 PUBLISHERS QUARTERLY ✦ PG. 18 REMEMBERING LITTLE RICHARD ✦ PG. 20 AFRICA GOES BOOMPLAY

Peak Streaming: Are We There Yet?

As the global music business faces an apparent slowdown — amid a pandemic — one unlikely market is emerging as a bigger revenue driver than ever. Here's the real story behind the latest numbers

BY WILL PAGE



IN 2019, RECORDED-music-industry revenue increased 8.2% — a figure that sounds substantial, but that nonetheless left some analysts and executives fretting that the business' streaming-fueled growth rocket might now be coming down to earth.

After four years of booming expansion, last year's gains were down 1.5 percentage points from the 9.7% growth that IFPI reported for 2018. And that was before the coronavirus pandemic halted touring, shuttered record stores and convinced some of the world's biggest artists to postpone releasing music.

But a closer analysis of IFPI's 2019 Global Music Report, which was released earlier in May, suggests the industry's future is actually brighter

than it appears — and reveals some surprising trends that could shape the way artists and labels will market their music in the years ahead.

CHINA'S BIG DEBUT

One reason 2019's growth looks slower than 2018's: China. IFPI counted total music revenue from the country for the first time in its 2018 report, using transactional data from digital services, just as it does for other countries. (Before 2018, it couldn't get that information.) That change in methodology led to a misleading 80% growth figure for 2018. The 2019 report presents a more accurate picture: China's market grew 16%. The effects can be seen worldwide. Without the 80% growth in China, 2018 revenue would have increased by 8.5% rather than 9.7% — and this

year's growth wouldn't seem paltry by comparison.

MY, MY THIS AMERICAN PIE

As streaming services expand across the world, the global music market is oddly becoming more American. When Spotify launched in the United States in 2011, IFPI reported that America made up slightly over a quarter (26%) of the recorded-music business' global revenue. In the years since, revenue has ballooned by more than one-fifth — putting the U.S. share of that increased pie at just over one-third (36%).

This might seem unlikely: Streaming is opening up new markets, and there are more smartphones in the world today than there ever were CD players. But there are a number of reasons why the United States ac-

counts for a growing share of global revenue, beyond the fact that the U.S. market has posted its own near-double-digit growth for four consecutive years. One factor: The dollar has been strong, with the trade-weighted exchange rate (measured against a range of currencies) rising 30% from 2011 to 2019. Also, the world's second-biggest music market, Japan, hasn't grown in size over the same four years, fueling America's dominance. Nearly 70% of Japan's recorded-music revenue still comes from CDs, but as the CD business struggles with the store closures and distribution issues posed by COVID-19, the United States could increase its share of the global pie even more.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE NORDICS

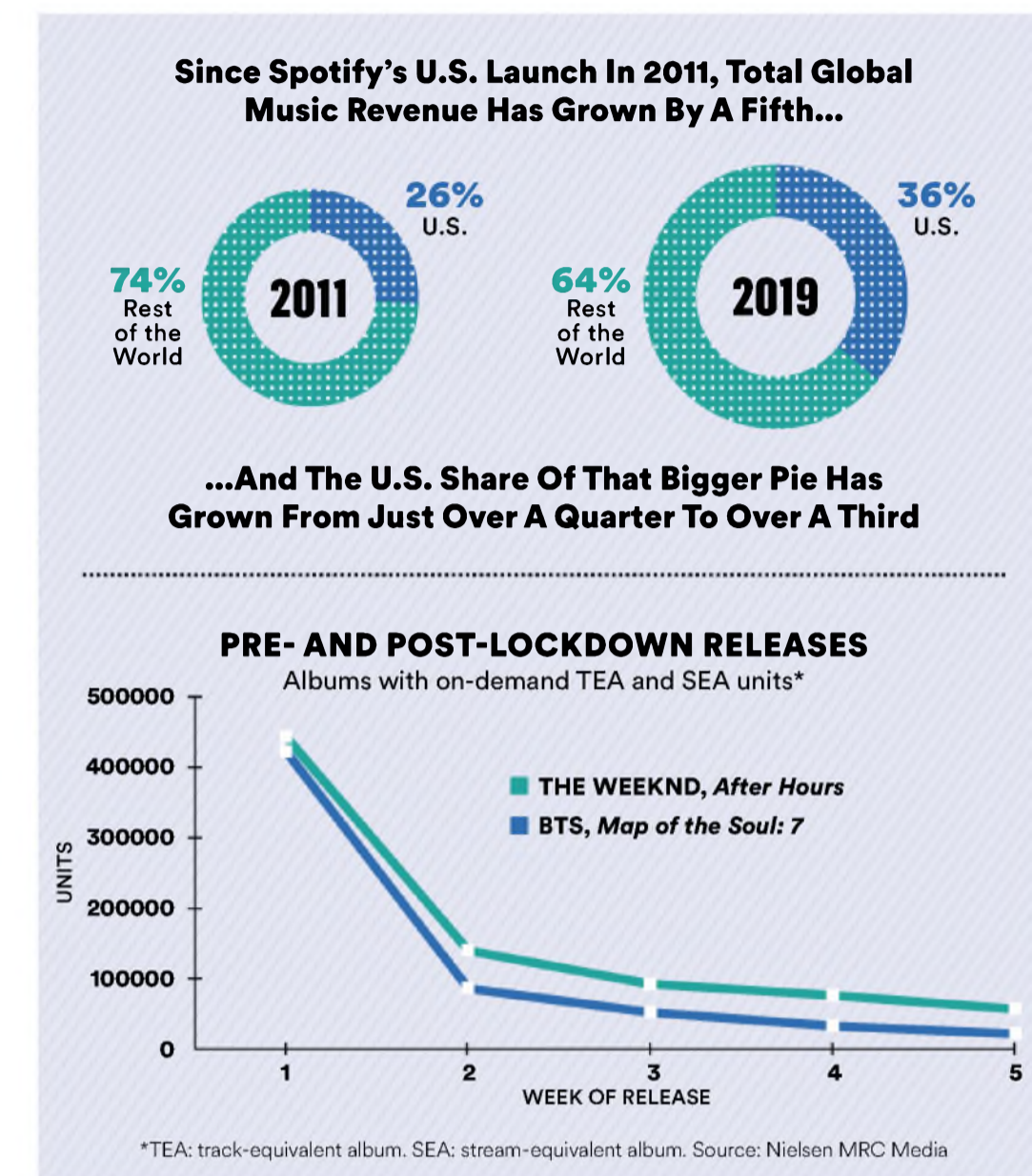
Sweden and Norway, the birthplaces

● DISNEY EXECUTIVE KEVIN MAYER JOINED TIKTOK AS CEO AND WAS NAMED COO OF PARENT COMPANY BYTEDANCE. ● SPOTIFY APPOINTED WARNERMEDIA VETERAN EVE KONSTAN GENERAL COUNSEL.

of Spotify and TIDAL predecessor WiMP, respectively, were the first countries to embrace streaming, which became mainstream there in 2008. Subscription revenue now accounts for about 95% of total recorded-music revenue in Sweden and Norway. Every year, analysts predict these two countries will soon reach a dreaded state — Peak Streaming — at which point subscriber numbers will plateau. But revenue in Norway grew 5.5% in 2019, despite a 10% subscription price hike in 2018 — while Swedish revenue grew 4.3%. Such continued growth bodes well for later adopters like the United States, and success in raising prices in Norway could encourage services to do so in other markets. Meanwhile, there are still plenty of Scandinavians left: Both countries still have only half as many music subscribers than they do members of Facebook, and the market of consumers age 60 and older is big — and largely untapped. After marketing to students and children, perhaps a “retirement plan” could extend the runway for future growth.

LATIN LESSONS

For the fifth consecutive year, recorded-music revenue grew fastest in Latin America, yet the region still only accounts for 4% of the global business. The potential is still huge: Latin America (measured from Mexico south) now has only 45 million music subscribers out of a population of 650 million, according to research firm MIDiA. Another consultancy, Omdia, estimates that 300 million of these residents have smartphones and credit cards, and that another 100 million might pay for music bundled into their wireless plans if telcos did the billing. But high inflation, taxation and political instability have music



streaming companies struggling to get more local traction. In countries like Argentina, where inflation hit 50% in 2019, streamers also face pricing challenges, like whether to offer subscriptions in volatile local currencies (to reduce risk for consumers) or in U.S. dollars (to reduce their own). One edge for the streamers: Latin American consumers may be less sensitive to small price increases, since inflation has habituated them to it.

SHOW ME THE RUPEES

Revenue from China and India fell just short of \$0.75 billion, meaning

the two markets together account for just 4% of global recorded revenue. By comparison, they make up a quarter of global GDP, raising questions about when, or if, those two numbers will start to converge. In 2019, YouTube announced that it had 265 million users in India, more than Spotify had amassed globally in over a decade. But the revenue hasn't been as impressive, with video streaming payouts lagging behind both ad-supported audio and subscriptions.

NOW, THE FINE PRINT

The Global Music Report includes

only 63 markets, compared to the 193 countries recognized by the United Nations, and not all of the revenue goes to labels, since the figures include mechanical royalties that will be paid to music publishers.

Also, while IFPI trumpeted 341 million users of paid music services at the end of 2019 — a third more than the previous year — its definition of “user” is inconsistent. When it comes to family plans, each family member is considered a subscriber, which could mean that as much as one-third of “subscribers” are not paying anything at all. Meanwhile, consumers who subscribe to two different service platforms may be counted twice.

VIRAL IMMUNITY?

The biggest cloud over the future of every business is the coronavirus, of course. As of now, U.S. streaming volumes are still broadly stable. The split between current releases and catalog is unchanged, and hits are still hitting like they used to. Take two of the biggest year to date: BTS' *Map of the Soul: 7*, released three weeks before sheltering in place was announced in the United States on March 13, saw a similar pattern of streaming activity to The Weeknd's *After Hours*, which arrived a week after the lockdown began. The Weeknd's prior release, *Starboy*, was broadly in line with this curve, too. The stability of the paid subscription model increasingly gives recorded music more security than other media businesses.

The challenge ahead will be the decline in disposable income, which will make it harder to attract new subscribers. In the short term, the battle for attention might be a more pressing threat. SuperData Research, a Nielsen Company, reported that revenue from gaming, including consoles, reached \$10.8 billion in March — which is more revenue than labels collected from streaming during all of 2019. Online video game Fortnite's 350 million users alone outnumber all the paying music subscribers across the globe. Whenever these gamers resume commuting to work on public transportation, music will have to fight even harder for their attention. **D**

Will Page is a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics, who previously was the chief economist at both Spotify and PRS for Music. His book, Tarzan Economics, will be published by Little, Brown and Company in the United States in 2021.

MARKET WATCH

<p>19.25B</p> <p>↓ 0.7%</p> <p>TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS WEEK OVER WEEK</p> <p>Number of audio and video on-demand streams for the week ending May 14.</p>	<p>13.99M</p> <p>↓ 3.2%</p> <p>ALBUM CONSUMPTION UNITS WEEK OVER WEEK</p> <p>Album sales plus track-equivalent albums plus streaming-equivalent albums for the week ending May 14.</p>	<p>363.6B</p> <p>↓ 8.4%</p> <p>TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS YEAR OVER YEAR TO DATE</p> <p>Number of audio and video streams for 2020 so far over the same period in 2019.</p>
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UMPG TOPS HOT 100, SONY/ATV RULES RADIO

BY ED CHRISTMAN

SINCE THE ADVENT OF the Hot 100 publisher rankings in the first quarter of 2019, Sony/ATV and Universal Music Publishing Group have been fighting fiercely for market share with the former coming out on top three out of the last four times. In the first quarter of 2020, however, UMPG beat its rival for the second time since the chart launched, with a 20.93% share, compared with Sony/ATV's 18.81%.

Sony/ATV extended its dominance among the quarter's top 100 radio airplay songs, however, ranking No. 1 for the 10th consecutive quarter on the Top 10 Publishers (Radio Songs) chart. (It has been No. 1 in 30 of the last 31 quarters.)

Roddy Ricch's "The Box" is No. 1 on the Top 10 Publishers (Hot 100 Songs) chart, with the most points for the quarter ending April 2, while Post Malone's "Circles" is No. 1 on Radio Songs chart. The top songwriter for the period on both charts: Toni Watson, aka Tones and I, who is credited as the sole writer for her hit "Dance Monkey," the No. 11 radio airplay song and No. 8 Hot 100 song.

Among Hot 100 songs, UMPG claimed a share in 54 titles, with Future's "Life Is Good" (featuring Drake) as its top track; it also raised its market share nearly half a percentage point from the 20.45% it posted in the previous quarter. Sony/ATV's market share fell more than 2% from the 21.12% share that earned the company the top ranking in fourth-quarter 2019, when it claimed a share in 52 of the first quarter's Hot 100 titles.

Sony/ATV's preeminence on the radio airplay chart came despite a nearly 4% decline in its market share to 21%, down from 24.93% in fourth-quarter 2019. Its top track was "Circles."

In the rest of the Hot 100 rankings, Warner Chappell

ranked third with a 17.99% share, slightly ahead of Kobalt's 17.94%, but more than 3% higher than the 14.90% share it had in fourth-quarter 2019. That came largely from its share of 48 of the quarter's Hot 100 titles, including a share in "The Box" — up from 39 songs last quarter. Kobalt, whose top song was also "The Box," saw its market share grow nearly 3% from 15.09%, even though the number of songs in which it had a share fell from 46 to 40.



Watson

BMG came in fifth in terms of market share with 7.09%, its highest percentage since *Billboard* began tracking Hot 100 publisher rankings in 2019. Pulse Music came in at No. 6 with 2.13%, moving it up two slots from last quarter's 1.21%. The No. 7 publisher, Round Hill Music (1.57% market share), and No. 8 peermusic (1.41%) both debut on the Hot 100 list, while Big Machine (No. 9, 1.21%) and Downtown (No. 10, 0.91%) round out the top 10.

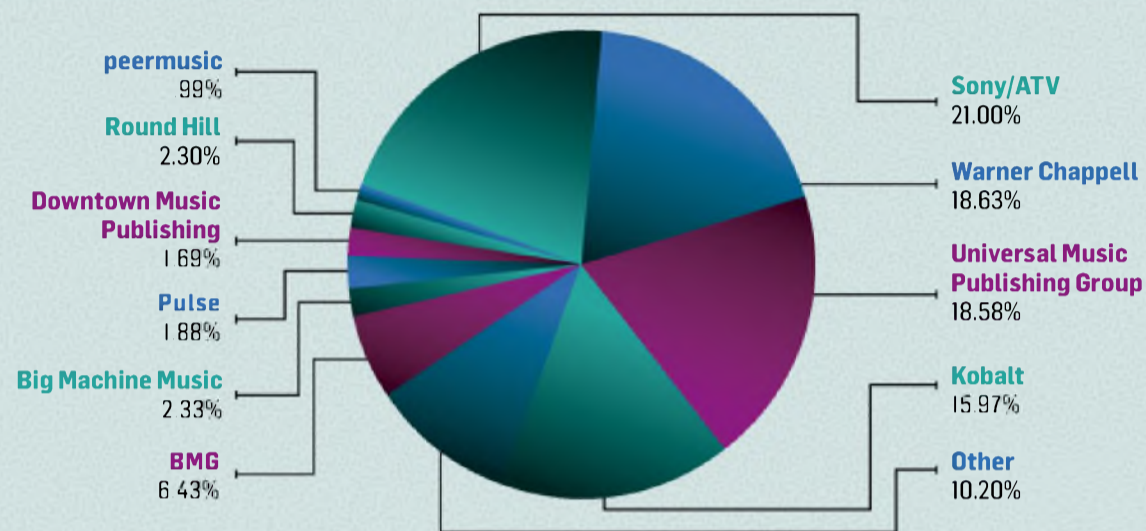
Meanwhile, Warner Chappell, at 18.63%, climbed to No. 2 on the radio airplay chart. The company continued improving its market share to 18.63%, up from 16.13% in first-quarter 2019 and 14.86% in third-quarter 2019. UMPG dropped to third with an 18.58% share, while Kobalt also dropped a spot, coming in fourth with 15.97%, down from 16.35% in the last quarter. While a distant fifth, BMG improved its market share for the fourth straight quarter, to 6.43%.

Big Machine marked its fourth consecutive appearance on the radio airplay rankings with a 2.33% market share at No. 6 — its highest yet. At No. 7, Round Hill earned 2.3%, while Pulse Music landed at No. 8, up to 1.88% from 1.29% the prior quarter. Downtown made its fifth straight appearance, at No. 9 with 1.69%, and peermusic returned after a three-quarter absence at No. 10. **B**



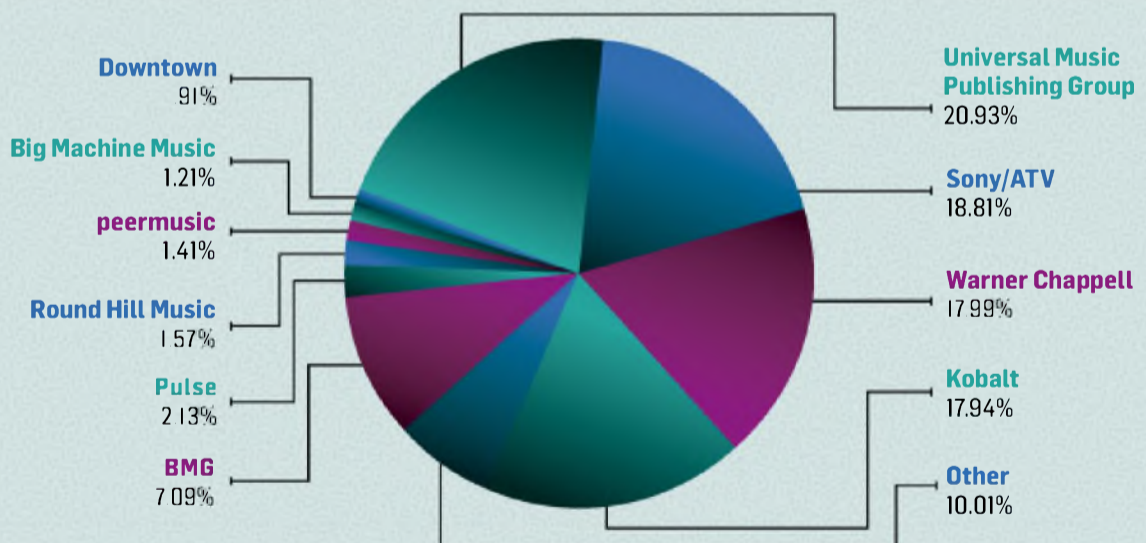
Lipa

TOP 10 PUBLISHERS (RADIO SONGS)*



RANK	TITLE	ARTIST	LABEL
1	Circles	Post Malone	Republic
2	Memories	Maroon 5	222/Interscope
3	Don't Start Now	Dua Lipa	Warner
4	Roxanne	Arizona Zervas	Arizona Zervas/Columbia
5	10,000 Hours	Dan + Shay & Justin Bieber	Warner Music Nashville/WAR/Warner
6	Lose You To Love Me	Selena Gomez	Interscope
7	Someone You Loved	Lewis Capaldi	Vertigo/Capitol
8	Heartless	The Weeknd	XO/Republic
9	Good As Hell	Lizzo	Atlantic
10	Hot Girl Bummer	Blackbear	Beartrap/Alamo/Interscope

TOP 10 PUBLISHERS (HOT 100 SONGS)*



RANK	TITLE	ARTIST	LABEL
1	The Box	Roddy Ricch	Bird Vision/Atlantic
2	Life Is Good	Future Featuring Drake	Freebandz/Epic
3	Circles	Post Malone	Republic
4	Don't Start Now	Dua Lipa	Warner
5	Roxanne	Arizona Zervas	Arizona Zervas/Columbia
6	Memories	Maroon 5	222/Interscope
7	Blinding Lights	The Weeknd	XO/Republic
8	Dance Monkey	Tones and I	Bad Batch/Elektra/EMG
9	Someone You Loved	Lewis Capaldi	Vertigo/Capitol
10	10,000 Hours	Dan + Shay & Justin Bieber	Warner Music Nashville/WAR/Warner

POP ARTIST **PIA MIA** SIGNED WITH ELECTRIC FEEL ENTERTAINMENT/REPUBLIC RECORDS. CHOREOGRAPHER **CHARM LA'DONNA** SIGNED WITH EPIC RECORDS TO LAUNCH HER MUSIC CAREER.

*For the Top 10 Publishers (Radio Songs) chart, percentage calculations were based upon the overall top 100 detecting songs from 1,970 U.S. radio stations electronically monitored by Nielsen BDS 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the period of Jan. 1 to March 31. For Top 10 Publishers (Hot 100 Songs), percentage calculations were based upon the top 100 songs based on Billboard Hot 100 chart "points" calculated from digital sales, streaming and Nielsen BDS-tracked radio airplay detections during the period Jan. 3 to April 2, reflecting the issue dates of Jan. 18 through April 11. Publisher information for musical works on both charts has been identified by The Harry Fox Agency. A "publisher" is defined as an administrator, copyright owner and/or controlling party.

Review Spotlight on . . .

RECORDS

LITTLE RICHARD

Rip It Up (Venice, BMI)
Ready Teddy (Venice, BMI)—Specialty 379—Here's a tremendous two-sided follow-up to "Long Tall Sally." Little Richard grooves it up on both sides with wild, rip-roaring abandon that's sure to excite the fans. The exceptional band backing keeps up the frantic swinging pace thru both sides. Both have big potential in the pop field as well.

Rank	Artist & Label
1	I'M IN LOVE AGAIN Fats Domino, Imperial
2	GREAT PRETENDER Platters, Mercury
3	LONG TALL SALLY Little Richard, Specialty
4	FEVER Little Willie John, King
5	HONKY TONK Bill Doggett, King
6	WHY DO FOOLS FALL IN LOVE Teen Agers, Gee
7	TUTTI FRUTTI Little Richard, Specialty
8	DROWN IN MY OWN TEARS Ray Charles, Atlantic
8	SLEPPIN' AND SLIDIN' Little Richard, Specialty
10	LET THE GOOD TIMES COME Shirley & Lee, Aladdin
11	SEVEN DAYS Drifters

which enjoyed lesser but still chartworthy success.

R.&B. Invasion

The most numerous invasion force, however, came right out of the pure area of rhythm and blues. As the adulterated product known as rock and roll caught on, the deejays led the kids in the appreciation of the true, original article. This led to the pop success of such performers as Little Richard, the Teen-Agers and many more.

Running down the impressive list, Specialty's Little Richard, an established r.&b. seller, cracked the pop barrier first with "Tutti Frutti," despite very heavy cover competition from Pat Boone. He then was able to follow up, and this time to outstrip the competition, with "Long Tall Sally" and the coupling of "Rip It Up" and "Ready Teddy." The same happened with that group of youngsters on Gee, appropriately named the Teen-Agers, starring pint-sized Frankie Lymon. This

ivory Ti names to made it f disk and for King.

Film m to chart or Bernstein, sponible sion of Golden? Jacob-

the Mor tion nic" cash of tl num the ever enit phoi well

A star rde sion dian



LITTLE RICHARD IS TOPS

... and no wonder, for every Little Richard record makes the Billboard and Cash Box Hit Charts! Even his newest record "Lucille" b/w "Send Me Some Lovin'" made all charts one week after its release. Now six of Little Richard's hits and six brand new songs of hit calibre are available in a great LP "Here's Little Richard" (SP 100... also in 3 EP's #400, 401, 402).



RHYTHM & BLUES RECORDS

61

WHO JOICES THE SPOTLIGHT?

Jock Showcasing Talent Keeps W

- Foresight and backing puts Presley, Perkins, Little Richard, Teen-Agers on the charts
- Many r.&b., c.&w. artists hit pop pictures in '56 via deejay push and savvy

This Week's R&B Best Buys

LUCILLE (Venice, BMI)

SEND ME LOVIN' (Venice, BMI)—Little Richard—Specialty 598—The singer has another disk that is going like a streak of lightning to the charts. Already listed on Los Angeles and New Orleans territorial charts, the record is also reported a top seller in Atlanta, Durham, New York, Philadelphia, Buffalo, St. Louis and Nashville. "Lucille" is the top-rated side, but the flip is also going strong. A previous Billboard "Spotlight" pick.

HONEY, WHERE YOU GOING? (Conrad, BMI)—Jimmy Reed—V-J 237—Reed has always been a fast starter in Southern territories, and he shows his typical good form in the South with this new

LITTLE RICHARD

1932-2020

I

T WAS THE SHOUT heard 'round the world: "Awop-bop-a-loo-mop alop-bam-boom."

Billboard was there to hear it, but didn't yet realize its significance. In an Oct. 29, 1955, roundup-style "reviews of new R&B records," we called the breakthrough hit from Little Richard (né Richard Penniman), who died of bone cancer on May 9 at the age of 87, "a cleverly styled novelty with nonsense words." It didn't get the kind of praise reserved for Piano Red's "Gordy's Rock": "The Solid South should cast its ballots for this typical pile-driving instrumental jump boogie." Within a year though, *Billboard* warmed up to the red-hot hitmaker, one of the original architects of rock.

THE PEN OF PENNIMAN

For decades, labels and artists have celebrated big wins with ads in *Billboard*, but Little Richard's "open letter" in the June 23, 1956, issue was particularly poignant. "Dear D.J.'s [sic] Dealers and Distributors, You'll never know what it feels like to be a poor Negro boy in Macon, Georgia, dreaming a dream that couldn't possibly come true," the letter opens. "The dream that kept buzzing in my head was to make a living as a singer. . . . Although TUTTI-FRUTTI was covered by several big-name artists, my record appeared on all the pop charts, as well as R&B charts. And believe me, I was in heaven!" He added that "I've really got my fingers crossed" for new single "Rip It Up," which would go on to top *Billboard*'s Most Played in R&B Juke Boxes chart.

LET IT "RIP"

"Little Richard grooves it up on both sides with wild, rip-roaring abandon that's sure to excite the fans," rhapsodized a June 16, 1956, review of his "Rip It Up/Ready Teddy" single. "Both have big potential in the pop field as well." That proved true: The single hit the Top 100, and the Jan. 26, 1957, issue said it let Richard "outstrip the competition" as other early rockers faded into obscurity.

"LONG TALL SALLY" FORTH

A Jan. 26, 1957, piece looked at some R&B acts becoming "established pop stars," while facing competition from white performers covering their songs. "Specialty's Little Richard, an established R&B seller, cracked the pop barrier first with 'Tutti Frutti,' despite

very heavy cover competition from Pat Boone," wrote critic Bill Simon, who went so far as to call rock'n'roll the "adulterated product" of R&B. In this case, "the deejays led the kids in the appreciation of the true, original article."

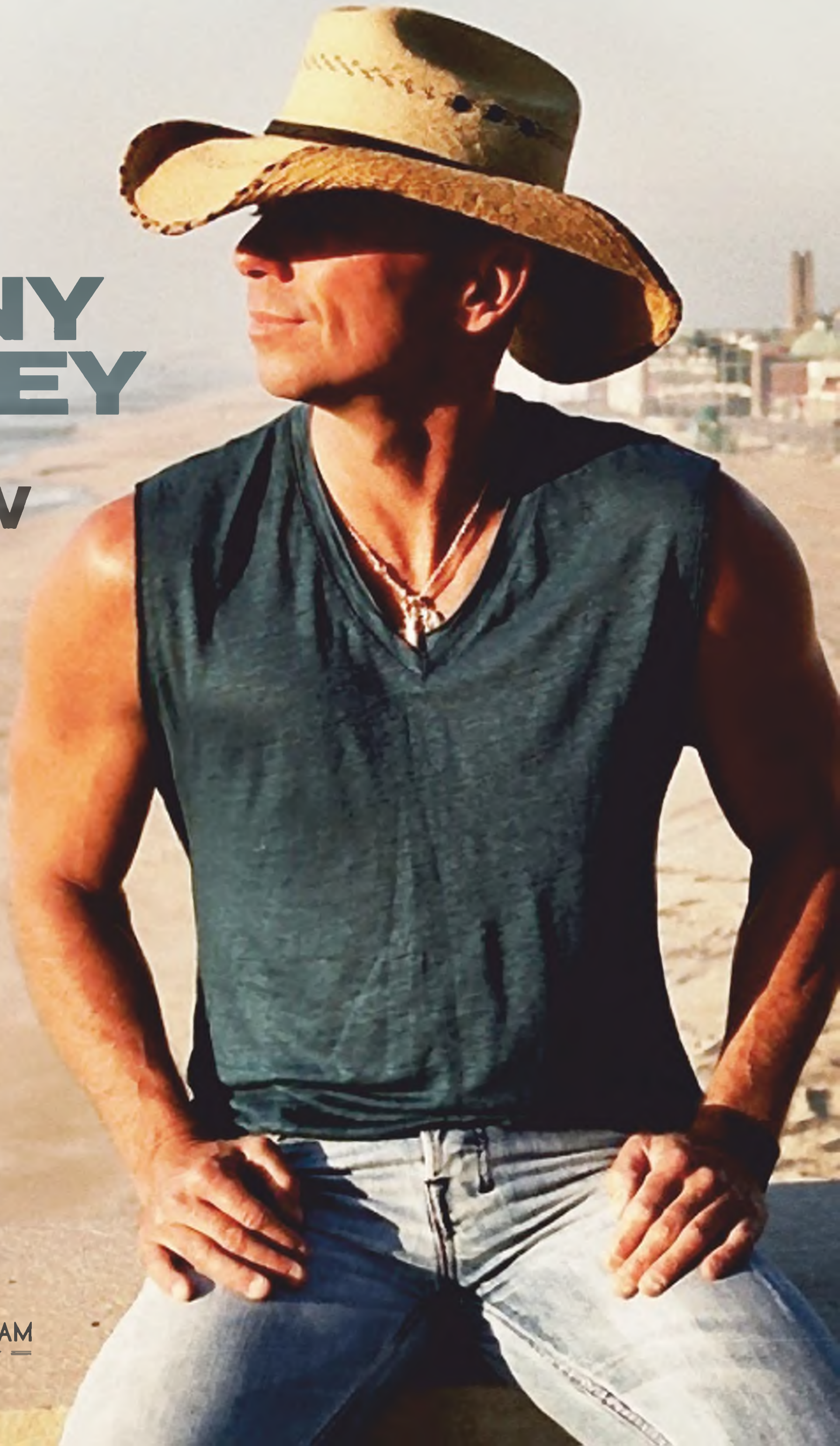
"LUCILLE" OF APPROVAL

Less than a year and a half after hearing that "novelty with nonsense words," *Billboard* put Little Richard's single "Lucille" in the March 9, 1957, "R&B Best Buys" column, raving that the "disk is going like a streak of lightning to the charts." Two weeks later, an appropriately outlandish ad for his debut album featured an upside-down Richard, trumpeting "LITTLE RICHARD IS TOPS... and no wonder, for every Little Richard record makes the Billboard Hit Charts!" —JOE LYNCH

CONGRATS, KENNY, ON YOUR
#1 BILLBOARD 200 DEBUT

**KENNY
CHESNEY**

**HERE AND
NOW**





Streaming In Africa Goes Boomplay

The Chinese-owned platform says 86% of its 75 million users are in sub-Saharan Africa, and it's outpacing Spotify and Apple to reach a market-projected 350 million listeners

BY WILLEM MARX

WITH 286 MILLION active monthly users, Spotify dominates the audio streaming business globally. When it comes to the increasing number of digital service providers vying for hundreds of millions of African ears, however, Boomplay is the brand to watch.

The streaming platform, which is controlled by two Chinese companies — NetEase, a streaming/mobile gaming competitor to Tencent, and Transsion, Africa's largest seller of smartphones — launched in 2015 as a preinstalled music player on low-cost Transsion handsets. Today, around 86% of Boomplay's 75 million global users are in sub-Saharan Africa, says CEO Joe He.

The region is home to one-seventh of the world's population, but a much smaller fraction of its internet users. Boomplay sees that as an arbitrage opportunity.

Over the past 18 months, the Shenzhen, China-based company has struck licensing deals with all three major-label groups, as well as the independent-label digital rights agency Merlin. The \$20 million generated by a 2019 fundraising round has fueled

content acquisition and marketing.

He says NetEase colleagues stressed the importance of an aggressive content strategy from the outset. "You have to build your repertoire — exclusive repertoire especially — as early as possible," he explains. "That will determine who will win the market."

The prize could be global streaming dominance. He describes Africa, with a population of 1.3 billion according to the United Nations, as the "next and also the last big user market," but says streaming there is still in its infancy. Boomplay projects 70% of internet users will become online music listeners. "We believe we [can] reach — even if the internet user base does not grow — roughly 350 million," he says. "It's a huge market."

The free streaming service is targeting what He calls "tier one" sub-Saharan countries where the potential to add users is greatest: South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania. He does not expect Boomplay to become profitable anytime soon and

is focused more on expanding its user base than increasing revenue. African consumers are used to getting their music for free online and are not yet prepared to pay for subscriptions: "We don't think the market is ready for that," says He.

Despite the potential that Africa represents, the major streaming platforms have a limited presence. Spotify is available in Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and South Africa but not in Nigeria, the continent's largest economy. And though Apple Music serves over two dozen African markets, it isn't free, and just a fraction of consumers can afford it. Apple does not publish subscription data on a country-by-country basis, but multiple label executives say that in Nigeria, a country of roughly 200 million, Apple Music has fewer than 100,000 subscribers.

Yoel Kenan, founder/CEO of the digital music services company Africori, which works with labels and artists from over three dozen African countries, agrees that consumption



He



Kenan

will eventually be enormous, but says infrastructure limitations will constrain demand for some time. He points to spotty mobile internet service, high data and smartphone prices in countries with comparatively low disposable incomes and a lack of reliable online payment options. "What people might see wrongly," he says, "is that they might expect the reward to happen quicker than it ends up happening."

And yet, Wiseman Ngubo, head of business and legal affairs at South Africa's rights licensing agency, the Composers, Authors and Publishers Association, says the argument for establishing a foothold in Africa grows stronger by the day. "If people can't find Netflix or Spotify there, they are going to [use virtual private networks]," he explains, which allow users in one country to pretend they are in another as a way to skirt geo-blocking of content. "If they don't find a VPN, they will find a local streaming service," he says. "And if they don't find that, there will be a lot of piracy."

In the 2010s, hundreds of websites emerged in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan countries offering music downloads at little or no cost. Given the prevalence of piracy, He says Boomplay's presence in Africa has provided him significant leverage in negotiating with rights holders. Though he may not be able to offer competitive licensing payments, the alternatives are less palatable. "If you don't work with us, you will continue losing money to the parasites," He says he tells them.

Among the other platforms targeting Africa's streaming market are France's Deezer, which is popular in some of West Africa's French-speaking countries; telecom operator-owned entities like MTN Nigeria's MusicTime; and small startups like Playfre, launched in 2019 by Nigerian musician Chika Nwaogu.

But Boomplay, which employs 140 staffers across five offices, is the only streaming service that can boast a genuinely Pan-African user base at the moment. He says the company is working to expand its presence in rapidly growing "tier two" countries Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia, then make a subsequent push in Senegal, Ivory Coast and Cameroon.

These moves are intended to maintain Boomplay's "first mover" advantage, but He also says the company is playing the long game when it comes to revenue growth. "If you don't have deep pockets," he says, "you won't be able to survive." ■

Who Makes It Rain Down in Africa?

CAPASSO is emerging as an African licensing hub

BY ROBERT LEVINE



STREAMING IS THE FUTURE OF THE

African music business, but making it work means licensing local music in each of the continent's very different markets. That isn't easy on the publishing side, since most African performing rights collecting societies are relatively young, and some don't have the technology to deal with the vast amounts of data streaming services generate. Also, until relatively recently, many societies had stronger ties to European societies than to their counterparts around the continent.

CAPASSO (the Composers, Authors and Publishers Association), which acts as a digital licensing hub for Africa, is trying to change that. The Johannesburg-based nonprofit association of authors and publishers, originally set up to collect mechanical royalties in South Africa, now also licenses mechanical and performing rights for streaming in multiple territories across Africa on behalf of the continent's various national societies. That means services like Apple Music can in some cases deal with one overarching organization, instead of one in each country. For decades, star creators in Africa have made worldwide deals with foreign societies, often PRS for Music or SACEM, which in turn has kept the African societies small. But CAPASSO, which gets Pan-African rights from national collecting societies rather than dealing directly with creators, allows services to license African songs that international societies can't. (It deals with creators directly on mechanical licenses in South Africa.) That scale should let CAPASSO account to creators faster and more accurately, says CEO Jotam Matariro, who spoke about how the organization is trying to smooth out the complexities of Pan-African licensing. "There's more trust now," he says, "because of the way we're doing things."

How did CAPASSO become a kind of African licensing hub?

When Apple Music launched in South Africa, SAMRO [the country's collecting society, the Southern African Music Rights Organisation] gave us the rights to collect performance royalties for streaming. In 2017 we were admitted into CISAC [the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers], and at a meeting in Kigali [Rwanda], all of the African collecting societies were pitched on having an international collection hub collect royalties outside Africa. At the time, there wasn't a solution on the continent to manage all the data that's involved in streaming. But we started discussing how we didn't have all of the rights data [in order], and, if we didn't have that data, how could we then make sure we would get paid accurately?

And your cooperation grew out of that?

Yeah. The difference between us and how it's done in Europe is that those societies can invest in systems. Here in Africa, most of the CMOs [collective management organi-



zations] are struggling. So we spoke to BackOffice, a distribution processing company that's based in Latin America, where the economies aren't so different from those in Africa. We didn't pay anything upfront; as we collect the money, they get paid a percentage as a processing fee.

Was it hard to get the many societies to work together?

It was extremely difficult. We started with the English-speaking countries — with the French ones there's a language barrier and they've historically had more ties to France. Then in 2018 ONDA [the Algerian collecting society] had a festival in Algiers and they invited us because they honored [South African singer] Miriam Makeba, and we signed a bilateral deal in front of the media. The other French countries followed last year. Now we call one another for advice. When another society was talking about licensing a mobile company, they called us to look at our contract. It's very important to everyone to find an African solution.

Traditionally, the biggest African songwriters have gone to European societies, at least to license rights outside Africa. Do you think that will change?

The reason African creators join foreign CMOs is that there's no money coming out [of African ones]. So that's good for them — but it's bad for everyone. But we believe this will change, and we believe we'll play a role in that. We pay out every quarter, and we publicize it, so everyone knows that we paid their society, and a month or two later they should get paid. We'll always have some creators who leave because they get advances [from other societies] — we can't afford that. But we're seeing more loyalty from big acts in South Africa, and as we benefit more from multiterritory licensing, we expect to have even more. If you don't have the big names, it's harder to make your voice heard. **B**

HOW AFRICAN COLLECTING SOCIETIES ARE PERFORMING

IN 2018, THE LAST YEAR FOR WHICH data is available, African performing rights organizations that collect money for publishers and songwriters took in 72.1 million euros (\$85 million at an average 2018 conversion rate), just 0.08% of the global total, according to the CISAC Global Collections Report 2019. By comparison, Africa accounts for about 3% of global GDP. Collections are increasing, though — up 1.8% from the previous year and 35.8% over the last five.

The vast majority of the money collected in Africa comes from just a few countries, which suggests there's more room for growth. South Africa accounted for almost half of African revenue, with 35.5 million euros (\$41.9 million). Algeria represented another 20%, with 14.4 million euros (\$17 million), while Morocco took in another 8.7%, with 6.3 million euros (\$7.4 million). Algeria and Morocco take in so much partly because those countries have private copying levies, which place a surcharge on recordable media that societies then divide among rights holders.

Of the top 10 biggest economies in Africa, only four make the top 10 list of countries with the most in collected performing rights royalties: South Africa, Algeria, Morocco and Ghana. Nigeria, the biggest economy in Africa, didn't make the list. — R.L.

WHERE PERFORMING RIGHTS PAY

RANK	COUNTRY	2018 MUSIC COLLECTIONS IN MILLIONS OF EUROS	FIVE-YEAR GROWTH
1	South Africa	35.5	+33.6%
2	Algeria	14.4	-1.8%
3	Morocco*	6.3	+873.3%
4	Ivory Coast	4.5	+98.0%
5	Burkina Faso	1.8	+132.5%
6	Zambia	1.4	+50.1%
7	Senegal	1.2	+94.0%
8	Zimbabwe	1.0	+70.5%
9	Mauritius	1.0	+32.8%
10	Ghana**	0.8	N/A
Total	Africa	72.1	+35.8%

*Morocco implemented a private copying levy in 2017.
**Ghana joined CISAC in 2016.

STAGE BLIGHT

AFRICA'S ACTS ARE BIGGER THAN EVER. NOW IT NEEDS VENUES TO MATCH

BY DAVE BROOKS

NIGERIAN AFROBEATS STAR NAIRA Marley has become so popular internationally that his home country — Africa's largest, with a population of over 205 million — doesn't have a live venue large enough to contain his burgeoning fan base.

Overseas, the 26-year-old artist's popularity expands far beyond West Africa's diaspora. In 2019, he sold out London's 4,900-capacity O2 Academy Brixton in under three minutes for a show in February, and he's considering playing an arena when he returns.

"In the [United Kingdom], he would graduate to the next venue size," says Chinedu Okeke, promoter-creator of the Gidi Culture Festival in Lagos, Nigeria, which launched in 2014. "But [here], there's not really anywhere he can do his own show beyond a 5,000-capacity venue, because they just don't exist right now."

The soccer-crazy nation has plenty of stadiums, but Okeke says the venues aren't suitable for most concerts.

That leaves few options for arena-ready acts. South Africa, home to the continent's three biggest markets — Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town — has six arenas, as well as the region's largest promoter, Live Nation-owned Big Concerts, which makes the country Africa's top touring destination.

The continent's robust festival scene is another option for artists with Marley's star power. Gidi Culture Festival, which typically draws 10,000 fans in April, was supposed to be Marley's unofficial homecoming show until the pandemic shut down the live industry. (Gidi has been tentatively rescheduled for October.)

When concerts and festivals do resume in Africa, the underlying problem will remain: A growing number of artists, including Burna Boy, Wizkid and Davido, are playing to increasingly larger crowds in Europe and U.S. cities like Houston and Atlanta, but face challenges touring back home.

"Africa hasn't historically been a hard-ticket market," says Okeke, explaining that much of the live-music business is driven by consumer brands like Coca-Cola that design and promote their own events, usually festivals. They pay artists a set fee and fund other aspects of the event, which "helps keep the ticket price low," says agent Joe Hadley of Creative Artists Agency, whose Jamaican artist cli-

South African rapper-singer-songwriter J Molley at the 2019 Rocking the Daisies festival in Cape Town, South Africa.



ent Koffee has played the festival circuit there.

Most festivals take place in December and January (the Christmas season) or midspring (Easter) and are anchored to major hubs: Gidi in Lagos; Afrochella in Accra, Ghana; Blankets & Wine and Africa Nouveau in Nairobi, Kenya; the Lake of Stars Festival on Lake Malawi; and Rocking the Daisies in Johannesburg and Cape Town.



Marley



Okeke

Despite the popularity of this model, Okeke says it "limits artists' ability to tour more frequently and gradually grow their fan base." If Africa's recorded- and live-music businesses are to evolve, he says investment in both club- and arena-size venues is needed throughout Africa, especially in Nigeria and other countries in West Africa.

Developing artists need smaller venues to build their fan bases, and one company answering the call is Vivendi-owned CanalOlympia, which operates a network of 14 venues in western African countries including Senegal, Cameroon and Ivory Coast, as well as Madagascar. CanalOlympia's modular spaces — which are geared for those regions' rapidly growing middle-class populations — convert from indoor 300-capacity movie theaters to open-air stages that can accommodate several thousand fans. They are equipped with modern audiovisual technology and can run on hybrid battery and solar-power systems.

Touring acts still have to navigate the many difficulties of traveling between countries in Africa, however. Playing a series of CanalOlympia venues requires a combination of commercial and chartered flights and bus travel, and the availability of backline varies from city to city — logistical issues that favor smaller groups and solo acts. And only

six of those venues are in countries that belong to the Economic Community of West African States, which allows travel and work among member nations without a visa.

In spite of these challenges, "more artists now see Africa as a touring destination," says Siphon Dlamini, Universal Music Group managing director of South Africa & sub-Saharan Africa. "We've had a number of conversations with Universal artists from the U.S. who want to tour Africa" instead of just playing South Africa and heading home.

To that end, Okeke says he's in the early stages of working with a public-private partnership on an arena project in Nigeria. "If we really want to be a global touring market, we need a venue capable of hosting the large touring shows," he says.

A venue in Nigeria would connect the country to a cross-continent touring route of modern arenas built in the last decade that includes Kasarani Safaricom Indoor Arena in Nairobi and Le Palais des Sports de Libreville in Gabon. He envisions a future in which a network of 10 to 12 arenas puts countries like Burkina Faso and Benin, which are adjacent to Nigeria, on touring routes.

He points to Rwanda's 10,000-seat Kigali Arena as a model for the future. The indoor venue, which opened in the city of Kigali last August and hosts sports events and concerts, is a joint venture between the Rwandan government and Turkish real estate development/construction company Summa.

Okeke observes that the economic benefits would extend beyond the music industry. "An arena is important for touring, but it's also a milestone for development," he says. "It's going to take more than the music community to get it done. We will need the support of the government to lead finance and development, and recognize the importance of investing in ourselves." □

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FROM THE DESK OF

SIPHO DLAMINI

Managing Director,
South Africa &
Sub-Saharan Africa,
Universal Music Group

BY ROBERT LEVINE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
ALEXIA WEBSTER

THERE HAS ALWAYS been great music coming from Africa,” says Sipho Dlamini, Universal Music Group’s managing director of South Africa & Sub-Saharan Africa. “But there was a long period when getting it was a matter of whether someone you knew flew to Africa and brought back CDs.”

Dlamini, 46, who was born in London and grew up there and in Zimbabwe, began his career throwing London parties where DJs spun music from southern Africa, then began bringing artists from South Africa and Zimbabwe to perform in the United Kingdom. For the last two decades, he has lived in South Africa, where he worked in live production and artist management before joining the Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO), the country’s performing rights society, which he became CEO of in 2013.

In 2016, Dlamini started his current job, where he oversees Universal Music’s operations in English-speaking Africa — just as international interest in African talent was growing. In 2018, Universal opened an office in Lagos, Nigeria, which represented a significant investment in developing Afrobeats music talent. Dlamini also oversees an office in Nairobi, Kenya, as well as label-agnostic concert promotion and production divisions. “If an artist wants to tour Africa,” he says, “we have teams in Nigeria, Kenya and the Ivory Coast that can produce events [there and in surrounding countries].”

Recorded music in Africa hasn’t generated serious revenue outside South Africa for years, but streaming is starting to change that — and global giants Apple and Spotify are already competing with the Chinese-owned service Boomplay and Tencent’s

Joxx. There’s even more excitement around a continentwide boom of talent that Dlamini says goes far beyond the Afrobeats music from Nigeria and Ghana that’s now exploding online. “Our tagline for the Nigeria office is, ‘Africa is more than Afrobeats,’” says Dlamini, speaking over Zoom from his home. “That’s just the beginning.”

Over the past two or three years, there has been an explosion of interest in the music-business potential of Africa, especially in terms of talent. There has always been talent there — why is it getting so much attention now?

What has changed is that the transition from physical to digital has made it a lot easier for people to access music outside of their immediate environment. Now you can be sitting in London or New York and as soon as Tiwa Savage or Tekno drops a song, you can listen to it.

Another change is the audience no longer seems limited to people from Africa, or serious music nerds.

The African music that people used to access was older — Fela Kuti, for example. Now it’s easier to consume newer music, and Afrobeats has elements of R&B and hip-hop, so it’s easier to go from [listening to] a Drake song into Davido or Wizkid or Tekno. And the production and songwriting has gotten better — especially for the new music.

A lot of the excitement about African music involves the Afrobeats music coming out of Nigeria and Ghana. How does that fit in with music from other African countries?

It’s not about trying to build a conveyor belt where we churn out the same thing over and over. There are pockets of excellence all over Africa, which is one reason Universal set up offices in different markets — we have an office here in South Africa, one in



Dlamini
photographed
May 5 at Universal
Music Group in
Johannesburg.

Nigeria and one in Kenya; in French-speaking Africa we have an office in the Ivory Coast, with satellite offices in Cameroon and Senegal [that report to Universal Music France] and an office in Morocco [under Universal Music MENA]. All of these regions have different sounds, but Afrobeats isn't all that far away from some of them. In Tanzania, Diamond Platnumz does stadium shows, and his sound is what some people call *bongo flava* [which combines elements of hip-hop, R&B and reggae with traditional Tanzanian music]; in Kenya, there's the group Sauti Sol, who sing in Swahili; and in South Africa, we have Nasty C, who recently signed to Def Jam in New York and does hip-hop — not an African version of hip-hop, but hip-hop.

Five years ago, there was a sense that music that's not in English has a limited audience in the United States, but K-pop seems to have changed that. What do you think about that?

My 10-year-old is memorizing K-pop songs — she learns the dance routines and sings along in Korean. I never did that when I was growing up. There has definitely been a change where people are more open to listening to music from different places, and I think that helps music from Africa.

How does that work within Africa, though? There are dozens of different countries — and markets. Can Afrobeats artists find an audience in the Ivory Coast or Morocco?

There are a few Nigerian artists who have become so successful that they're known across the continent. You can go to Angola or South Africa and people will know Tiwa Savage. That doesn't mean they get a lot of radio play [everywhere], though.

There are also a lot of music consumers in Africa — and a lot of potential for streaming. How does that look at this point?

Spotify is only in one country on the whole continent, South Africa. Apple Music was in more countries and just launched in another 17 [in April], but the subscriber base has to be built from zero. We welcome all partners that are delivering music on legal platforms, because that has been the barrier to the development of the music business in Africa. The more that services don't see Africa as a single market where they can launch at a single price point, the more people will use them.

A lot of big African artists are independent. What's the conversation like when you talk with them about signing to a major?

There are artists who have the resources to operate without a major, but there are others who recognize there are limitations to what they can do on their own — and what we can offer them. As an example, Nasty C went to Japan and wanted to interact with the music industry there. He ended up collaborating with JP The Wavy, a hip-hop artist from Japan [on the song "Chatanoshi"]. Next thing, he was chosen to be on the official Olympic song for Japan. As an independent artist, that would be a lot more complicated.

What happened at SAMRO? As CEO, you led the collecting society through a period of growth and took the first steps toward setting up a collecting



society in the United Arab Emirates before you left for Universal in 2016. When the UAE project failed, the board at the time commissioned an audit that suggested there weren't proper approvals for parts of the 47 million rand (\$2.6 million) investment.

I can speak to what happened during my time there: We significantly grew distributions to members; reduced costs to the lowest they've ever been; brokered a deal to end a five-year impasse over broadcast performance royalties; and made steady, dependable payments. As for the UAE collecting society, I can't really speak to what happened after I left. When I left SAMRO, the due diligence was successfully done, all the approvals had been given, all our processes were independently audited annually, and no concerns had been flagged. The large majority of funds was spent after I left, and I don't have any visibility into what happened then.

South Africa is considering copyright legislation that would import the U.S. concept of "fair use." What would that mean for the music business there?

The way that this is currently drafted would be detrimental to the local music industry, it would jeopardize international investment, and it would violate South Africa's obligations under various treaties. The entire creative community has come forward to say this is going to be harmful, and we spent the better part of last year trying to get the government to engage with these concerns.

Universal Music just announced that it's launching Def Jam Africa. How is that going to change the game for you?

In the U.S., [Universal Music has] Republic, Interscope Def Jam, Capitol — labels that can each define their own DNA. In Africa, we've only ever operated Universal, and under that umbrella you might have jazz, gospel, dance and hip-hop. What Def Jam Africa allows us to do is create an aspirational label. If a kid is making hip-hop, we want him to say, "I want to sign to Def Jam Africa." 📺

1. Dlamini's Yoda figure, complete with Africa chain, alongside Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G. "Yoda helps me stay calm when things get hectic," says Dlamini. "Besides, with all that wisdom, he must be from Africa." **2.** Pictures of Dlamini's daughters, Zani-Lee and Zaya Rose. "They make my heart smile." **3.** A South African Music Award, alongside a pair of rare sneakers Dlamini was given by Nic Burger, Universal's head of digital operations for Africa. **4.** Some classic vinyl records. "Vinyl has always been an important part of my music journey," says Dlamini. **5.** D'Angelo's *Voodoo* album: "He marks the beginning of the neo-soul era for me."

The Scene

GLOBAL HIP-HOP

AT HOME IN AFRICA

With musicians across the world in self-quarantine, some of Africa's brightest hip-hop talents — as well as others throughout Europe, Asia and South America — share snapshots from life in lockdown.



Name Sho Madjozi Age 28
Location Johannesburg

"Realizing how many creatives are not making money, I've tried to create opportunities," says the Epic Records signee, who achieved a U.S. crossover with her viral 2019 hit "John Cena." That includes a beat-making competition for her upcoming track "Sena Ala," for which she is receiving over 3,000 submissions a week from producers around the globe.



Name DaBoyWay Age 39 Location Bangkok

Just weeks before the Thai government imposed stay-at-home orders, the member of rap group Thaitanium released his self-titled debut solo album. He says he has since been spending time with his children, Bena (left) and Brooklyn Guy, and "catch[ing] up on my features and collaborations" from his home studio. "The music never stopped."

Name Vava Age 24 Location Shanghai

Known by her fans as the "Rihanna of China," Vava has taken the opportunity to practice her English while preparing to release an album later this year through Warner Music China. "I've been watching a lot of Will Smith movies as well as *Friends*," she says. "I have enough material [to] write a new song every day."



Name SonaOne Age 31 Location Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

When the French-Malaysian artist started making videos for IGTV amid the pandemic, it was just to pass the time. "I ended up making a new song and video every day for a week," he says, and quickly had enough material for a new album, *The Loccdown*, which he released April 20 to mark the 10-year anniversary of his first mixtape.



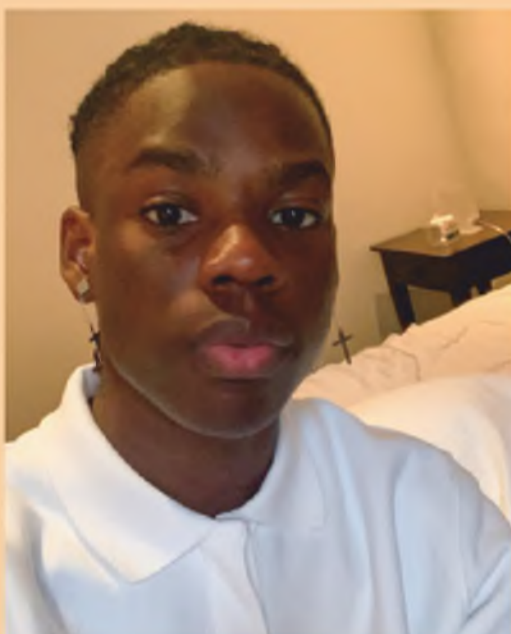
Name Boity Age 30 Location Johannesburg

The artist/TV personality, who is one of the first signees to Def Jam Africa, celebrated her 30th birthday in April with the launch of The Boity Thulo Foundation. It aims "to address challenges faced by the women and youth of South Africa through education, mentoring and empowerment," she says. "I have big dreams."



Name Cassper Nyovest
Age 29 Location Johannesburg

Nyovest has turned to digital engagement to gauge the success of his latest singles "Amademoni" and "Ubani," the former of which shouts out the late Brooklyn rapper Pop Smoke. "I can't go out and see how well people are receiving it," he says. "All we have are numbers online and on social media."



Name Rema Age 20
Location Lagos, Nigeria

Though the singer-rapper, whose song "Iron Man" appeared on Barack Obama's 2019 summer playlist, was looking forward to performing at festivals like Coachella and Pharrell Williams' *Something in the Water* this year, he's using his downtime to learn audio engineering. "In this time, I need as much knowledge as possible," he says.



Name Kris Wu Age 29 Location Ningbo, China

The Chinese-Canadian actor-artist, a former member of the boy band EXO, is busy as ever: In April, he released his new EP, *Testing*; on May 9, he performed during the online coronavirus relief concert Believe in the Future; and now, since “most of China’s industries have returned to normal order,” says Wu, “I’m currently filming a TV series.”



Name Ms Banks Age 26 Location London

At home, the British hip-hop artist is drawing musical inspiration from Drake, Doja Cat and Lana Del Rey. And in the absence of large production crews, she says she’s “going back to the old-school days” to create music videos in her room, while signing up for platforms like TikTok and Triller. “It gives supporters a chance to see me in a different light.”



Name Mr. Rain Age 29 Location Brescia, Italy

The rapper started his self-quarantine on a creative high, releasing “Fiori di Chernobyl,” which he calls “a hymn of hope,” on March 13. But lately, he has taken “time for myself,” he says. “These days creativity comes and goes — a week can happen where I can’t write anything. Other days, I write two songs.”



Name Raftaar Age 31 Location Mumbai, India

The independent rapper, who is known for his Hindi and Punjabi rap, was well-prepared to promote his April album, *Mr. Nair*, virtually. “You don’t require a label or marketing agencies to push good content,” he says. “Your fan army is more than enough.”



Name Anil Piyancı Age 29 Location İzmir, Turkey

“Everyone thought people would start listening more [to music] at home, but it didn’t turn out that way,” says the rapper about streaming trends in Turkey. But that hasn’t kept him from releasing two new singles in May. “It’s not productive every day,” with worries about the virus on his mind, he says, “but this is part of the creative process.”



Name Ninho Age 24 Location Paris

The French superstar treated fans to a quarantine gift with *M.I.L.S 3* on March 7. The album marked his second consecutive chart-topper in his native country, but he maintains that there’s still work to do for the genre: “Rap in France has yet to reach the recognition it deserves,” he says. “But we’re getting there.”



Name Djonga Age 25 Location Belo Horizonte, Brazil

The “LEAL” rapper released his fourth album, *Histórias da Minha Área* (Stories From My Hood), in March. “I’m not able to do shows [and] make videos,” he says, “so I’m staying inside the house,” where he has been spending time with his children, Jorge (left) and Iolanda. “I’m in a moment of reflection.”



Name Koffee Age 20 Location Kingston, Jamaica

After scoring a Grammy Award in January for her 2019 debut EP, *Rapture*, Koffee had to cancel a number of shows due to the crisis. But she performed for Global Citizen’s Together at Home virtual series in April, and says it was “amazing” to help with “raising money and awareness for the pandemic.”



Name Kontra K Age 32 Location Berlin

Fortunately for the German rap heavyweight, he was able to finish a tour just as the pandemic began causing cancellations. And because he “produced videos in different countries” over the winter, he says he has “so much material left” to release, including new single “Namen” in May.



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The Sound

PG. 32 ARISTOKRAT'S NEW DEAL ✕ PG. 34 A STUDIO IN NIGER? ✕ PG. 36 MADONNA ON BATUKADEIRAS ORQUESTA

LOOK OUT, WORLD

With his Def Jam debut album, South African rapper Nasty C hopes to “open a whole new lane”

BY GAIL MITCHELL

PHOTOGRAPHED BY THEMBA MOKASE

Nasty C photographed
May 7 in Johannesburg.

NASTY C HAD PLANNED to spend part of May on a promotional tour that included stops in Japan, Africa and Los Angeles celebrating his upcoming Def Jam debut album, *Zulu Man With Some Power* — but then the coronavirus hit.

Having just signed to Def Jam Recordings through a joint venture with Universal Music Group (UMG) Africa in late March, his team wasn't going to let him lose momentum, though. The announcement of his signing came with the trap-leaning single "There They Go," on which he raps, "I sign deals but I own my soul," and a music video shot in his hometown of Durban, South Africa — and, apparently, a strategy for how to stay connected without leaving his home.

Three days before Nasty C self-quarantined in Johannesburg, his team secured cameras, lights, a sound system and other equipment so the rising rapper could stage virtual performances. His first, a YouTube #StayHome #WithMe concert followed by a Q&A, premiered April 27. "I've lost count of the days," says Nasty C of his lockdown. "There's nothing I can do about it, so I'm focusing on what I can do to stay in touch with my fans."

Nicknamed "The Coolest Kid in Africa," the 23-year-old born Nsikayezwe David Junior Ngcobo was raised with his eight siblings in Durban's KwaZulu-Natal province. His mother, who worked as an insurance agent, died when he was just 11 months old — he named his entertainment and touring entities "Ivysen" after her. His father, a hospital HR manager, didn't initially support his career. (Nasty C



"This album is me embracing my Zulu roots," says Nasty C. "Since I'm taking this global step, I thought it would be dope to show the world where I came from and who I am."

grew up listening to Lil Wayne and T.I., and decided when he was 9 years old he wanted to become a rapper, too.) "He used to give me such a hard time," recalls Nasty C. "But now, he sees all the hard work I put in. He's proud."

Nasty C is the latest in a growing contingent of African artists catching the ear of major U.S. labels. In 2016, Wizkid landed a career-changing feature on Drake's "One Dance," later signing a worldwide deal with RCA Records/Sony Music International. And in 2017, Burna Boy — whose latest album, *African Giant*, earned him his first Grammy Award nomination — signed a recording contract with Bad Habit/Atlantic in the United States and Warner Music International abroad (excluding Africa, where he releases music on his own Spaceship Entertainment label).

Seeing the trajectory of his peers, Nasty C says his decision to sign with Def Jam came down to one word: crossover. "We were ready to take this whole thing global, and Def Jam has been doing this for as long as I've even been around," he says. Manager Colin Gayle, CEO of Africa Creative Agency (ACA), adds: "The fact that he signed to Def Jam, the epitome of

hip-hop, is a loud statement to the world of where hip-hop is — and the opportunity that [Nasty C] has in front of him."

The rapper has been working toward a U.S. crossover for the better part of eight years, beginning with his first mixtape, *One Kid a Thousand Coffins*, in 2013. The 2015 release of his second mixtape, *Price City* — with breakout single "Juice Back" (its remix featured Davido and Cassper Nyovest) — helped him secure a record deal with Mabala Noise, an independent label distributed by UMG Africa. Two years later his debut album, *Bad Hair*, arrived, and its rerelease, *Bad Hair Extensions*, featured French Montana.

By 2017, Nasty C landed a guest spot on Major Lazer's "Particula" (also featuring Ice Prince, Patoranking and Jidenna), which peaked at No. 42 on *Billboard's* Hot Dance/Electronic Songs and became the rapper's first *Billboard* chart entry. That same year, Mabala Noise hired Johannesburg-based ACA to consult on the young artist's developing career. When the label decided to exit the music business in late 2017, ACA came on as full-time management and Nasty C signed directly to UMG Africa.

His second album, 2018's *Strings and Bling*, cemented the newcomer's star status in Africa and gave him the final push into a mainstream global market. The album raked in over 120 million aggregated streams across Apple, Spotify and other services in Africa, according to Nasty C's management, and yielded multiplatinum singles "King," "Jungle" and "SMA." The project also earned him two South African Music Awards and two All African Muzik Magazine Awards. By the start of 2020, Nasty C was performing in Los Angeles at UMG's annual Grammy brunch and showcase that included sets from Billie Eilish, DaBaby and Tiwa Savage.

And though Nasty C still hasn't met T.I., his idol does appear on *Zulu Man With Some Power*, as does Burna Boy. Performing his new music live ranks high on Nasty C's post-pandemic wish list (further down are paintball, go-karts and shopping) but, more than anything, he hopes his new album "breaks the stereotype of Africa just being Afrobeats," he says. "I hope it opens up a whole new lane for American hip-hop artists to interact with African hip-hop artists. In bridging those gaps, I want people to realize there are a lot more flavors here." ■

AS TOLD TO

Starting A Wave

Launched in 2016 by Colin and Yvette Gayle (CEO and COO, respectively), along with general counsel Roger Patton and CFO Kevin Boakye, Johannesburg-based Africa Creative Agency has grown into a Pan-African talent and digital marketing agency representing clients across music, comedy and acting. The two industry veterans talk leaving Los Angeles for the front lines of Africa's exciting transition into a global force.

COLIN GAYLE I came here with Stevie Wonder and other artists for Nelson Mandela's 80th-birthday celebration in 1998 — that was my first taste of Africa. I fell in love with the continent, and then I fell in love with the concept of building an entertainment industry across Africa. I spent the next several years traveling back and forth when the idea came to create something that would really wrap its hands around the entertainment industry. I'd

noticed that Africa didn't have any type of agency looking after the creative space. There was nothing connecting South Africa to Nigeria, Nigeria to Kenya, Kenya to Tanzania. ... It was about taking the informa-



Yvette and Colin Gayle

tion we'd learned in North America and partnering with people here to build out the ecosystem. It always reminds me of the early '80s, when we were trying to get our footing in hip-hop; trying to change the structure of how we were dealt with as young business executives in record companies that we did not have a voice in.

YVETTE GAYLE That's what helped shape my decision to give up two decades of

working for major labels [Interscope Geffen A&M, Columbia] to forge this exciting life full of opportunity in Africa. We moved here as a family with our son, 13, and daughter, 9, in 2017. One of the great things about Africa is the talent that's on this continent. It's an amazing cultural melting pot. I'm getting the same feeling and belief I felt when I worked with Nas at the beginning of his career and when I met 50 Cent and spent 18 years working with him. —G.M.

Luc De Christy

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Isokrari

LABEL
LOOK

ARISTOKRAT GROUP

A decade ago, rising music producer Piriye Isokrari was looking for an act to launch his new label, Aristokrat Records. Soon enough, he met a then-unsigned artist at a recording studio in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, who went on to become Burna Boy. Impressed by the 19-year-old's Afrofusion music and raw charisma, Isokrari was quick to sign him to a recording contract in 2012, the same year Burna Boy broke out in Nigeria with his track "Like To Party," included on his 2013 debut studio album, *L.I.F.E.*, which

was Aristokrat's first full-length release. The label used the momentum — plus a \$1 million investment from a venture capital firm — to develop four more artists. But by 2014, Burna Boy's contract had expired, and Isokrari decided to transform the label into Aristokrat Group, a full-service creative agency. (He remains on Burna Boy's team as a paid consultant.) Now Aristokrat has formed a partnership with Universal Music Group that includes a publishing deal through Universal Music Publishing Group and a label deal through Universal Music France. (Aristokrat artists will be signed and distributed by Caroline France.) "Afrobeats is a global wave, and Burna's the prototype," says Isokrari. "There are thousands of artists here that deserve to be on that global stage. This partnership will allow us to discover them, develop them and get them to the right audience."

—ALEXEI BARRIONUEVO

BACKGROUND

Isokrari, 35, studied economics at the University of Oklahoma and had planned to work in politics. Instead, he started producing under the name Peedi Picasso and co-hosting parties in the United States that fused Caribbean and African sounds. Post-college, he returned to Nigeria with dreams of starting his own label that, thanks to Burna Boy, became a reality. In 2013, United Arab Emirates-based VC firm Rio Africa acquired 40% of Aristokrat; in turn, Rio Africa tapped Isokrari to head A&R and operations for its new label, 960 Music Group.

THE ARTISTS

Nigerian producer Leriq — who produced Burna Boy's *L.I.F.E.* (Leaving an Impact for Eternity) — became one of Aristokrat's earliest signees. More recently, the label signed producer Kel P, who has worked with Burna Boy and Wizkid (his deal includes management); Jujuboy Star, a 24-year-old songwriter-producer of Afro R&B/soul; and T'neeya, a Ghana-based singer-songwriter from Cameroon. On the publishing front, Aristokrat-UMG has signed Kel P, Jujuboy Star and Saszy Afroshii, a producer from Lagos, Nigeria.

KEY STATS

After *L.I.F.E.* peaked at No. 7 on *Billboard's* Reggae Albums chart in 2013, the label signed a distribution deal with movie marketer Uba Pacific. Six years later, Burna Boy brought on Kel P to write nine of the 19 tracks on his fourth album, the Grammy Award-nominated *African Giant*. Currently, Aristokrat does not plan to expand its 15-person staff in its Lagos office, though Isokrari says it hopes to eventually hire more A&R executives and managers.

WHAT'S NEXT

With Aristokrat coordinating A&R efforts from Lagos, UMG France and Caroline France are eager to see whom the label discovers next. "Having this partnership with Aristokrat is the best way to have a real team [in Lagos] that knows the country, knows the culture and is developing projects — but is not trying to imitate U.S.-[style] production," says Olivier Nusse, CEO of Universal Music France. *The Sound of New Africa*, a compilation of Aristokrat artists due in August, will be the partnership's first new release.



Burna Boy



ONE TO WATCH

Soolking

FROM Algiers, Algeria

AGE 30

LABEL Affranchis Music

FOUNDATION Born and raised in a northern suburb of Algeria's capital, Abderraouf Derradji grew up in the middle of a civil war. He first worked as an acrobat and dancer, later discovering rappers like 2Pac, The Notorious B.I.G. and French rapper Booba. Before founding a rap group of his own, which had relative success in Algeria, he had drummed in a rock band. By 24, he moved to Paris, where he lived and worked illegally — sometimes in restaurants, or by selling cigarettes on the street — and created music on the side. "I paid for my studio sessions, was producing everything myself and paying for my advertisements on the internet," he recalls. "It was a challenging moment in my life."

DISCOVERY In 2017, a year after adopting the moniker Soolking, the rising rapper was performing in small venues and releasing songs online, eventually catching the attention of Sofiane, one of the most famous rappers in France. Sofiane signed him to a recording contract with his independent label Affranchis, which in early 2018 inked a label deal with Capitol France. (Soolking is co-signed to Hyper Focal and has a license deal with Capitol France.) Around the same time, Sofiane invited Soolking — who fuses hip-hop with Rai, a form of Maghreb folk music — to freestyle on *Planète Rap*, a popular hip-hop radio show in France. Soolking sang "Guérilla," a song about his story as an illegal immigrant, and the performance went viral. (The video now boasts over 250 million YouTube views.) Says Soolking: "The success of 'Guérilla' was the achievement of something I was trying to build for years."

FUTURE Soolking, who has nearly 6 million Instagram followers, is spending much of his self-quarantine in his Paris studio working on new tracks for a follow-up to his second album, *Vintage*, which arrived in March. He spent 2019 touring the Persian Gulf, Europe and Maghreb, and now, once the live industry resumes, he hopes to conquer the United States — even while singing in French and Arabic. "I have toured countries that do not speak my language," he says. "That's the strength of music. I want to make a sound that crosses borders." —JASMIN LAVOIE

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SARZ

PRODUCER

As a kid, Sarz, born Osabuohien Osaretin in southern Nigeria's Benin City, quickly realized he could memorize the sequence of any beat — and taught himself how to make his own by listening to Timbaland. In 2006, as a teenager, he started selling his beats for 3,000 nairas (\$7.70). Over the past decade, Sarz has played an instrumental role in the global explosion of Afrobeats — contemporary pop made in West Africa — producing for top Nigerian and international artists including Wizkid, Reminisce, WurlD, Burna Boy and Drake. No matter whom he works with though, his primary goal remains the same: to promote the recognition of producers. In 2015, he started The Sarz Academy in Lagos, Nigeria, where the 31-year-old teaches young artists and Afrobeats producers how to navigate the music industry in Africa. He says, "I wanted to help others achieve in a shorter time the things that took me 10 years to achieve."

—JASMIN LAVOIE



DRAKE



In 2016, Sarz's longtime friend and music partner Wizkid, a Nigerian singer-songwriter, came to him with a task — and an opportunity. Wizkid had just received a beat from Drake on which he was supposed to be featured, but as Sarz recalls, "I wasn't feeling it at that time; it sounded just OK." So he tweaked the beat, and a couple of months later, Wizkid said they were releasing the track. It went on to become "One Dance," *Billboard's* No. 1 song of that summer. "Most of my hit songs like this one weren't planned," says Sarz. "That's just what it is."

WIZKID & SKEPTA



During a 2016 studio session in Los Angeles, Sarz and Wizkid (bottom) were working late into the night. Around 2 a.m., Sarz was getting ready to leave — but that's when British MC Skepta showed up. Skepta asked him if he had a beat ready, so Sarz went to a folder on his laptop and played one that Skepta then listened to for one hour non-stop while Sarz and Wizkid went home to bed. "The next morning, we came back in the studio, listened to what he did, and we were like, 'That's the coolest verse ever,'" recalls Sarz. The track went on to become "Energy (Stay Far Away)", a collaboration between Wizkid and Skepta.

BEYONCÉ



Nigerian singer Niniola teamed with Sarz in 2017 for her track "Maradona," which has over 7 million views on YouTube. Two years later, the song was interpolated on "Find Your Way Back" by Beyoncé, off *The Lion King: The Gift* (co-written by Beyoncé, Starrah, Bubele Booi, Robert Magwenzi, Abisagboola "Bankulli" Oluseun and, of course, Osaretin). Sarz says the album's production team reached out to him asking for clearance, to which he agreed — and that's how he unexpectedly landed himself credit on a Beyoncé track. "It came to me on a platter," he says. "It is a big honor to be part of that project."

INSIDE LOOK

BOMBINO'S PLAN FOR PRESERVATION

Nearly a decade ago, singer-songwriter-guitarist Bombino told his longtime manager, Eric Herman, that he wanted to open a recording studio in his home country of Niger. "It is materially a very poor country," says Herman. "It's rare to find studios that would be up to world-standard in Africa in general." Plus, since Bombino — who champions his Tuareg identity and culture in his lyrics — usually spends eight months of the year touring, Herman felt "it needed some sort of outside push to get going."

That push came in 2019 when Welsh producer-engineer-musician David Wrench (who mixed Bombino's 2016 album, *Aze!*) approached the artist about working together again. Only this time, he wanted to produce Bombino's next album — and he wanted to do it in Niger. "That reignited the spark," says Herman, "and it snowballed from there." The idea of Bombino recording in Niger appealed to his label, Partisan, and according to Herman, "that's when we started talking more about Bombino's vision for a studio there that would endure long past one album."

The goal was to open the studio by the end of 2020, but the pandemic delayed plans for both the new space and the album. Already though, there is a location in mind, and, thanks to their consultant

Patrick Votan — who manages Tuareg band Tinariwen and has experience with studio construction projects in Africa — they have a sense of what equipment they will need to import. (Depending on funding, the team plans to make the space solar-powered.)

In terms of funding, they're working on a tiered sponsorship model. Herman says they are pursuing Air France, which under normal circumstances offers a direct flight from Paris to Niamey, Niger's capital, and

could help transport necessary gear and personnel. Fender has agreed to provide amplifiers, pedals and instruments.

Herman says that because such access doesn't exist in Niger, artists looking to professionally record would likely have to travel to bordering country Mali, which has a few studios. "We should be able to do this at home, like almost everywhere else in the world," says Bombino. "Niger is a country that is very rich in culture but poor in resources. With modernization and globalization, the beautiful traditional Tuareg culture — my culture — is being slowly erased and forgotten. It's extremely important for Tuareg youth to preserve their heritage — and for me, this would be the best way to do that."

—LYNDSEY HAVENS



Bombino (left) with Herman in 2013.

Hollywood Media



PRODUCER AND SONGWRITER
MANAGEMENT



Clockwise from left: Redsan, Wizkid, quartet Sauti Sol, Burna Boy and Yemi Alade.

‘WE’VE BEEN EXPECTING THIS’

The gold rush is on as major labels try to tap into Africa’s global potential

BY TATIANA CIRISANO

THE WEEK OF MAY 10, Universal Music Central Europe & Africa senior vp A&R Joe Chialo’s packed schedule included conference calls with the music company’s offices in Nigeria, Kenya and the Ivory Coast. On the agenda: Universal’s recent signing spree in Africa, which over the past few months has included deals with Afropop singer Yemi Alade, Nigeria-based label Aristokrat Group and Kenyan Afropop group Sauti Sol. “A huge wave of entertainment is happening,” says Chialo, who also launched

his new Universal Music Group Africa joint-venture label, Afroforce1, in South Africa in April. “Now is absolutely the right time.”

While artists like South African Zulu choir Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Beninese singer Angélique Kidjo have won Grammy Awards and achieved international acclaim, for many decades major labels have treated African pop as a niche business under the “world music” banner for decades. But in recent years, buzzy new artists like Nigeria’s Wizkid and Burna Boy have burst onto the U.S. mainstream. And as internet access becomes widely

available to Africa’s substantial youthful population — 60% of Africa’s 1.25 billion people are under the age of 25, according to the Brookings Institution — the once rare global crossover is becoming increasingly common with A&R executives now prioritizing the continent.

Chialo has already signed his first two artists to Afroforce1: house trio Mi Casa and singer Mikhalé Jones, both based in South Africa. Sony Music Entertainment, having snagged Nigerian heavy-hitters Davido and Wizkid years ago, is now focusing on emerging acts like Kenyan

dancehall artist Redsan, who SME Africa managing director Sean Watson says is providing “a fountain of information” to help the label discover future signings. And in April, Warner Music Group invested in Johannesburg-based digital distribution/artist development company Africori, which also has offices in London and Lagos, Nigeria, while WMG South Africa managing director Tracy Fraser is helping propel the country’s thriving dance music scene with signings like twin brother duo Locnville and producer Sketchy Bongo — and is already teasing “there’s more where that came from.”

But scouting and developing talent in Africa requires an understanding of its complex web of both domestic and global connections. While the Western music industry has tended to think of it as a homogenous region, the continent is home to 54 countries and nearly 2,000 native languages — and U.S. A&R reps find that their methods don’t necessarily translate on African soil. Internet access may be widespread there, but music streaming

Q&A

Unexpected Encounter

How Madonna ended up bringing a group of female drummers from Cape Verde on tour — and formed a “sisterhood” by the end

BY JOE LYNCH



has lagged, meaning a lack of listener data. Instead, A&Rs within Africa still largely rely on personal networks and gut feeling. “That’s dangerous in today’s world, which is intensely guided by analytics,” says Watson. Even so, major-label partnerships are helping provide the analytical resources to accelerate talent discovery. Last March, WMG partnered with Nigerian music company Chocolate City Group to provide its acts like Fela Kuti’s eldest son, Femi Kuti, distribution and artist services via WMG’s independent label services division, Alternative Distribution Alliance. “The Warner deal helps us understand how to plan releases and how to get the best from our activities,” says Chocolate City co-founder/COO Paul Okeugo, citing education about analytical resources and collaborative opportunities between Chocolate City and WMG artists.

Collaborations are still the main mechanism for exposing African acts to new markets, and many African executives point to Drake’s 2016 Afrobeats-flavored smash “One Dance” (featuring Wizkid) as a turning point in the continent’s bid for global attention. “If you look at Nasty C, the biggest rapper in South Africa, he has had features with French Montana and A\$AP Ferg,” says Chialo. “It’s about exchanging the coolness of Africa — that’s what the big artists want — with market share.” Indie label, distributor and publisher EMPIRE is set to open its first office in Nigeria by the end of the year, and founder/CEO Ghazi envisions it as a “bidirectional thing,” he says. “We’ll be able to bridge a lot of our artists into the continent and then also bridge a lot of the artists from the continent back.”

Collaborations are key to growth within the continent, too. Alade featured Kidjo on her 2019 track “Shekere,” helping the former artist, who is Nigerian, find new fans in French-speaking Africa. “They’re both queens on the continent,” says UMG Africa managing director Franck Kacou.

Though the global potential of Africa’s booming talent is clear, the lack of music industry infrastructure remains a challenge. “You get a little chaos,” says Watson, who has invested money signing artists only to find out they have existing deals with other labels. Meanwhile, Chialo finds it difficult to explain to some local acts why they might want an A&R rep in the first place. “Usually, the songs are made on their own. It’s their friends giving comments,” he says. “You come in and tell them, ‘I wouldn’t do it that way,’ and they’re like, ‘Why?’ ”

Still, the market is steadily developing, and many Africa-based executives think it’s about time the global music industry paid attention. Watson has been waiting for this moment since he joined SME Africa nearly 10 years ago.

“For the past decade, we’ve been talking to everybody who will listen,” he says. “We’ve been expecting this, so we’re ready.” ■

IN 2017, MADONNA THOUGHT SHE WAS moving to Portugal to “be a soccer mom,” but instead, the 61-year-old icon found inspiration for her then-upcoming album, *Madame X*, thanks to a friend she calls her “musical plug,” Dino d’Santiago. One night, the Cape Verde-born, Lisbon-based singer — who coached Madonna on how to speak Portuguese and sing in Portuguese and Creole — had arranged a concert for her by Batukadeiras Orquesta, a group of female drummers specializing in *batuka*, a rhythmic call-and-response style created in Cape Verde during the early days of the slave trade. “I’d never seen anything like it, never heard anything like it. So of course, I couldn’t get it out of my head,” says Madonna. She invited several members of the collective to perform on her album and even brought some to the United States for her intimate *Madame X* tour that began last September in New York. (Its final two dates were canceled due to the pandemic.) “I thought about [my manager] Guy Oseary’s response to the cost of taking 22 women on the road with us,” says Madonna. (They ended up taking 14.) But her goal was set: “I wanted the audience to get a glimpse of [their] history.”

What did you learn from sharing the stage with Batukadeiras Orquesta every night?

It really impressed me how much they loved and cared for one another — and had so much respect for the elderly women in the group. You don’t see that in our Western world. We’re experiencing that now as people are coming together, but it’s important to have that spirit at all times. That thought helped me keep going through my show because I was suffering, I was in pain, and they really supported me. It was a real sisterhood.

The prime minister of Cape Verde attended one of your New York shows. What did you two talk about when you met?

He said he was crying tears of joy. He was telling the truth — he was on his feet from beginning to end. He was just so proud of the Batukadeiras, that all these musicians I’d met in Lisbon were traveling around the world. Never in a million years did he imagine that people in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago would be experiencing this.

What other African music inspires you?

I love *morna* music, which is the music of Cape Verde. It’s the kind of music that Cesária Évora made. To me, it’s the sound of mourning: sad, melancholic music that’s mesmerizing and heartbreaking. The song “Sodade” that I sang in my show, which Cesária made famous, is about loss, but never being a victim. It’s not like, “Poor, pitiful me” — there’s strength in longing.

How fluid is the music between Portugal and Portuguese-speaking African countries like Mozambique and Angola?

Extremely fluid. One of the musicians I love is Kimi Djabaté from Guinea-Bissau. He plays an instrument called a *balafon*. It looks like a xylophone, but it’s a more ancient version. Growing up, his father and the people in the village were against him playing music, as they perceived what he was doing as wrong or negative or connected to witchcraft. He eventually moved to Lisbon, and now he has records out.

What else has Dino d’Santiago introduced you to?

Dino’s responsible for so much. He introduced me to Miroca Paris, Carlos Mil-Homens, Jéssica Pina and Celeste Rodrigues — whose great-grandson, Gaspar, ended up going on the road with me. He introduced me to so many different genres and styles of music, brought me to every club, to living room sessions, and just connected me to this underground world of music that people don’t know about. I, in turn, tried to share it with the world. ■

‘WE’RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE’

Three of Africa’s biggest stars — **TIWA SAVAGE**, **DAVIDO** and **MR EAZI** — are opening doors (and labels’ checkbooks). Here’s what they’re up against

BY GAIL MITCHELL

Mr Eazi photographed by Seye Isikalu on May 6 outside of London.

Styling by Quinton Faulkner
Kyle Ho suit.







Savage photographed
by Lakin Ogunbanwo on
May 5 in Lagos, Nigeria.

Styling by Daniel Obasi
Lisa Folawiyo dress, Lace by
Cataleya earrings, bracelets
and rings, Wow Accessories
ring and bracelets.



THE NEXT MUSICAL REVOLUTION IS brewing in Africa.

As the industry buzzes with — and profits from — new languages and sounds from all over, the prospects for artists across the continent have never been brighter or more numerous. There have, of course, always been African superstars — from Miriam Makeba to Hugh Masekela to Fela Kuti — as well as great respect for the continent's music, thanks to projects like Paul Simon's iconic 1986 album, *Graceland*, which famously put Ladysmith Black Mambazo and others on the international map. But despite major-label deals, chart successes and eye-

be their geographic origin, but the artistry and business savvy that are on par with the biggest names in their field. In 2016, Nigeria's Wizkid topped the Billboard Hot 100 as a collaborator on Drake's summer smash "One Dance," which hinted at the possibilities awaiting his peers from the continent. In the years since, Kendrick Lamar and Beyoncé have fueled interest in the motherland by curating ambitious, Grammy Award-nominated movie-music projects — Lamar's *Black Panther: The Album* and Beyoncé's *The Lion King: The Gift* — that put a spotlight on African artists and producers and showed just how closely their music resembles today's reigning pop and R&B styles.

A-list tastemakers aren't the only ones lavishing new attention on the region, however. The three major-label groups — Universal, Warner and Sony — have all ramped up their investments in Africa in recent years: opening offices, sending A&R scouts to major hubs and forming joint ventures and partnerships. Meanwhile, advances in technology and social media have further connected a continent of 1.2 billion people — with a median age of 19.7 years — to the rest of the industry, creating a lucrative audience for both homegrown and foreign stars alike.

Among Africa's 54 countries, Nigeria, with an estimated 206 million people, has the largest population and the largest economy. It has also emerged as a particular wellspring of talent, thanks to stars like Tiwa Savage, Davido and

Mr Eazi, whose diverse paths through the industry have helped pave the way for other artists — and highlighted just how many possibilities await African talent.

Lauded as the "Queen of Afrobeats," Lagos-based Savage, 40, signed a landmark global recording deal with Universal Music Group and Motown Records last spring after making a name for herself as an independent artist (on Nigeria's Mavin Records and her own 323 Entertainment), a songwriter (for the likes of Monica and Fantasia) and a backing vocalist (for Whitney Houston, George Michael and Mary J. Blige). With two

degrees — one from Boston's Berklee College of Music, one in business from England's University of Kent — and stints in London, New York and Los Angeles under her belt, she's showing how primed for global stardom African artists already are as she readies her fourth studio album, *Celia*, due later this year.

Davido, who has been in the business for a decade, has brought the worlds of African

and contemporary black music together like few others before him. Signed to RCA Records through his own Davido Music Worldwide and Sony Music U.K., he's fusing Afrobeats, Afropop and highlife — a cosmopolitan style of Ghanaian music — with dancehall, hip-hop and R&B, while recruiting some of the genres' biggest names as collaborators. The Lagos-based 27-year-old's most recent studio album, last November's *A Good Time*, featured guests such as Chris Brown, Summer Walker, Gunna and Popcaan, and breakout hit "Fall" spent an impressive 21 weeks on *Billboard's* Mainstream R&B/Hip-Hop chart. He's currently working on an EP that will showcase the acts he has signed to his label. (In the United States, Davido Music Worldwide is registered as Davido Worldwide Entertainment.)

Mr Eazi, who grew up in Lagos but is now based just outside of London, has devoted himself to supporting the next wave of African artists as he builds an independent solo career making what he calls "Banku music" — a twist on Afrobeats with greater influences from Ghana, where he moved as a teen and attended university. The 28-year-old, who worked in mechanical engineering before becoming an artist, founded the talent incubator and label emPawa Africa in 2018. Its first round of investment raised \$300,000 to help cover video costs for 100 emerging artists from 11 countries, including Nigeria's Joeboy and Ghana's J.Derobie; in 2020 it will award 30 artists grants of \$10,000 each. Mr Eazi, who last year made his Coachella debut and toured with J Balvin, is also preparing an upcoming EP as well as a collaboration with Major Lazer and Nicki Minaj.

During a late afternoon in early May, the three artists joined *Billboard* for a video conference to speak candidly about the opportunities African artists have now, the stereotypes they still face and how they're staying true to their culture as they bring a slice of Africa to the rest of the world.

How have you been adjusting creatively and personally to life during the pandemic?

DAVIDO Man, it's been crazy because my fiancée actually tested positive [for COVID-19 but has since recovered]. I was on tour in America, with six shows done and 19 sold-out shows left. We were in Denver sitting in my hotel room listening to the news. We looked at each other and said, "Yo, let's just tell ourselves the truth: It's about to be a wrap." New York had put a cap on shows at 500 [people], then 200 the next day and down again the next. So we all came back home and did the test. My fiancée was in London with the baby. She's the only one that came out positive. She had to isolate; I had to isolate. I did two tests after that, and they came out negative. I just got back home [to Lagos] a week ago. Since then I've been recording.

"I look forward to when we'll be on the same playlists as Billie Eilish or Justin Bieber. Give us that kind of global campaign — treat Afrobeats like a pop record."

—SAVAGE

popping sales figures, African artists have often been siloed from the popular music landscape, segregated under the "world music" banner or viewed as Africans first, artists second.

Yet in recent years, especially as streaming has helped hip-hop become a universal language, the industry is witnessing the rise of the first generation of truly global pop superstars from Africa, whose defining trait will not

SAVAGE At first it was kind of difficult for me to get my head around. I had a tour planned, a bunch of festivals lined up. When it finally dawned on me that those weren't going to happen this year, it made me wake up and realize how fragile life is and how we take it for granted. So I've been spending time with my son and speaking on the phone more with my family. More importantly, I've been giving out food to people around my neighborhood. I can quarantine for a month or couple of months, but some of these people don't even have food for tomorrow.

EAZI I'm 19 minutes out of London, living in a small community and finally getting back to jogging. But musically, it's been an eye-opener for me. During this lockdown, I've not recorded any new music. But I'm on Zoom calls almost the whole day working on my business or [talking] with one of my new artists, listening to records and setting up release plans. I thought I would have been frustrated by not being able to go out of the farm. But I've always been an entrepreneur, so this has been a next-level step for me in terms of investing more of my time and resources toward my business.

What factors have been driving the industry's investment in Africa in the past few years?

SAVAGE One of the main reasons is that social media and tech have made it a lot easier for people to access our music. When I lived in London [she moved there with her family at age 11], African music and culture weren't cool. In fact, it wasn't cool to be African. When music came out in Africa, it would sometimes

music is amazing. The feeling you get from Afrobeats and African music is just different. When I was in school in America and would play African music, people would say, "Yo, what's that? That shit's hard." They didn't understand what the artists were saying, but the feeling they got [from the music] was just crazy. People have always loved African music, but we didn't have the avenues to go worldwide. Back then, you actually had to have an African friend or come to Africa to experience it.

EAZI There's also a general wind of appreciation now for what being African is about: "Hey, I'm African, it's great to be African, and we're flaunting it." When Davido is singing, he's talking about things that are very particular to his culture. It's also the same when Tiwa sings. Back in the day, even in the villages you'd hear people singing Céline Dion. But now people are playing 99% Nigerian music because that's what's hip.

Everyone is waking up because of what's happening. One of the biggest music streaming platforms in Africa is [owned by Chinese company] Tencent. Last year, loads of people from across the world went to Ghana for the Year of Return [the country's 2018 initiative to encourage African diasporans to move to Ghana and invest in the continent]. It's not politics that's bringing people here. It's art and young business people.

Do you still encounter stereotypes about Africa abroad?

DAVIDO Some people are still not fully educated about how life is here. I did an interview in Los Angeles a couple of months back and the dude was just so ignorant, basically asking if Afrobeats is a phase. The only way to understand is to come and see for yourself. When most people come down here, they're both surprised and disappointed because for their whole lives they've had a different idea of what it's like. Like everywhere else, there are good parts and bad parts in Africa. There are places even in America that look worse.

SAVAGE It was a lot worse before, when people literally thought we lived in trees. That was a big misconception. But it's changing as people see pictures via social media when people visit places like Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa and

Zimbabwe. Nothing beats that experience when somebody actually lands in Africa. And it depends where in Africa, because it's a continent and not a country.

Others think that maybe Africans don't speak English or it's not our first language. So they're surprised when they hear us singing

along to J. Cole, Future or whoever. They're also surprised at how up to date we are with the rest of the world — in music, fashion, everything. When you come to Nigeria, you'll experience the beauty of Africa, but you'll still feel like you're somewhere in New York. We're still maintaining our identity and culture.

EAZI The misperception I always run into is one of general ignorance: people classifying all music coming out of Africa as Afrobeats. To drive from Lagos to Accra is a nine-hour drive. In that journey, you pass through Benin and Togo. Even within those two countries there are a lot of different tribes — the language and culture are as different as the rhythms and BPMs of the music. You can have a hit song in Nigeria, but it won't be a hit in Ghana.

I didn't go to America until I was 20-something. What I'd known of America was what I'd seen in music videos and movies. To see homeless people in places where it was cold and freezing — it was the first time I experienced that.

Eazi, you've been independent since the start of your career, while Davido and Tiwa are signed to major labels. Why go that route?

EAZI I began doing music full time on July 22, 2016, here in London. I feel like I was lucky because people like Davido, Tiwa and Wizkid had laid the foundation for the Afropop renaissance. But at every point along the way, I've asked myself: Do I stay independent, or do I sign to a bigger label with a bigger team? Do I plug into that machinery to solve my financial goals, or do I keep investing in myself, which is obviously riskier? I remember dropping my last project and having to take from my personal savings to do a global campaign and tour. When I look back, I have no regrets. I'm a junkie in the sense that the risk is thrilling to me. And now for the first time, I can see an ecosystem building that's also giving a chance for other artists.

Davido and Tiwa, what drew you to the major-label path?

DAVIDO When I got my deal, it was very, very early in the transition of Afrobeats to the U.K. and then to the U.S. Before signing the deal in 2015, I was perfectly fine. It wasn't something that I needed, as I'd been successful prior to that. But then I was like, "Fuck it, let's take the risk! I basically have nothing to lose, as I'll still be able to do my thing in Africa." But a year after signing, the vision I'd had then didn't come into play. I felt like I had dropped the ball because people were trying to make me sound different.

I really had to put it in [the label's] head that the sound I was talking about was the sound that was going to pop, not the sound the guys there were trying to make us do. So me being stubborn, I came back to Nigeria from L.A. and started making the music I wanted to make.

“The language and culture are as different as the rhythms and BPMs of the music. You can have a hit song in Nigeria, but it won't be a hit in Ghana.”

—MR EAZI

take a year for people to get the mixtapes. So by the time we were hearing the music abroad, it was already old back there. With social media, we're able to connect instantly with fans. That has made the music travel a lot faster and a lot wider. And it's great music.

DAVIDO That's the most important thing: The



Davido photographed
by Lakin Ogunbanwo on
May 5 in Lagos, Nigeria.

Styling by Daniel Obasi
Ifeanyi Nwunye shirt and pants.

“If” was my first record that really blew up. At the same time, other artists began dropping [Afrobeats] music as well. Then Wakanda [the futuristic, fictional country featured in the 2018 film *Black Panther*] came and everyone wanted to be African. The process for making people believe in this culture wasn’t easy. I’m just happy that everything paid off in the end. All the labels are out here now in Nigeria,

Ghana and South Africa looking for talent.

SAVAGE I still act like an independent artist even though I’m signed to a major label. I think all of us [signed to a major] do. I think labels still don’t quite understand how to sell Afrobeats. And they haven’t really put their machinery behind the genre yet.

A lot of times when we drop a record, it’s put on playlists like [Spotify’s] African Heat.

We already come with huge followings. I look forward to when we’ll be on the same playlists as Billie Eilish or Justin Bieber. Give us that kind of global campaign — treat Afrobeats like a pop record and not a tastemaker record or something that cool urban kids in the diaspora listen to. How often do you see an American artist get signed and he or she already has 5 million followers on their own? Even 1 million? And you don’t want to give them the same push as Bieber? If [African artists] even had 25% of that push, Davido and Eazi would be billionaires. That’s the vision I want for Afrobeats. They haven’t even begun to scratch the surface. But when they do, it’s going to explode. What we’re enjoying now is the blood, sweat and tears that we’ve been putting up as individual artists.

With the scene heating up, are African artists commanding equitable respect dollarwise?

DAVIDO I’m getting my fair share now. (*Laughs.*)

EAZI The amount of respect has grown. I remember my first deal in 2016 was 400,000 pounds [\$522,068, adjusted for inflation] for three albums. It’s becoming more evident that the numbers are rising. I was about to sign a huge label imprint deal in 2018 for about \$6 million but didn’t. Now I’m having a different conversation with the same people.

Once the Internet becomes cheap in Africa, then you’ll see. That’s when we’ll be able to get our fair share in terms of recognition and revenue. Africa has a population of over 1.2 billion. When you see a Davido song with 100 million views, just know that the real view count is like 900 million because there are a lot of people who don’t have the money to pay for the internet, so they’re watching via untrackable means.

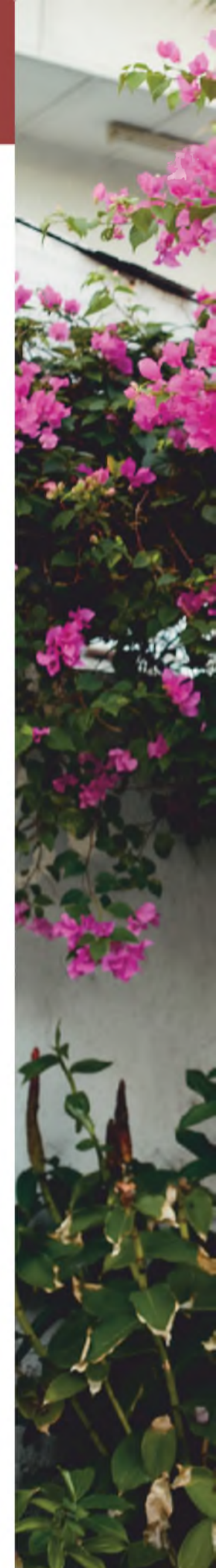
Tiwa, have you encountered additional challenges as a female artist?

SAVAGE A lot of people in Africa still have the idea that a woman has to be submissive, stay at home and be the wife and mother. Don’t get me wrong. Those are great morals to keep. But I think the modern African woman, the modern black woman is being limited. We can do both. You can have a successful full-time job, you can be strong and vulnerable at the same time. That’s the message I’m trying to put across. So when you see my videos or see me on the red carpet, don’t think I’m not at home cooking for my son or helping him with homework when I’m not doing shows.

Beyond Afrobeats, what other styles and artists should the industry be looking at in Africa?

SAVAGE Don’t tell them, Eazi! (*Laughs.*) I’m kidding. Because Africa is so big, I think everyone is still trying to figure it out. Even in Nigeria, you have artists like [alt-folk songwriter] Johnny Drille, Flavour [who fuses highlife, R&B and hip-hop] and [Afropop singer] Rema, as well as

Mr Eazi wears a JW Anderson sweater.





Davido wears an Orange Culture jacket and pants, Wow accessories brooch. Savage wears a Lisa Folawiyo blazer and Lace by Cataleya jewelry.

the three of us. It's just weird how everything is being categorized as Afrobeats.

EAZI Between Tiwa, Davido and myself, we don't make the same kind of African music. But beyond that, there's so much to know. I just jumped on a record by George Kalukusha, a new artist I signed from Malawi. There's something traditional to his music, but it also sounds like folk. I didn't know people in Malawi are listening to this kind of music.

DAVIDO Eazi, the ones you cannot sign, send to me! (*Laughs.*)

EAZI I'll send to you, no worry! But this just shows that music is different everywhere in Africa. I don't think there has been a proper profile yet of what's happening on the continent. But it's all good. Maybe like Tiwa said, we want to keep our Wakanda secret.

SAVAGE People just need to get on the train. This isn't a fad. With 1.2 billion people, we're not going anywhere anytime soon. We're here to stay. 📍

CRISIS CONTAINED?

Several African nations responded quickly to COVID-19. But as they start to open back up, the music industry is hardly secure

THANKS TO TOUGH MEASURES THAT included overnight curfews and restricted travel between provinces, most African countries have seemingly prevented the severe COVID-19 outbreaks and death tolls seen in Italy, Spain and the United States.

As of May 18, Nigeria and South Africa — two of the largest music economies on the continent — had 182 deaths and 264 deaths, respectively, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. (Some media reports suggest cases are being underreported in parts of Nigeria.) Amid slowly rising numbers of cases, both countries relaxed restrictions in early May, allowing some stores and shops to reopen. Still, some fear the worst is yet to come, with health officials in South Africa projecting that cases will peak in August or September.

Many parts of Africa are particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus because of fragile health systems and dense populations. For African artists, the pain is especially acute, as most rely heavily on live performances and brand sponsorships for their music income. In South Africa, at least half of artists' revenue flows from live gigs, says Mark Rosin, CEO of the South African Music Rights Organization, Africa's largest collecting society. In Nigeria, the percentage is likely higher, music executives there say.

Less-reliable internet connections and the sometimes prohibitively high cost of bandwidth data has complicated work-at-home orders and efforts by artists to connect with fans via livestreams, let alone to monetize them, says Rosin. Governments have also earmarked little funding for music-industry relief. South Africa has put aside 150 million rand (about \$8.2 million) for combined relief of sports, arts and culture practitioners — “everything from swimming to drumming,” says Rosin. Most of the funding is going to individuals for lost gigs, with payments capped at 20,000 rand (about \$1,000) per person.

Beyond live entertainment, the pandemic shutdowns have set off the first recession in sub-Saharan Africa in a quarter century, which, according to the World Bank, has the potential to create a severe food-security crisis in the region. “You are talking about an economy where people aren't eating,” says Rosin, adding: “So more important than if your gig got canceled, whether you're going to get money for that, is have you got money to eat?”

In Nigeria, an oil-based economy, a perfect storm of plummeting oil prices and outbreak-related shutdowns is exacerbating the pain. In South Africa, two airlines have sought bankruptcy protection, 90% of the hotels are closed, live entertainment is completely shut down and advertisers are fleeing.

With scant testing — as of May 11, only 27,000 Nigerians had been tested for the coronavirus in a country of over 200 million people — many are nervous. “We think the restrictions were lifted a little bit too early,” says Piriye Isokrari, CEO of Aristokrat Group, a Lagos-based creative agency and record label. “But we understand that for people that live day-to-day, the alternative would have been a lot of civil unrest.” —ALEXEI BARRIONUEVO

Additional reporting by Jasmin Lavoie.

MAPPING THE MUSIC

FORGET THE IDEA OF “AFRICAN MUSIC” AS A CATCH-ALL FOR THE CONTINENT’S VIBRANT, DIVERSE STYLES AND STARS. AS THE MAJOR-LABEL GROUPS DIG IN, IT’S TIME TO SHOWCASE THE ENTREPRENEURS — INCLUDING ARTISTS — WHO HAVE BUILT THRIVING BUSINESSES

BY TATIANA CIRISANO



TOP LOCAL ACT

Shatta Wale

13.26M YOUTUBE VIEWS

Wale’s 2019 album is called *Wonder Boy*, and the 20-year-old singer-songwriter and actor seems determined to live up to that name. The country’s two biggest political parties have used his songs in campaigns; his 2018 album, *Reign*, hit No. 6 on *Billboard*’s Top World Albums chart; and in April, he organized the online Faith Concert to cheer up fellow Ghanaians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Afrochella

Abdul Karim Abdullah and Kenny Agyapong launched Afrochella in 2017 out of frustration over how few African artists played major festivals elsewhere. The inaugural one-day event drew 4,700 attendees for a lineup that included Ebony Reigns and Kwesi Arthur. The December 2019 edition at El Wak Stadium in Accra, Ghana, drew over 16,000 for a bill headlined by Tiwa Savage, Sarkodie, Samini and Wande Coal. Amid the pandemic, its founders are working with the Ministry of Tourism to create a plan of action for this year’s event, which they hope to expand to two days. Says Abdullah: “Our goal is to ensure the stories of African creatives in music, food, fashion and art across the continent are properly celebrated.”



TOP LOCAL ACT

DJ Arafat

27.52M VIEWS

The king of *coupé-décalé* — Ivorian patois for “cut and run,” a musical style that incorporates hip-hop, bass and rapid-fire percussion — died in an August 2019 motorcycle accident, but his music, including hits “Dosabado,” “Jonathan” and “Moto Moto,” continues to resonate.

Universal Music Group Côte d’Ivoire

UMG’s outpost in French-speaking Africa, which is located in Abidjan, reports to Universal Music France president/CEO Olivier Nusse. Its roster includes Kiff No Beat, Locko, Toofan and the late DJ Arafat.



TOP LOCAL ACT

Naira Marley

17.6M VIEWS

Marley isn’t just a star in his home country: He sold out London’s 4,900-seat O2 Academy Brixton in February.

Chocolate City Group

Founded by Audu Maikori and Paul Okeugo, the trailblazing record label, licensing company, event-planning agency and management firm is home to Femi Kuti (son of the late Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti), Ckay and Dice Ailes. In March 2019, Warner Music Group announced that Chocolate City would receive distribution and artist-services support from

its indie label services group, Alternative Distribution Alliance, as part of a partnership deal. Chocolate City has offices in Lagos and Abuja plus boots on the ground in Kenya.

The Plug

Founders Abiodun “Bizzle” Osikoya and Asa Asika say they want to make their management company “the Roc Nation of Nigeria.” The roster includes heavyweights Mayorkun, Peruzzi and Davido. Founded in 2016, The Plug has since expanded into music publishing, distribution and sports management. It’s also known for its Mainland Block Party series.

Boomplay

Although based in Lagos, Africa’s biggest streaming platform is controlled by China-based phone maker Transsion and Chinese internet provider NetEase. Launched in 2015, Boomplay CEO Joe He says 86% of its 75 million global users are in sub-Saharan

Africa. Major markets include Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda, Rwanda, Cameroon, Senegal and Ivory Coast. Thanks in part to licensing deals with all three U.S. major-label groups, it offers a catalog of 20 million-plus songs and videos, and a 2019 funding round that raised \$20 million is fueling expansion.

Eclipse Live

Co-founder/managing director Chin Okeke launched this live-events promotion and production company in 2013 to bring affordable entertainment to young people in Africa. Eclipse Live is best known for its Gidi Culture Festival (often called “Africa’s Coachella”), which anchors Lagos Music Week every April. This year’s edition, which has been moved to October due to the pandemic, will be headlined by Rema, Flavour and Naira Marley. Eclipse also produces the music festivals Nativeland in Lagos and Palmwine in the United Kingdom.



TOP LOCAL ACT

Wally B. Seck

20.95M VIEWS

“Faramareen,” “Taxi Love” and other hits have given this 35-year-old Senegalese soul singer international cachet. He hails from a family of singers, most notably Thione Seck of Raam Daan and (formerly) Orchestra Baobab.

IVORY COAST

GHANA

NIGERIA

ALGERIA



TOP LOCAL ACT

Soolking

316.8M VIEWS

Born in Algeria but currently living in France, Soolking (born Abderraouf Derradji) broke out in 2018 with “Dalida,” an homage to the titular French singer-actress. The 30-year-old rapper-singer has scored again this year with his album *Vintage*. “Melegim” (featuring Dadju) has generated almost 110 million YouTube views.



EGYPT

TOP LOCAL ACT

Hamo Bika

736.53M VIEWS

Bika, 31, remains massively popular even though — and perhaps because — Egypt authorities have banned the ribald *mahraganat* style of dance music he performs. One government spokesman deemed it “even more dangerous to Egypt than corona[virus].”

TOP LOCAL ACT

Scró Q Cuia

3.73M VIEWS

Scró (born Gerónimo Lubombo) is celebrated for his Afrohouse and contemporary *kuduro* dance music, a frenetic style that originated in Angola in the late 1980s. He has cited Michael Jackson as an influence.



ANGOLA



KENYA



TANZANIA



MOZAMBIQUE

TOP LOCAL ACT

Mr. Bow

6.88M VIEWS

Salvador Pedro Maiaze, who calls himself Mr. Bow and also Bawito, is the country’s celebrated practitioner of contemporary *marrabenta*, Mozambique’s Portuguese-inflected R&B. The “Nitiketelile” singer also operates his own label, Bawito Music.



TOP LOCAL ACT

Diamond Platnumz

53.94M VIEWS

Platnumz, 30, born Nasibu Abdul Juma Issack, reigns as Tanzania’s prince of *bongo flava*, a musical style that melds hip-hop, reggae, Afrobeats and dancehall with the country’s *taarab* and *dansi* genres. He was also the first East African artist to sign with Universal Music. His hits include “Kamwambie” and “Fire” (featuring Tiwa Savage).

Wasafi Classic Baby

WCB is Platnumz’s full-service management, recording, publishing and entertainment company. Its portfolio includes a roster of some of Tanzania’s top acts, such as Harmonize and Rayvanny; radio station WASAFI FM; and YouTube channel Wasafi Media, which programs artist interviews and music videos for 1.3 million-plus subscribers.



TOP LOCAL ACT

Otile Brown

27.88M VIEWS

The 26-year-old R&B singer, born Jacob Obunga, called his first album *Best of Otile Brown*, but three years later he is still racking up hits as well as Kenya’s top local artist. Only Tanzania’s Diamond Platnumz and Rayvanny are more popular on YouTube.

KAKA Empire

Kenyan hip-hop star King Kaka heads up his own Nairobi-based record label and artist management company, which represents seven local talents. Among them are rapper FemiOne, whose March hit “Utawezana” was fueled by a TikTok dance challenge, and Afrofusion trio JaDi.



TOP LOCAL ACT

Joyous Celebration

36.44M VIEWS

The South African gospel choir formed in 1994 after the country’s first democratic elections. Over 25 years later, it continues to foster talent and release new music, most recently double album *The Rock* in April.

Sony Music Entertainment South Africa

SME has a combined roster of 80-plus artists in Africa including Davido, Wizkid and Sho Madjozi. In addition to Johannesburg, the label group maintains offices in Lagos, Nigeria and Ivory Coast. The lattermost outpost reports to Sony Music France.

Universal Music Group South Africa

The label group’s South African outpost and recording studio has signed local acts Cassper Nyovest, Dr. Tumi, Mafikizolo, Prince Kaybee, Nasty C and Black Coffee, as well as artists from other countries, such as Tanzania’s Diamond Platnumz. It launched two live-music companies in Johannesburg: booking agency UMG Live and ULive Africa, which has produced and programmed events like Afrochella. UMG also has offices in Nigeria, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Cameroon and Senegal.

Warner Music South Africa

Since its launch in 2013, Warner Music South Africa has developed local artists both in Africa and internationally, including Durban DJ-producer Sketchy Bongo, Lagos artist Superstar Ace, South African singer-songwriter Zahara and Bigstar Johnson, a winner of the South African hip-hop reality competition *The Vuzu Hustle*. In 2019, Warner Music Group also partnered with pioneering Nigerian independent label Chocolate City.

WALE: COURTESY OF SHANTA MOVEMENT EMPIRE; DJARAFAT: EDMOND SACAKASIPAS/SHUTTERSTOCK; MARLEY: COURTESY OF MARLEY SECK; ISSA: ILLU; SOOLKING: FIFOU; MR. BOW: 99; BOW OFFICIAL/YOUTUBE; DIAMOND PLATNUMZ: COURTESY OF UMG; JOYOUS CELEBRATION: COURTESY OF JOYOUS CELEBRATION; OBILE BROWN: 99; BROWN OFFICIAL/YOUTUBE.

SOURCE FOR ARTIST YOUTUBE VIEWS YOUTUBE CULTURE & TRENDS. TOTALS REPRESENT AN ARTIST’S TOTAL VIEWS FROM MAY 1, 2019, TO MAY 1, 2020, WITHIN THE ARTIST’S RESPECTIVE COUNTRY. THEY DO NOT REPRESENT GLOBAL VIEWS.

HOMeward

BOUND

Four decades ago, **DENZYL FEIGELSON** began an odyssey through the music biz in his native South Africa. Now, as CEO of Platoon, he's paving the way for Apple's expansion on the continent where he grew up

BY DAN RYS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAN KENNEDY

Feigelson photographed
May 6 in Ledwell, England.



I

IN APRIL, APPLE ANNOUNCED a bold expansion of its Apple Music streaming service: It would move into 52 additional markets — including 25 in Africa — even amid the anxiety and belt-tightening necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic.

At the same time, Denzyl Feigelson — a former flower farmer whom Steve Jobs had enlisted years ago to help build the original iTunes Store — was working on tackling an even more ambitious project for the continent's musicians. As co-founder/CEO of Apple's artist services company, Platoon, Feigelson was about to start offering health insurance to his artists, a first-of-its-kind initiative that felt all the more urgent as the world ground to a halt. By May, the program began covering 30 artists in South Africa, with plans to roll out into more territories in the future — just one of a suite of services he's putting together to help his acts. "It sounds a little altruistic," says Feigelson. "But life's too short to have what we call in the music business 'agita.' I like to sleep well at night."

For the past three years, Platoon has been striking licensing and services deals with acts in countries like South Africa, Ghana and Nigeria, offering advances, distribution and support to 88 African musicians — and quietly becoming a major player amid an industrywide shift toward establishing a larger footprint on the continent. Feigelson also has been exploring new kinds of offerings that position the company as a one-stop finishing school that can make artists the CEOs of, well, themselves.

"I want artists to be able to manage their music on our platform; get services like health care, legal and accounting; learn about publishing, touring, how you market; and conquer things like YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Twitch," says Feigelson. "Because if I help them grow their businesses, it's only helping us grow our business, too. And we're doing that in all kinds of ways."

Since its 2016 founding, Platoon has provided 250 artists free studio time; funding for videos, promotion and marketing; distribution; tour support; playlist pitching; and data and analytics support from all digital service providers. This spring though, as the coronavirus shuttered countries around the globe and devastated the touring industry, it doubled down on those efforts. Platoon has offered six-month advances on royalties to 60 artists to give them financial relief while other income streams suffer; hosted video-mentoring sessions with the likes of Nile Rodgers, Apple Music global editorial head of hip-hop and R&B Ebro Darden and record executives Alex and Alec Boateng; and helped connect performers — like South African singer-songwriter Msaki with Diplo, Ghanaian rapper Kwesi Arthur with Nasty C — to make new music.

For Feigelson, 63, bringing Platoon to Africa (it arrived in South Africa in mid-2018) is the culmination of a lifetime's work that has been laser-focused on artists. Born in South Africa during apartheid, he was working in a Johannesburg studio in the 1980s when he got his first big break, working on a little album called *Graceland*. He should, in fact, be in Cape Town right now, opening up Platoon's shiny new headquarters, complete with recording studios, content studios, podcast studios and more. It's now set to open sometime later this year, and instead, Feigelson is in the English countryside, in the thatched-roof Oxfordshire cottage to which he retreated once shutdowns swept across the United Kingdom. But he hasn't paused when it comes to taking care of the Platoon family.

"If an artist cannot survive through this COVID-19 period, they're not going to survive," he says. "Just like companies are going to go down, too. And I don't want that to happen. So we're finding ways to mitigate this time that we're going through to help artists."

ASKING FEIGELSON about his career feels a bit like getting a music history lesson — not because he's particularly long-winded, but because he simply has so many incredible stories to tell.

There's the tale about that studio in Johannesburg, where he was working with South African musician-activist Johnny Clegg (whom he would later manage) and producer Hilton Rosenthal, when a phone call came that would change his life's course: "Hi, my name's Paul Simon.



I'm looking for Hilton or Denzyl! And Hilton and I were both like, 'Yeah... Who is this *really*?' "

The story of Simon's masterpiece *Graceland* — which won the 1987 Grammy Award for album of the year and helped bridge the gap between South African music and American pop — has been told many times. But Feigelson's role facilitating its initial recording during the United Nations' cultural boycott of South Africa over apartheid and helping assemble the musicians from that country with whom Simon played is far less known.

Another story, or rather two: It's the early 1990s, and Feigelson is managing boat-shoe icon Kenny Loggins, who decides he would like to make a children's album. Sony, Loggins' longtime label, balks at the idea, pointing to a clause in his contract that stipulates he only make pop albums; Loggins makes the album anyway, which he and Feigelson release independently. Sony, seeing that it looks headed for a Grammy nomination and gold certification, eventually distributes *Return to Pooh Corner*, and Feigelson sees up close precisely how major labels sometimes treat their artists.

That experience was fresh in his mind when he subsequently quit the music business and headed to Hawaii, where he started a mail-order flower business that he promoted and ran through the nascent internet. "The fact that I could make an album myself and distribute it myself without using the network that the labels

used... I thought, 'If I can build a website to sell flowers, why can't I build a website and sell music from all my friends who can't get record deals?' "

In 1996, that idea became Artists Without a Label, or AWAL, which Feigelson launched as a home for acts who still had a fan base but were no longer the major labels' flavor of the month. Run out of Feigelson's converted three-car garage in Ojai, Calif., AWAL quickly became a one-stop licensing outfit and distribution network for a deep catalog of music unattached to labels or publishers. (In 2012, he sold AWAL to Kobalt for seven figures; it now offers marketing, promotion, A&R, distribution and licensing for some 25,000 artists who retain ownership of their master recordings.)

Then came another of those serendipitous moments that seem like business as usual when Feigelson tells the story. A neighbor, none other than Academy Award-winning documentarian Bill Couterié, knocks on his door asking if he is the music guy everyone keeps talking about. Says he is working for a man named Steve Jobs — the one who keeps saying, "But there is one more thing," and then showing off, say, the iPod — and he needs to license some songs to soundtrack all those "one more thing" videos. Feigelson starts handling the music, Jobs is into it — and especially into how easy it is to clear — and suddenly Feigelson starts getting calls from different departments at Apple: "Steve's office told

me to call you, said you could help me with some music.”

Thus begins Feigelson’s consulting for Apple — joining the team building the initial iTunes music download store in the United States; moving to London to oversee its expansion to the United Kingdom, France and Germany; then spending a decade booking the annual 30-day iTunes Music Festival, helping develop Apple Music and always keeping a hand in the company’s music-biz dealings, talking to artists and their teams about their needs and how they’re planning their next moves.

PLATOON, WHICH PAUL Simon calls “an amazing example of what can be accomplished when a label truly has the best interest of its artists at heart,” started simply. During Feigelson’s years booking the iTunes Festival, artists would tell him that they didn’t really want a label, or even a distribution company, just the space to be creative and slowly build their fan base. “How can you allow an artist to stay independent, stay creative, stay inspired, but still give them those label services that they wanted without being a label?” he recalls thinking. “How do you allow that magic to happen so an artist can find their tribe?”

Platoon started raising money and built its first multistudio headquarters in King’s Cross, London, keeping its nonexclusive contracts to a single page. It attracted then-unknowns like Billie Eilish, Jorja Smith and YEBBA, taking a cut of streaming revenue from their Platoon-released music. Some of those artists have since been snapped up by major labels, which have at times viewed Platoon as a kind of farm system.

Enter — or, rather, reenter — Apple. The company had launched Apple Music in June 2015 and quickly became a player in the streaming world — it’s the second-largest subscription service behind Spotify. In 2016, Apple began throwing that muscle — and money — behind independent labels and artists, cutting direct distribution and marketing deals for Frank Ocean and Chance the Rapper, and later backing Doug Morris’ indie label 12 Tone Music. In the fall of that year, it acquired 100% of Platoon, adding a label-services wing to its growing music portfolio as its overall services division — which includes Apple Music, the App Store, iCloud, Apple Podcasts and licensing — began to set revenue records within the company.

“Denzyl is a creative force with an entrepreneurial spirit who has dedicated his career to continu-

ously finding inventive ways to support and shepherd artists,” says Oliver Schusser, vp Apple Music and international content. “We share an artist-first philosophy, global perspective and the belief in supporting the artist community from the earliest stages of their careers.”

Since then, Feigelson has set up a boutique operation that is part of a class of companies offering artist and label services without actually *being* a label — i.e., not owning masters or locking people into long-term deals. It’s not quite a distribution aggregator, like TuneCore or CD Baby, and not a platform like SoundCloud or Spotify, but sits somewhere alongside companies like EMPIRE (though it is smaller), offering a la carte options for artists who, more than anything, want its support to double down on their craft.

“It wasn’t about signing artists. It wasn’t about keeping artists. It was all about building creativity, which Apple is so good at,” says Feigelson of the acquisition. “And they’ve allowed us to do that. We’re still independent, we’re still Platoon, we still distribute globally to every [digital service provider], we distribute artists, so we don’t sign them to long-term deals. We’ve just become a better version of ourselves, and that was the intention.”

Platoon has also given Apple a new way to sell itself: as a haven for artists. As global sales of its hardware begin to decline due to smartphone saturation, the company has looked to beef up its services sector — including with that massive expansion in April that brought the number of countries in which Apple Music is available to 167, compared with 79 for Spotify — with the goal of doubling that revenue by the end of the fiscal year, which CFO Luca Maestri said in May the company was “well on its way to accomplishing.” And if Apple can cater to artists with label services through a division like Platoon, it can glean valuable insights into how artists work and what they value most, helping it build out more functionality to boost its appeal as a partner to them.

In Africa, Apple has a fresh oppor-

tunity to lead the streaming conversation in a way it couldn’t in the United States or Europe, where Spotify has a head start. Apple was the first streaming service to launch in South Africa, for example, and its recent expansion means it’s now operational in 37 countries on the continent, compared to Spotify’s five. “Apple has managed to really maintain that market leadership here in South Africa,” says Nthando Migogo, a Johannesburg-based intellectual-property attorney and the former CEO of performance rights group Southern African Music Rights Organisation. “They’ve really been at the forefront of shaping that online streaming music culture. If you do well on Apple Music in South Africa, you do really, really well.”

Platoon is not only helping to draw in new subscribers, but also to scoop up artists for Apple Music to showcase as it works to promote playlists that offer a more nuanced representation of the number and variety of genres across Africa’s regions and platforms like Beats 1 Radio shine a light on developing acts. “I didn’t feel like I needed to be with a bigger engine or a bigger label to be successful,” says Nigerian singer WurlD, who just released his *Afrosoul* EP on

Platoon. “I just needed a team of people that understood my art and shared a similar vision. I feel like Platoon works with artists they believe in — not just ‘This artist is doing something; let me jump on it and make some money.’” Msaki notes that Platoon doesn’t “apply one strategy to everyone. They’re literally looking at it case by case. I don’t know if majors have the capacity to look at artists that closely and that intimately.”

Feigelson says that Platoon pitches its artists to all digital service providers equally, without favor from Apple, and doesn’t get access to Apple Music data beyond what the company shares with all of its partners. Even as Platoon expands in Africa — where four of its 17 employees are now based and which in some months accounts for 40% of the company’s business — he is relying on personal connections to do so. “I do find it

quite refreshing that it’s not the brand first; it’s the artist first,” says Migogo. “I mean, look — what is it that artists want? They want the freedom to create, and they want flexibility. And I think that’s really what Platoon is trying to give.”

As Platoon’s efforts dovetail with Apple Music’s massive expansion on the continent, the streaming service is providing Platoon with a springboard to establish a presence in Accra, Ghana; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Lagos, Nigeria; and beyond. If Feigelson isn’t there in person right now, he is very much in spirit, video conferencing with his artists, recently hosting a Zoom Q&A with early Platoon success story Mr Eazi (who built his own Empawa label while releasing music and videos through Platoon) and preparing for more new music on the way.

“Our long-term vision is to help artists grow their businesses, and our goal is to not see it as African music but as global music,” says Feigelson. “Storytelling has become our key weapon these days: How do you tell a story of an artist? What’s going to make your track, your story, stand out so that people get it? Our quality just has to be good. That’s the magic sauce — you’ve just got to be fucking good.”



Among Platoon’s African artists, clockwise from top: Amaarae, Arthur, WurlD and Msaki.



Jaidi photographed April 29
in Rabat, Morocco.



DESERT BEAT

With her Oasis Festival in Marrakech, **MARJANA JAIDI** is bringing global dance music stars (and their fans) to Morocco — and giving northern African artists access to a much bigger stage

BY KATIE BAIN

PHOTOGRAPHED BY HIND BOUQARTACHA



T

THE CAMELS STARE AS WE PASS BY.

Gathered on the dusty shoulder of the road, they form lanky silhouettes against the sun setting pink and heavy on the outskirts of Marrakech. Through the window of the packed shuttle bus, I can see makeshift stalls selling produce and meat, horses pulling carts of soil, women in burkas pushing strollers and men in long robes playing hand drums and smoking hookahs.

We stop at a sign written in Arabic, then take a left up a dirt road, where a very different picture unfolds: a sprawling resort complex of pools and palm trees called The Source. Meandering pathways illuminated with twinkle lights lead to tucked-away stages blasting house and techno music. Lanterns and hammocks hang from trees as visitors lounge on Moroccan rugs, sipping tea and eating tagine.

This is no ordinary group of tourists. We're dance music fans from around the world who have come here for Oasis Festival — an event just as cool, posh and trendsetting as those we've attended in Ibiza or Miami or New York, but which feels, and truly is, a world away from them all. In its five years of existence, Oasis has made Morocco one of the newest and most exciting destinations on the international dance festival circuit. Its founder, too, is a refreshing presence in this corner of the music industry: Marjana Jaidi, a Moroccan-Filipino, first-time event producer driven by a vision of bringing a new type of music and audience to her ancestral home while giving artists there a meaningful spotlight.

Dance festivals in exotic locations are often designed expressly to draw well-off travelers and can thus end up feeling cut off from both locals and their authentic culture. But with its focus on fans and artists from throughout Morocco and northern Africa, Oasis is amplifying the region's bubbling electronic scene while still attracting big global stars. "It didn't feel right bringing people to Morocco just to party in clubs," says Jaidi. "We wanted them to have an experience that feels Moroccan."

Last year, when I attended, the roughly 6,000 festivalgoers were about 57% Moroccan and 43% international, making Oasis itself feel at once familiar and novel — African attendees hear music by stars who rarely play the

region, while those from abroad find the music and Western-style festival format they enjoy set against the allure of Marrakech. At least, that's what usually happens. 2020, of course, will be different.

Like most festivals this year, Oasis has been canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. With international flights in and out of Morocco currently restricted, Jaidi is hunkered down at her home in the capital city of Rabat, where social distancing is being strictly enforced. "It was clear to me in the middle of March that the festival was not going to happen, but it wasn't until mid-April that I became comfortable with the decision," she says over WhatsApp. "After Burning Man canceled, I felt people would be more understanding than they would have been a few weeks earlier."

Canceling five months ahead of the planned date allowed Jaidi and her business partner to offer ticket buyers either a refund or a pass for the next Oasis — planned for Sept. 17-19, 2021 — without devastating financial consequence. It's a serious setback for such a young festival, but it hasn't halted Jaidi's larger mission: dreaming up new ways to make Oasis even more representative of music from both Morocco and Africa at large. For now, she'll just have to focus on next year.

MOROCCANS HAVE LONG celebrated their own musical traditions at festivals. The Fes Festival of World Sacred Music has been going strong for 25 years, the coastal town of Essaouira's Gnaoua & World Music Festival has presented the country's spiritually infused Gnaoua tradition since 1998, and Rabat's Mawazine, a state-run festival intended to showcase Morocco as a tolerant nation, has attracted an astounding 2 million attendees annually for nearly two decades. (In 2019, its lineup featured major international acts like J Balvin, Future, David Guetta

and Marshmello.) Meanwhile, from 2002 to 2015, the desert rave Transahara served as an underground destination for Moroccan EDM fans.

But before Oasis, there was no northern African festival featuring stars of the worldwide house and techno scene — genres that in the past several years have supplanted EDM as the most popular forms of dance music in the United States and beyond. With Marrakech a roughly 10-hour trip from New York (there are no direct flights, with layovers largely in Casablanca, Morocco; Lisbon, Portugal; and Paris) and a four-hour direct flight from London, Jaidi saw an opening in the market for the country's first Western-style dance music festival.

"Morocco is the part of Africa closest to Europe," she says. "It's the gateway to the continent." She envisioned an event without the pyrotechnics or confetti spectacle of an Ultra Music Festival or Electric Daisy Carnival. Instead, Oasis would be intimate, upscale and designed for mature, adventure-seeking dance fans. Still, bringing a clientele known for its hard-partying ways to a Muslim country (albeit one Jaidi classifies as "more liberal") presented a potentially dicey culture clash.

Discussions with local authorities — "We heard the word 'pills' a lot and questions about that," says Jaidi — helped alleviate her fears, but Jaidi remained cautious, avoiding booking EDM acts who tend to attract raucous millennial crowds. "We didn't want to be a stereotype, and we didn't want to ruin it for future events," she explains. House and techno became her focus — genres that typically attract older ravers with both the disposable income for the trip to Marrakech and the experience to stay on their best behavior (or at least hide their bad behavior better).

At any rate, within its gates, Oasis feels much like any other upscale dance festival. While tourists in Marrakech are encouraged to adhere to local customs around alcohol consumption and conser-



The scene at the 2019 Oasis Festival at the Fella Hotel in Marrakech, Morocco.

vative dress (especially for women), at Oasis booze flows freely, party drugs are available, and attendees dress in the same skimpy festival-wear of any given rave — not surprising, given that nighttime temperatures in September rarely drop below the mid-60s.

Raised in New York (where she still lives part time in the city), Jaidi spent every summer of her childhood visiting family in Morocco. Years later, after working in nightlife marketing, she launched a travel blog targeting music festival fans. While attending Miami's Ultra in 2009, Jaidi realized that the dance music-fueled pool parties that worked so well in South Beach would make sense in Marrakech — a city also flush with pools and palm trees.

"My adult life was in a post-9/11 world," she says, "and it felt like I was hearing people say uneducated things about the Arab community that I didn't like." When the Arab Spring occurred in 2010 — shortly after her trip to Ultra — Jaidi's intention for Oasis became clearer. "I felt that if people traveled to some of these places," she says, "they would have a better understanding of them."

Working with her cousin and business partner Youssef Bouabid (a full-time Casablanca resident), Jaidi launched Oasis in 2015. It didn't hurt that her father, Abdeslam Jaidi, is the former ambassador of the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations: "My dad was happy to make some key introductions in the beginning, which definitely benefited the festival," says Jaidi.

She stacked her inaugural lineup with popular international acts like Guy Gerber, DJ Harvey and Derrick Carter to draw dance fans who might otherwise never travel to Morocco. Some locals thought it was too good to be true and, convinced these A-listers wouldn't show up, skipped the event. But while the debut Oasis was small — bringing a crowd of 1,800 to its original location at Marrakech's Fella Hotel — it demonstrated an appetite among fans and a willingness among artists to play somewhere beyond the well-trod circuit of New York; Miami; Los Angeles; Tulum, Mexico; Burning Man; Ibiza; and Berlin.

"We've been doing parties [here] for a long time, but it was mainly underground," says Moroccan producer Amine K, who has played all five years of the festival. "When Oasis came, it brought electronic music to the masses. Even people who'd never been to parties came because it was this huge event with the best DJs in the world, and people around the world were talking about it."

In the following years, the festival grew in size and stature, expanding to focus more on local artists; up-and-coming global acts; famous favorites like Black Coffee and Solumun (who were set to return to Oasis in 2020); and scene heroes who had never before played Morocco. "It's cool to be in new places where new people are enjoying the music because, ultimately, it's about spreading creative and cultural freedom," says veteran house and techno producer Seth Troxler, who came to Oasis for the first time in 2019.

"It's a new market; it's exciting," says Jaidi of what now draws big names like Four Tet, Nicolás Jaar, Chromeo, Moodymann, Carl Cox and The Black Madonna. "A lot of artists might not have played in Africa before, so for them it's an entrée into the country and the continent. Artists with a sense of adventure were open to playing Oasis."



Moroccan rapper ISSAM performed at Oasis' Mbari House stage in September 2019.

“It didn't feel right bringing people to Morocco just to party in clubs. We wanted them to have an experience that feels Moroccan.”

—JAIDI

IT'S HARD TO MISS MARJANA JAIDI at Oasis. As head of the festival's creative direction, she oversees the site itself, and on the second day of the 2019 event, she could be spotted wearing a neon tutu, walkie-talkie in hand. Her staff describes her as direct, specific and no-nonsense, with high standards that she expects to be met. Meanwhile, Bouabid takes care of on-the-ground logistics like security, shuttle systems and liaising with local authorities.

Oasis is privately funded — sponsors throughout the years have included BMCE Bank of Africa, Royal Air Maroc, Maroc Telecom, Samsung and Jack Daniel's — and since 2016, Jaidi has booked her lineups in conjunction with FMLY, a U.K. agency that represents DJs and books other independent festivals in countries like Portugal and Croatia.

All that support goes toward realizing one of Jaidi's main goals: bringing more Moroccan artists into the spotlight. The Moroccan electronic scene mostly exists within a network of clubs, record stores and labels throughout Marrakech, Rabat and beyond. While this scene is still coalescing, it is on the rise, with producers taking inspiration not only from foreign house and techno, but from traditional Moroccan music like Gnawa, whose polyrhythms, particularly when matched with a beat, can inspire the same transcendental state of mind familiar to the dance music faithful worldwide.

Moroccan producer Driss Bennis, whose Casablanca-based label Casa Voyager hosted an Oasis showcase in 2019, says that as the festival has grown, so too has outside interest in the country's electronic culture. (Jaidi says that from 2017 to 2019, people from 82 countries have come to Oasis.)

"Some of the best Moroccan artists that can't travel abroad, often due to visa obstacles, are able to show their work to a more experienced crowd at Oasis," says Bennis. "This shows them that on the global electronic music scene, there is a chance to

make a professional life out of their passion."

The festival's emphasis on Moroccan and northern African culture is especially visible at its Mbari House stage. Curated by Marrakech's Museum of Contemporary African Art Al Maaden and the art collectives Art Comes First and Marché Noir, the space presents African music, visual art and fashion. In 2019, Mbari hosted some of the weekend's best sets, including Zimbabwean-British artist Shingai, Casablanca rapper ISSAM and Yasiin Bey, the artist formerly known as Mos Def. "A festival is best when it's more than just a party," says Jaidi of the Mbari area. "When you can get some kind of personal enrichment or learning out of it."

Now, in the wake of Oasis' success, other Moroccan electronic festivals are popping up, like Atlas Electronic in Marrakech and MOGA Festival in Essaouira. Lineups for both lean even more toward the underground but include many of the same local artists Oasis brings in. Since these festivals launched, Oasis has even waived its radius clauses — agreements artists make with an event that dictate how long they must wait to play nearby — so these acts can play more shows in their home country. With the combined power of these new festivals and Oasis, Morocco feels like one of the most exciting new hubs on dance music's evolving international circuit. It also could be, Jaidi hopes, the scene's gateway to an entire continent.

For now, she is focused on the 2021 festival. While Jaidi had to cancel a research trip to neighboring countries because of COVID-19, she wants future iterations of Oasis to become even more representative of the continent as a whole. She's working on expanding the Mbari stage and adding more African artists to the lineup while considering how genres like rap and rock might be integrated.

"I really do see it as something that we do as a collective," she says. "And as we grow the network, the representation of African culture will grow stronger as well." ■

Fight Song

STORIES OF ACTION DURING THE PANDEMIC



1



2



3



4



5



6

ANGÉLIQUE KIDJO

FOUNDER, BATONGA FOUNDATION

In 2017, Grammy Award-winning icon Angélique Kidjo's Batonga Foundation incorporated soap-making lessons into its education and mentorship programs, which currently serve nearly 4,000 girls and women in her home country, the West African nation of Benin. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, those skills have taken on a new urgency. Kidjo has now shifted the organization's focus toward raising \$25,000 to help those girls not only make soap but also set up hand-washing stations, distribute protective face masks and broadcast radio messages about COVID-19. The initiative is providing critical supplies to Benin's hardest-to-reach communities, while also helping women develop entrepreneurial skills in a country where 34% of girls are married by age 18, according to UNICEF. Kidjo, a UNICEF Goodwill

Ambassador since 2002, also collaborated with the organization in April to release a cover of South African star Miriam Makeba's 1967 hit "Pata Pata" — meaning "touch touch" in Xhosa — with new lyrics about social distancing. Kidjo explains how Batonga (which accepts donations at batongafoundation.org) is adapting its mission.



MY FIGHT SONG

"ONE," U2

"Because we are all one."

When there is a crisis like this, women are at the forefront. The girls that I reach out to come from the poorest communities, and no one pays attention to them. But they are going to be the agents of change. Three years ago, we asked them what they needed, and the first thing they said was that they wanted to manufacture soap. They are thinking at-large about themselves and their community. With COVID-19, they are the ones we train through the phone. They are the ones on the local radio, saying, "Wash your hands. Don't touch your face." They are working with the head of the village. They came up with the idea of putting out fountains for people to clean their hands. Those girls are transforming villages where the government doesn't have the time or means to go. When we started Batonga [in 2006], that was my goal: "I will ask you what you need and help you be self-sufficient."

We haven't raised as much as we want yet, but people have really responded and realized that COVID-19 doesn't know boundaries. This is teaching us that we need to think deeply about our role. If you have money, that's where you have to invest it. If we want to live longer and leave an Earth to the next generation, we have to sacrifice things. My grandmother always told me, "When you help someone, you don't wait for a thank-you. You do it because you have to."

—AS TOLD TO TATIANA CIRISANO

1. Kidjo in Paris on May 12. 2. Kidjo with members of the Lionel Loueke Trio after a performance at Carnegie Hall in New York on Dec. 13, 2019. 3.-4. Kidjo distributed TOMS shoes for the Batonga Foundation x TOMS Shoes partnership initiative and helped make soap in Benin in October 2019. 5. From left: Kidjo, Usher and Sheila E. backstage at Harry Belafonte's 93rd birthday gala at the Apollo Theater in New York on March 1. 6. Kidjo won best world music album for *Celia* at the 62nd annual Grammy Awards at the Staples Center in Los Angeles on Jan. 26.

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