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It's been a transformational year for the music business - and MBW has captured it through the lens of the world's most influential execs

It's fair to say that Music Business Worldwide hasn't exactly been left wanting for attention-grabbing headlines over the past 12 months.

It's been a year of record revenues for the music business's biggest players - a barnstorming, bonus-hitting trend that shows no signs of slowing down.

Total revenues from paid subscription streaming services in the US in the first half of 2017 jumped by a whopping 60.4%, according to the RIAA, up to \$1.7bn. Compared to just two years before, that number represents an increase of almost four times - or over \$1.2bn.

Something to chew over: if the same % growth pattern were to apply over the next two years, paid streaming in America alone would be generating over \$1bn each month by summer 2019.

Data like this has brought a real buoyancy and confidence back to the music business - not least because the potential of markets such as China, Africa and India remains far from fully realized. Yet to pretend this is a global ecosystem without serious tensions would be a falsehood.

Not only does the debate continue to rage about the so-called 'Value Gap', but there are also other clear economic frailties in the marketplace.

Case in point: this calendar year, you're going to see the three major labels turn over somewhere around \$5bn from recorded music streaming receipts alone. That's not far off \$10,000 every single minute.

Don't let anybody tell you that, for those with mammoth catalogues, the good times aren't



"THE MUSIC INDUSTRY IS AWASH WITH OPTIMISM, WHILE HARBORING A FAILSAFE DOSE OF SKEPTICISM."

well and truly back in town (with a cheaper cost base to boot).

However, now consider two of audio streaming's biggest players: Spotify and Pandora. Across 2016, these companies posted almost \$1bn in combined net losses.

Neither has subsequently made such sweeping changes to their business model that you'd expect such figures to be significantly reversed in 2017.

We are therefore beginning to see a streaming profits scenario whereby the 'haves' (major labels) rely heavily on the 'have-nots' (platforms) to... well, 'have'.

Then there are the publishers - perplexed and angry as to why they and their songwriters are earning around a fifth of what

recorded music rights-holders take home from Spotify, Apple Music et al. For a long time, pubcos have been told, 'Let's wait for the pie to grow before we debate how to cut it up.'

They may now justifiably point out that \$5bn sounds like the sort of fiscal pudding that would leave most people pretty stuffed.

In the midst of this delicate balance - positive financial news versus the uncertainty of ever-shifting foundations - lies a music industry awash with optimism, yet which continues to harbor a failsafe dose of skepticism. The perfect conditions, in many ways, in which to interview the most influential people in the business.

MBW is proud to have grilled many of them over the past year, and what you hold in your hands is a compilation of exactly that - just some of the most interesting discussions we've published on the site, lightly edited for topicality and brevity.

There are plenty of fascinating stories - from Interscope's John Janick giving his view on the commercial explosion of hip-hop to Jonathan Dickins' personal retelling of Adele's rise; Atlantic's Julie Greenwald on her aversion to studying market shares to Jimmy Iovine's fury over the industry's propensity to over-value 'free' music in its charts.

I sincerely hope you enjoy MBW's first ever Yearbook, and that you might even learn something from it.

Here's to a rosy future - for all corners of this increasingly global business.

**Tim Ingham, Editor,
Music Business Worldwide**

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Jimmy Iovine: 'Musicians taught me everything I know. Without them, I'm working on the docks.'

Jimmy Iovine's mother was displeased.

It was 10am on Easter Sunday, 1974, and Iovine had just received a call from Roy Cicala, John Lennon's go-to engineer at Record Plant Studios in New York.

Cicala had explained that the ex-Beatle urgently needed someone to man the phones; as in, five minutes ago.

Iovine, Record Plant's always-willing 21-year-old gopher, unquestioningly did as he was asked - but not before informing his mom he wouldn't be attending church that morning.

Maternal tongue-lashing survived, Iovine pitched up at Record Plant, only to find Cicala and Lennon laughing in his face.

The punchline: this was a test of his dutifulness... and he'd passed. Jimmy Iovine had just bagged himself a job as John Lennon's

new Assistant Engineer.

This was the moment that Iovine says his life changed forever. Before he was taken under the wing of Cicala (and Lennon), the now-Beats/Apple Music chief was working go-nowhere jobs in various New York recording studios - while expecting a far less cushy professional destiny to take over.

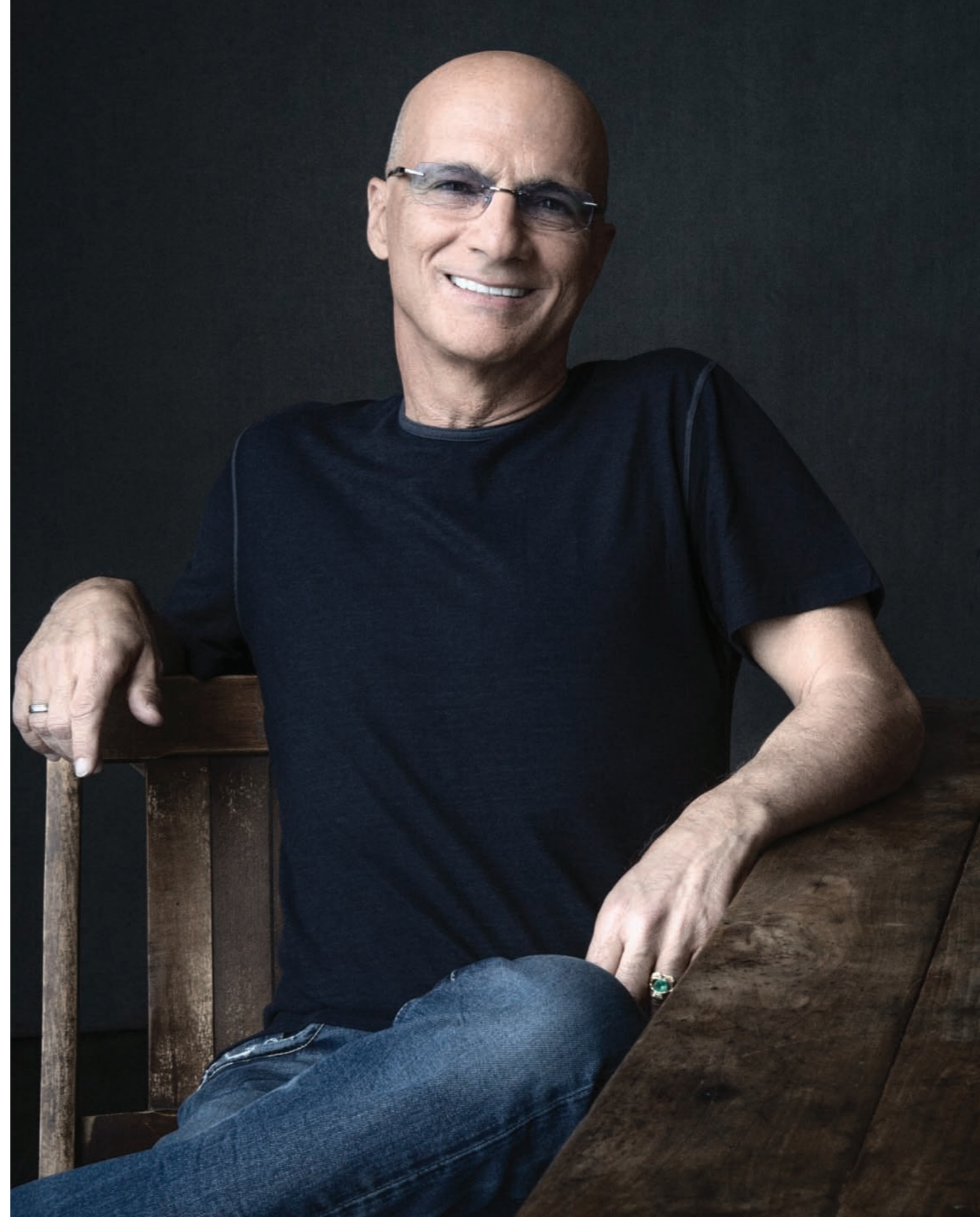
Having left school with no real qualifications, Iovine believed he'd end up doing what many young men from Red Hook, Brooklyn did in the early '70s - joining their fathers toiling on the docks.

Instead, Iovine started working on Harry Nilsson's Pussycats (produced by Lennon, engineered by Cicala), then on to timeless records by Lennon (Rock'n'Roll, Walls & Bridges), Bruce Springsteen (Born To Run, Darkness On The Edge of Town),

"I HAD NO SKILLS, NO TALENT... AND THOSE THREE PEOPLE [JOHN LENNON, BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND PATTI SMITH] TAUGHT ME TASTE, FEEL AND RESPECT."

Patti Smith (Easter), Tom Petty (Damn The Torpedoes), Stevie Nicks (Bella Donna), U2 (Rattle and Hum) and many more.

From there, Iovine co-created Interscope Records in 1989, broke Dr. Dre, Eminem, Nine Inch Nails, Lady Gaga... and well, you know the rest. (For those who need a quick refresher: Interscope





Iovine with Zane Lowe

became a central player in hip-hop's first commercial wave alongside its partner Death Row Records; Iovine eventually sold it to MCA, which then became Universal, where Interscope-Geffen-A&M remains a star entity; on the side, Iovine and Dre created Beats headphones - plus streaming service Beats Music - before selling their company to Apple for \$3bn in 2014. Both Iovine and Dre are now Apple employees, directing traffic at Apple Music.)

The unlikely tale of Iovine's path to 'making it' - and John Lennon's vital role within it - is on the 64-year old's mind when MBW catches up with him at his home in L.A.'s Holmby Hills.

Iovine passionately notes that every item in his sprawling, sun-kissed pad - from the gleaming SUVs in the driveway to the 6-foot Brice Marden artwork hanging on his walls - ultimately exists thanks to Lennon, Cicala and the handful of musicians who gave an unqualified New York drifter a chance. It's for this reason, more than any other, he says, that he refuses to countenance the idea of music as a free utility - and why he's angry

other industry power players still blithely accept it as a necessity.

Jimmy Iovine wants people to pay for records again - and he knows just how the music business can make it happen.

Many artists, Iovine suggests, have simply given up on the idea of the record industry as a revenue generator, and instead view it as a loss-leading tool to sell tickets and merch.

Meanwhile, Apple Music's potential subscriber audience has arguably been held back by the free music available on the likes of Spotify and YouTube. Iovine is particularly vexed that the music industry - while in a public war with YouTube over payouts - is allowing free music to count equally alongside paid-for tracks in its most venerated charts.

He cites with some despair a recent conversation with a young artist, who told him their record label was instructing them to promote their music on all services equally - YouTube included - to give them the best chance of a Billboard Hot 100 No.1.

Iovine's passion for convincing more people to pay for music forms the basis of our discussion across of a range of topics; from

the exec's history with Doug Morris and David Geffen to his Interscope achievements and his personal experience of watching the value of the recorded music business crumble away.

There's also a few industry hot potatoes to explore, too - including Apple's attempts at signing exclusive artist deals, Iovine's departure from Universal and last year's headline-grabbing Frank Ocean drama...

Explain your big issues with streaming music right now - especially the chart.

The fact is that 'free' in music streaming is stunting the growth of paid streaming.

Two things have to happen: free has to become more difficult or restricted, and the paid services have to get better. Musicians believe right now that there's very little money in the recorded music business. So a lot of them are aiming their goal to be nothing but promotion - and that means having a No.1 record.

If it were me or some of my friends from the past [running today's labels], we'd have changed this situation. You've got

to put everything into making the experience for people who are paying for music feel special.

How do you make Apple Music attractive enough for consumers to leave a free service like YouTube or Spotify's ad tier?

We see Apple Music as a cultural platform, and we see that music is becoming more and more about storytelling.

My son has a comic book store, Meltdown Comics [in LA], and it's his whole life. I went to the opening of the Power Rangers thing they did. And inevitably, when I'm out, some kid will walk over and give me a CD.

So this kid comes over and says: 'Yo man, I'm from Compton. Can I show you something?'

I said, why not just give me the CD? He says no, I need to show it to you on my iPad.

It was an animation of an African American family - and he

owe them something. Period.

Labels got a minor victory with two weeks of windowing. What other industry does that? None. Nobody else does it.

The most important thing for labels is to make the paid services compelling. And don't make free services as good as the paid services. Is that not obvious?

Some people think this industry got so beaten up by piracy after Napster, the only thing left to do was to give it all away for free.

Some people thought that. Some people didn't. I never thought that - you go back to my interviews in 2002.

Steve Jobs never thought that. Eddy Cue never thought that. Apple still doesn't think that.

If Apple Music had a free tier we would have 400m people on it. That would make my job real easy. But we believe artists should get paid.



Eddy Cue

my career in a studio with them. I am a manual laborer if not for musicians. I'm down at the docks if not for musicians.

I get that. I get it to my soul, and I've tried to live my life always remembering it.

You made three albums with John Lennon...

Yes, and then I went in with Springsteen and did two albums with him; and then I went to Patti Smith and did an album with her. This was all in four years.

When you make an album, you're with a person at least six days a week. So there was probably 75 days out of four years that I wasn't with one of those three people, plus Jon Landau, who played a big role in it all.

That was my college education. I had no skills, no talent, no education, no soul - no nothing. I was headed to the docks.

Those three people taught me taste, feel, respect of music - how it should move and shouldn't move. I was a blank canvas.

So that's the genome for all this passion for getting artists paid?

That's it. Right there. They gave me a shot. I didn't deserve it.

And I've put my money where my mouth is: Beats Music didn't have a free tier. Apple Music doesn't have a free tier.

I'm not just talking it; I'm

"IF APPLE MUSIC HAD A FREE TIER WE WOULD HAVE 400M PEOPLE ON IT. THAT WOULD MAKE MY JOB REAL EASY."

explained there was music in it, as well as a story. And I thought: 'Oh shit. This reminds me of the beginning of hip-hop; young, talented kids are realizing that the money is in visual.'

That's where we're going.

Are you encouraged by the news that Spotify is now at least allowing labels to window albums on its service for a fortnight at a time?

People who pay for subscriptions should be advantaged. The labels owe it to their customers.

If they want to take credit for those customers in their [company] valuation, they owe them something. If they want them to stay for a long time, they

I suppose the movie industry never did it; you don't expect to get everything free on Netflix.

Music was an easier app for technology, so it was easier to transfer the files [on piracy sites]. But, still, try and find Game of Thrones on YouTube. Good luck!

Artists are getting screwed. Period. I don't see how anybody stands behind it.

Naturally, having YouTube streams count the same as Apple streams in the Billboard Hot 100 advantages someone each week - and disadvantages someone else.

Well, it disadvantages the artist. And artists make this world go round. I spent the first 20 years of

walking it. That's why I aligned with Eddy and Tim and Steve. They thought the same way.

Your huge success with Beats earned you a lot of money - it sold for \$3bn, and you'd have got a big chunk of that. Has that windfall affected your hunger to achieve in the music business?

No. I was very fortunate to be successful at an early age back in the '70s. Compared to what I come from, all of that [success] was unbelievable. What I have now is just **more** unbelievable.

In the beginning of Apple Music, I was very frustrated; I tried to fight [Spotify] and all those things. Now all we can do is make Apple Music such a special place that people want to come there - and that will encourage more people [to subscribe].

By the way, I think Daniel Ek is terrific. He's doing a fabulous job. Everybody needs competition; my best friends were my competition in the record business: Doug [Morris], David Geffen, Irving [Azoff], Mo [Ostin] - these guys were all my friends... and then they were my competitors.

Where does all of this leave Apple's drive for artist exclusives, which were previously a key tenet of your strategy to benefit paying customers?

We tried it. We'll still do some stuff with the occasional artist. The labels don't seem to like it and ultimately it's their content.

We're doing exclusive video content now, and putting a lot of money into that.

So what did we do? We signed an exclusive on an album then marketed the heck out of it. The artist benefited, the label benefited and it was only on a paid-tier. Larry Jackson just thought: let's promote this Drake album [Views] as hard as we can. And I said, okay, let's make a deal with him.

Drake and Future are two of the

"IT'S A GREAT BUSINESS. PEOPLE NEED RECORD COMPANIES. BUT RECORD COMPANIES HAVE TO ADAPT, AND HOPEFULLY THEY WILL."

smartest entrepreneurs I've met in a long time.

This is interesting: at Apple you've empowered artists like Chance The Rapper and Frank Ocean to take control of their own careers. And yet you're a record company guy.

I was doing the same thing [at Interscope]. Dr. Dre and Suge Knight own their masters.

I'm known for giving good deals to artists when I ran a record company. I'm sure some people might disagree. [When I was a producer], when albums came out that I sweated over, pained over, and they weren't a hit, I always blamed the building. I never looked in the mirror.

My thing is, I'm not trying to hurt labels. Chance The Rapper owns his copyrights? I didn't invent that - he'd [been doing that already] before I'd even heard of him.

But surely you are hurting labels by financially supporting him?

Herb Alpert was the original Chance The Rapper. He played the trumpet and wanted to make a record. Nobody would make it with him. He had a friend named Jerry Moss and they started A&M Records.

Who's to say Chance The Rapper won't be the next Herb Alpert? Who's to say? Both smart motherf*ckers.

Berry Gordy started a record

[label] with \$4. And in America they called them 'race records'.

That's why he's the greatest record company executive of all time, by the way, because he overcame something that no-one's ever overcome. What he did was impossible.

The Frank Ocean story is fascinating. When he released Blonde, exclusively on Apple, it looked like UMG had been duped. Soon after, Sir Lucian Grainge sent out a company-wide diktat banning exclusives. How did that play out for you?

Very simple: we're gonna play by whatever rules someone who owns the masters wants to play by. But we have to make our business grow, so we're going to create stuff that is good for our customers and favors them - whatever that is.

We're not looking to disrespect or hurt a record company. I made my living owning and running a record company. It's a great business and people need record companies. [But] record companies have to adapt - and they will, hopefully.

What's your history with tech companies before Apple?

Here's why I fell in love with Steve Jobs and Eddy Cue. I went to meet someone at Intel once, before I met Steve or Eddy. And I explained the plight of an Assistant Engineer and a young musician [during the erosion of the music business due to piracy].

I said: 'If we can work together, we can really advantage your platform with music. And you can help the music industry find its value, rather than this free stuff.'

He goes: 'What an interesting story, Jimmy. Unfortunately not every industry was made to last forever...'

I walked out of there saying: 'Oh shit! We're on another planet.'

Then I met Steve and Eddy, and they were very pro-musician. And

then I started working with Tim and he feels the same way.

Time Warner was the original 50% owner in Interscope. They sold the company back to you and Ted Field for \$115m in 1995, after publicly criticizing hip-hop music for being obscene. The next year, you sold that 50% to MCA for a reported \$200m. Hip-hop is now the biggest genre in the charts. Time Warner looks ridiculous in hindsight.

It's one of my favorite stories in the world - and it is why a lot of these big companies have problems in the arts.

Someone at Time Warner came to me in the middle of it and said: 'Look, my son listens to Tupac - as a matter of fact, he's a teacher in a public school and he uses it as poetry. I understand what you're trying to do. But I need all these people that are complaining about you [to buy cable subscriptions].'

That's what pushes all of this stuff. It wasn't Elvis's belt, or John Lennon saying [the Beatles were bigger than Jesus]. It's always the same thing - it's agendas.

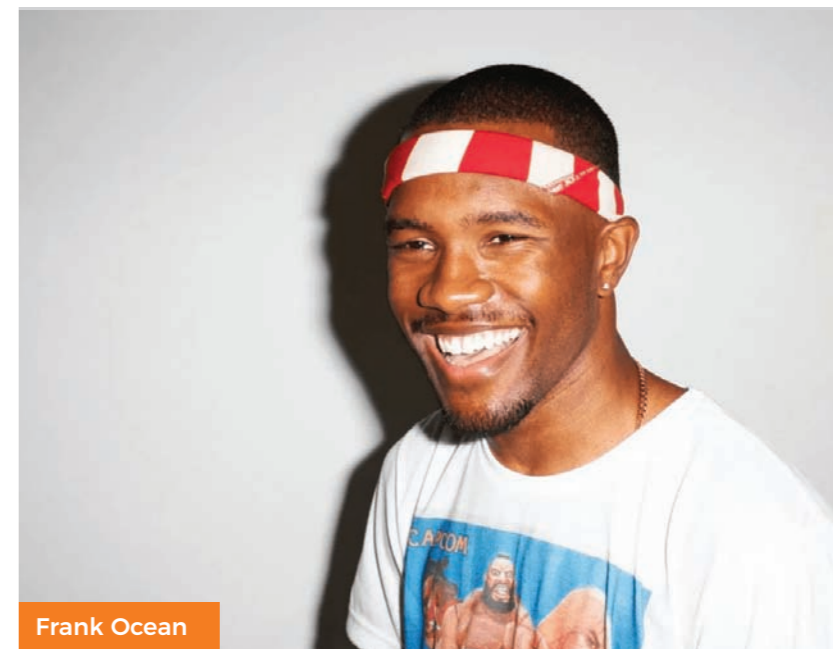
It's the same thing today. These giant companies buy media companies and there's inevitably going to be a conflict of interest.

But, yes, Time Warner looks... as they should. Because they made a big mistake.

How do you think the current Interscope team at Universal, led by John Janick, are getting along since you left?

When a founder is in a record company, they have ideas. And John will have different ideas. Whatever those ideas are, I'm sure he'll be successful. I'm proud of them, I'm happy for them and obviously I love [Steve] Berman.

When you had to leave that building in 2014 and officially became Apple's Jimmy rather than Interscope's Jimmy, what



Frank Ocean

emotions did you have?

It was simple. I couldn't get done what I wanted to get done inside Interscope. I couldn't take the next step. So I said: I gotta leave.

And that next step was?

Streaming. I'd wanted to do streaming since 2006 - when I started talking to Steve [Jobs] about it. I remember he said to me, I'm working on something and I can't get distracted with this right now. He didn't tell me what it was but he said it was bigger than streaming. It was the iPhone, and he was right.

We weren't going to sell Beats to just anybody. Beats is doing really well today. And now you see all these guys like Snapchat trying to get into hardware.

Any of those companies would have wanted Beats because it [offered] an easy way into hardware. You can't just wake up and say: 'I'm in hardware.' It's a tough business.

What have Doug Morris and David Geffen taught you?

David Geffen really gave me feel for the art of business. With him, it's instinctual. He fully

understands art and the creative process, but also fully understands business.

A lot of my business attitude, my feel for it, comes from him. How to deal - when to hold 'em, when to fold 'em. All of that I got from David Geffen.

David, still to this day, guides me in business and in life in an enormous way. He's very generous with me and always has been.

And how to run a record company? I got that from Doug.

Doug is one of the greatest executives that ever lived; how to nurture and bring up executive talent in music. He taught me so much about how you should treat people within a record company.

I also learned a lot from Steve Jobs and Eddy. I knew I'd never be as good as them at making hardware, but I knew I could be better than some of the people out there doing it.

You know, I was a terrible student at school. But I'm a great student at life.

This interview was originally published in May 2017

"I LIVE BY KARMA AND I TOTALLY BELIEVE IN DOING RIGHT BY THIS WORLD. I'M IN THIS JOB FOR THE RIGHT REASONS."

Julie Greenwald: 'You have to be smart... and out-hustle everyone.'

"I live by karma and I totally believe in doing right by this world. I'm in this job for the right reasons."

Julie Greenwald has long been determined to make a positive difference in people's lives.

Once upon a time - back when she was sure she'd end up a political lobbyist or human rights lawyer - that meant working in soup kitchens in New Orleans or educating underprivileged kids as part of the 'Teach For America' program. Since meeting Lyor Cohen in 1992, though, she's channeled this advocacy for human decency (and refusal to be cowed by dodgy odds) towards the music business.

It's writ large in the devoted manner in which she talks about her artists and her staff at Atlantic Records, who are celebrating a golden period of late.

And it's literally writ large in her New York corner office - where, on the far wall from her desk, hangs a large canvas from local artist Michael Scoggins.

There, spelled out in repeated schoolboy scrawl, you'll find the affirmation with which Greenwald vanquishes the dark personality pitfalls of the entertainment industry: 'I'm still a good person. I'm still a good person. I'm still a good person...'

2017 marks Greenwald's 13th year running Atlantic in tandem with A&R supremo - and Ahmet Ertegun protégé - Craig Kallman.

Although Greenwald protests that she and Kallman never look at market share figures, her bosses - Warner CEO Steve Cooper and owner Len Blavatnik - must be enjoying what they see.

Atlantic was the only label in the US in 2016 to have had four albums across Gold & Platinum



Julie Greenwald, Kelly Clarkson and Craig Kallman

certified by the RIAA. In 2017, the company has followed up with another stellar performance, topping market share rankings while breaking the likes of Cardi B, Lil Uzi Vert, Portugal. The Man and Kodak Black - while signing Sia and Kelly Clarkson. Plus, Ed Sheeran and Bruno Mars have made huge comebacks.

The blend of A&R specialist Kallman (intrepid discoverer, meticulous refiner) and marketing/promo specialist Greenwald (strategic loudspeaker, unapologetic champion) is paying major dividends.

If you'd have visited the Elka pharmacy in upstate New York in the mid-'90s, you wouldn't have been able to duck your reflection.

Julie Greenwald's parents ("Catskills Jews") spent their

professional lives running medical retail outlets. They were understandably apprehensive when Greenwald jacked in her political aspirations to work with Lyor Cohen - first at Rush Management and then Def Jam.

To reassure her folks this professional dalliance wasn't without merit, Greenwald began sending Gold and Platinum discs home in the post - from Redman to Jay Z, Method Man and DMX.

One-by-one, they proudly began decorating Elka's walls.

"I came home to visit my parents and Lyor had just given me a numerical pager," Greenwald recalls of her early months in the music business.

"I put it on the table and my father says to me: 'What's that?' I said: 'Oh it's my beeper - I have to

be accessible 24 hours a day.'

"He says: 'Daughter, there's only two types of people that carry beepers: doctors and drug dealers. And I know I didn't send you to medical school...'"

Greenwald found a kindred spirit in Cohen. She initially worked a summer job as his assistant, before joining Def Jam's promotions department - and executing an instant impact.

"Def Jam was incredibly chaotic at that time," says Greenwald. "I saw an opportunity to make it more efficient. I programmed the fax machine so with one button you could hit every radio station. I also wrote a proposal covering why we should get computers; literally everyone was still writing reports on typewriters."

Before long, Greenwald had climbed to GM of Def Jam's promotions department, and, by 1994, was heading up marketing at the label. She says her and Cohen made an "incredible pair" - but it wasn't a relationship without some heavy run-ins.

"A lot of people were scared of Lyor but I wasn't," says Greenwald. "I loved his energy. We'd get into crazy arguments - we didn't hold back. Neither of us wanted to spend money on something that would end up getting shelved. We would go down swinging!"

She adds: "I was 22 years old and learning about hip-hop music and artist development from the guy who was the road manager for Run DMC and The Beastie Boys. Best teacher ever."

Greenwald stayed loyal to Cohen throughout Def Jam's transition into Universal/Polygram, where she eventually rose to President of Island / EVP of the Island Def Jam Music Group in 2002. And two years later, she followed her mentor out of Universal to Warner Music Group, where she was named President of Atlantic Records.

Greenwald spearheaded a pioneering online-first strategy



at Atlantic, which soon became the first major label to cross the threshold of 50% digital revenue.

In 2006, Greenwald was named co-Chairman/COO of Atlantic, which has since broken acts including Bruno Mars, Ed Sheeran, Wiz Khalifa, Trey Songz, Flo Rida, James Blunt and Cee Lo Green.

In our in-depth Q&A below, MBW asks Greenwald about the forces behind Atlantic's success, her long-standing partnership with Kallman, Lyor Cohen's attributes as a boss - and why streaming is sorting 'the men from the boys' when it comes to breaking acts...

Lyor Cohen clearly had a mammoth impact on your career. What did he teach you that you still use today?

He's taught me so much. Signing stars, for example: he didn't believe you could Frankenstein together a star, but that you had to bump into one - then give

them the tools and resources they need to develop. Lyor didn't believe you could just take an attractive looking person, give them the right songs and then, voila, produce something great.

He always wanted to sign real artists with a real point of view who could write. To this day I'm still attracted to artists like that.

A lot of times that means I'm attracted to stuff that's going to be really hard to break, but I love that challenge.

Does that sum up Atlantic: signing artists which look difficult to break on paper... and then breaking them?

Atlantic is about signing stuff that we love - however long the road is going to be. Def Jam had 14 artists at a time when we were killing it, going Gold and Platinum all the time. It showed you don't need to be the biggest company - you just need to be the best. That's a mantra at Atlantic - it's never about market share for Craig and I.



Is that really true though? You don't peek at market shares? I never look at them.

It's no secret that Sony and Universal - corporately - are big into market shares, and their label heads all know about it...

Steve [Cooper] and Len [Blavatnik] have never once asked me about market share. Ever. I like that we don't have to worry about size. When you're not the biggest, you don't talk about being the biggest. You talk about innovation and how you can get better.

Is it reassuring or scary that Len Blavatnik own WMG?

Think about this: he owns the company - hopefully he's going to have it in his family for his children and grandchildren. So what's important to him, then? Longevity and having career artists right? It's not about flipping a quick profit [for him].

Don't get me wrong, I have to run a smart business - I want to keep hiring more people and

I want to keep paying people. But as far as making short-term decisions? No.

That's the nice thing about having one owner: he wants

the fight a very, very long time.

We're now monetizing artist development. Artist development used to all be one way [financially]. Now as soon as

"DEF JAM SHOWED ME THAT YOU DON'T NEED TO BE THE BIGGEST - YOU NEED TO BE THE BEST. THAT'S A MANTRA AT ATLANTIC."

you to make long-term bets on quality copyrights that are going to affect his business forever.

In terms of building and breaking those artists, is streaming working out for you?

Yes. I love streaming. In 2013 we pulled the handbrake on this company and said: we need to learn everything there is to know about streaming.

We started re-organizing ourselves, and it's enabled us to take a much longer view. Streaming allows you to stay in

I put out a new song, we start to make money back.

One criticism of streaming is that it's hard to break new artists - particularly new album artists beyond one song. How do you meet that challenge?

There are people who don't make compelling albums. And there are people who do make compelling albums.

Sturgill Simpson made one. Twenty One Pilots made one. Melanie Martinez made one. You cannot fool the public.

If you want to be an album artist on streaming [services], then you have to make an unbelievable album. It's separating the men from the boys.

Speaking of men and boys... the top of the music business is still uncommonly male-dominated. Does it ever feel like an odd environment in that regard?

Listen, I'm 25 years in, and it's always been an odd environment. I've spent many board meetings with a ton of men - I'm talking about the intimate smaller meetings with the top brass.

Did I ever think it was a disadvantage? No, not for me personally. I only ever saw an opportunity to distinguish myself and be a different kind of leader.

I'm instinctually a mother. I take care of people and I have great relationships with artists and my team. I saw a label say recently that their thing is: 'We break artists'. And I thought: 'Well, Atlantic nurtures artists.'

It's more important for me to offer career longevity than to just split you open.

What advice would you give young executives who may have been inspired by your rise?

You're going to have to work your ass off.

We live in a day and age of instant gratification; everything is so available. I devoted my twenties to working 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. I didn't get here by chance.

You're going to have to make serious choices if you want a career path like mine. It's not about just being smart and resourceful. You have to be smart, resourceful and out-hustle everyone.

As you get older in life as a woman, and you want to have the family conversation, that's where you come to a real challenge; oh shit, how do I balance it all? Then you wake up one day and

"I'M INSTINCTUALLY A MOTHER. I TAKE CARE OF PEOPLE AND I HAVE GREAT RELATIONSHIPS WITH ARTISTS AND MY TEAM. WE NURTURE OUR ARTISTS."

realize - there's no such thing as balancing it all! You just do the best job you can.

MBW interviewed APG boss Mike Caren recently - he's been with Atlantic for 20 years. Compared to some other major labels you don't seem to have a high staff turnover here. Why do you think that is?

The only way I can help my company grow is by having better and better executives - so it's partly about giving something back, but it's also completely in our interest to help raise self-confident executives.

I use every opportunity to teach my young staff to become my senior staff and it's worked fantastically; one of the reasons we're such a tight unit is because so many people here have been 'home-grown'.

I'm not doing stupid shit in the name of market share. I'm trying to run a very profitable company.

What did you learn from former Fueled By Ramen boss John Janick departing to Interscope?
I'm super-happy if the industry is populated with great thinkers who hopefully share our ethos.

It's a giant compliment when somebody takes one of your people and gives them a great job. John's doing great and I'm super proud of him.

You've been working together

with Craig since March 2004. Partnerships at the top of the industry don't always work out - especially when ego gets involved. Why hasn't that happened at Atlantic?

It's a wonderful partnership in the true sense of the word. We both need each other, we both complement each other - and we both like each other.

Craig's the nicest guy on the planet; he's very selfless. There's no ego with Craig and I - it's all about the company and the artists.

You don't ever have the thought: 'It would be nice if this company was all mine'?

Oh my God, no way!

Listen, I grew up with Lyor and Kevin Liles - there was always three of us. We had more fun than you could ever imagine.

It's so much better to have partners in crime. I never want to do this job by myself - ever.

We're a very flat organization at Atlantic - we all run it together. Everybody is making plays. Both Craig and I allow our people to make good decisions but also to make mistakes. That's another thing I learned from Lyor: if you're gonna make a mistake, it's okay, just learn from it.

As I say to people: 'Just don't burn the f*cking building down.'

If you could give the 22-year-old Julie who joined Def Jam some advice, what would it be?

That it's okay to take the full amount of time for my maternity leave. You never get it back.

I'd also tell her that you can find a little bit more time for yourself. I really didn't have a personal life for a long time, it was just work, work, work. It wasn't until my 30s that I realized I needed to have a personal life as well as a professional life.

Atlantic was a pioneer of the '360' model. Does it still work for artists and for Atlantic?

Personally, I love it. Here's why: when I sign a new artist, I get to dream. I get to dream that if I keep investing, regardless of what it looks like on paper, I don't have to live by one P&L.

360 allows that first album cycle to look a little funky on paper; we get to 'over-invest' in artists who are building on the road.

We sign our artists to these deals, but we pay it forward - it's not a land-grab. We have a full touring department, a tour marketing department, a whole merch company - we provide real services.

Has radio's influence been diminished due to streaming?

It's a different part of the equation now. When I have a brand new baby artist we don't go straight to radio.

First we build touring, streaming, YouTube... I want us to go in to radio with an army behind us, rather than just believing we have a hot song.

Ultimately radio is still very important. But you can definitely have success without a 'radio hit', and we're not afraid of that.

Streaming exclusives are a hot issue. What's your view?

If someone's paying \$9.99 a month and something's not available, I know how bummed out I would be. I try to explain to our artists that we're too young of an industry to have consumers feel that way.

What impact do you think Lyor Cohen's going to have on YouTube?

I think he's going to have a great impact. He knows both sides; he knows how to run a business but he also comes from the artist and label perspective. He understands what the value proposition for artists and music is on YouTube - he knows we bring real value to the platform. We've seen first-hand how we can use YouTube



Lil Uzi Vert

to break artists here. But Lyor also knows our artists need to be well compensated for the content they are creating.

What ambitions do you have left to achieve?

I'm a woman, I have a daughter. Now is not the time to be passive.

Presumably you're saying you're a little fearful of the political future of the United States?

I definitely have a lot of fears. [Trump] has come after eight

years of a great president.

Also, I'm Jewish. I recently bought a house in Brooklyn Heights and there were swastikas painted in the park just off it, right near where it said, 'Go Trump!'.

All these feelings have swirled up that weren't apparent before.

I worry about our rights as women, Jews and minorities - and especially about the rights of the less fortunate in our society.

This interview was originally published in December 2016

**Music inspires.
Music heals.
Music connects.**

**Thank you for
bringing the
world together
with your art.**





Jonathan Dickins: 'It's very important not to take anything for granted in this business.'

The first time MBW sits down with Jonathan Dickins this year, it's a balmy February evening in Los Angeles.

Less than 24 hours earlier, Adele – the brightest star on this planet – was proudly telling The Grammys, and therefore the world, how lucky she is to have him.

You might reasonably assume that we find Dickins gloating, or at least soaking up the platitudes from the numerous glad-handers making a beeline for him in the Chateau Marmont.

But you'd be wrong. He's a bit busy for all that.

The September Management founder is delighted for Adele, who's just become the first artist in history to win The Grammys 'big three' (Record/Song/Album of the Year) twice over.

Yet throughout the course of our hour-long chat, he's flitting between two phones – tackling a pile of email and numerous calls – never not replying, instructing or directing traffic.

Dickins is calibrating Adele's first ever run of stadium performances, which began in Australia in late February and culminated in record-breaking

shows at Wembley this summer. There's a beer in hand, but post-Grammys party mode is officially on ice.

Evidently, now is no time to drop the ball.

"There's probably a balance I haven't yet achieved between enjoying the moment and not resting on one's laurels," he admits. "It's very important not to take anything for granted in this business. Once you start thinking you've made it, it's dangerous."

He adds: "It was an emotional thing to hear Adele say those things about me last night.

"I don't ever take our relationship for granted, and I think she knows that.

"She just continually sets these incredible standards, and it's my job to make sure that everyone around her steps up."

Four months later, we meet again, this time in September Management's London offices in Notting Hill.

Dickins is less restless about Adele's ascent to the world's biggest venues: she's now completed 11 stadium shows, playing to over 700,000 people while winning rave reviews and breaking attendance records in the process.

Yet there's a feeling in the air that this is something of a watershed moment in the decade-plus development of September Management.

Not only is Adele about to play to 98,000 people a night at Wembley – the biggest capacity music audience the venue has ever seen – but another key September act, London Grammar, have just scored the first UK No.1 album of their career with their second LP, *Truth Is A Beautiful Thing*.

It's an opportune moment to rewind September's story back to the start – and get the inside story of how Jonathan Dickins first met Adele.

It's early 2006 – at a location rather less glamorous than a glimmering Staples Centre.

Tipped about 17-year-old Adele's talent by XL A&R Nick Huggett, Dickins arranges to meet the singer/songwriter outside a petrol station on Goldhawk Road, West London.

"I had no employees and I was running [September] out of a loft in my house," he recalls. "I'd checked out Adele's MySpace, and she had *Hometown Glory* on it, which blew me away.

"The day we met outside that



London Grammar

garage, she came over for a cup of tea. Straight away there was just... a bit of a bond."

Adele informs Dickins that, the following week, she's playing a live open mic set at the long-since dissolved Pop nightclub off Soho Square. He's there with bells on.

"She did two songs and they absolutely floored me," says Dickins. "It was so brilliant and yet so utterly unassuming.

"It was like, this girl's going to do something – and even if she doesn't do something, she's still cool as f*ck."

Fast forward eleven years, and Adele has just collected five Grammys for her work on *25* – the fastest-selling LP in US history, and the biggest-selling album in both the US and UK for the past two years.

Such stats make it tempting to re-write *25*'s journey to global triumph (and 23m+ sales) as a forgone conclusion. Yet doing so betrays two key facts. First: off the back of the 35m-selling *21*, this

"ADELE DID TWO SONGS AND THEY ABSOLUTELY FLOORED ME."

was arguably the world's most pressurized record release since Michael Jackson's *Bad*.

Second: there's a more typical fable for follow-up records in the same orbit of mass popularity. Just ask Alanis Morissette or Norah Jones. It involves taking a profound commercial tumble.

"Of course you feel the pressure," says Dickins of *25*'s four-year gestation, and the intimidating shadow cast by its phenomenal predecessor.

"When we got close to finishing the record, there were a couple of people inside the industry I trust who I'd play songs for – people who didn't want us to lose and

who wouldn't bullshit me. That gave me a lot of confidence."

Along the way, fruitful collaborations for 25 were green-lit with Danger Mouse, Tobias Jesso Jr and Bruno Mars, as well as Greg Kurstin - the Grammy-winning co-writer and producer of comeback single Hello.

Moreover, a 107-date world arena tour, which wrapped in November last year, was a Herculean undertaking.

"The biggest pressure [of the 25 campaign] was definitely the tour," admits Dickins, noting that Adele's live run for 21 involved a comparatively straightforward 50-something gigs in smaller venues.

"I knew Adele was a fantastic live performer - but she's shown herself to be the ultimate big game player. She's got charisma, she's the best singer of her

he's "grateful for what I learned from Rob and some of the music he introduced me to".

Perhaps inevitably, he says the situation "led to me putting a weight of expectation on myself".

That expectation would have been exacerbated by the rest of Dickins dynasty: Jonathan's dad Barry is a legendary live agent and the co-founder of ITB, while his grandfather Percy co-founded the NME and created the UK's first ever singles chart.

"The music business is all I ever knew," Dickins notes about his early career choices. "I honestly never even thought about doing anything different."

After Warner, Jonathan launched his own label, Showbiz, where his signings included a young Maya Arulpragasam - aka MIA. As industry heat began to rise around the artist, Chris

September client) Paul Epworth to work on 19 and 21 respectively.

Dickins also played a key role in selecting collaborators on 25 including Tobias Jesso Jr (When We Were Young) and Greg Kurstin (Hello) - and famously introduced Adele to the Bob Dylan track, Make You Feel My Love, at the very end of 19's sessions.

"Artists and their teams need to be self-sufficient because record companies can have revolving doors," says Dickins.

"I think it's important to offer a creative opinion, even if the artists disagree with most of it - and, trust me, the good ones usually do - and remember that being overly reliant on people at labels is dangerous.

"Having said that, when something's successful, we all win - artist, management, agent, label. What you ultimately get remembered for is success or failure, and we're all in it together. As my dad used to tell me: 100% of nothing is f*ck all."

Talking of record companies, Dickins is full of praise for the exec who has spearheaded Columbia throughout its hefty contribution to Adele's Stateside career.

Rob Stringer was named CEO of Sony Music Entertainment in April after nine years in charge of the New York-based label.

"Rob's a good man and I genuinely think he cares about artists," says Dickins. "He's trustworthy, and that's rare. And you can have an honest conversation with him.

"You can't knock what he's done at Columbia - he's built an incredible company. He absolutely deserves this chance [to run Sony]."

The admiration cuts both ways.

Says Stringer: "This role is in Jonathan's blood. His attention to detail and focus are remarkable and he is totally aware of how and where everything fits together in pop culture terms. Oh,



"JONATHAN'S ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND FOCUS ARE REMARKABLE. HE IS TOTALLY AWARE OF HOW AND WHERE EVERYTHING FITS TOGETHER IN POP CULTURE TERMS."

Rob Stringer, Sony Music

generation and she has great songs," says Dickins.

He adds: "The level of commitment and discipline she's displayed this past year on tour has been f*cking phenomenal. And the consistency of show she's done night in and night out is frankly insane."

This is all a long way from Dickins' first entry point into the music business - working as a junior A&R at Warner in the 1990s under his uncle, and the major's former UK boss, Rob Dickins.

The younger Dickins admits now that working in his relative's shadow sometimes "made it hard to find my own identity", although

Morrison suggested Dickins come in-house at CMO and start managing her instead.

"Obviously, as others have found out since, managing MIA is not an easy ride," Dickins says with a smile. "But management immediately suited me - I started feeling like I had my own lane."

Dickins' label experiences helped sharpen an innate A&R instinct which has served him exceptionally well in the past few years. While he shirks credit for creative decisions concerning Adele, sources tell MBW that Dickins was instrumental in selecting songwriter Eg White and writer/producer (and now



and he has fun doing it - which is becoming more of a rarity in the music business these days!"

Stringer and Dickins have worked side-by-side on Adele's Stateside career since the Tottenham-born star first signed with Columbia in 2008.

"People forget now, but we built

an audience for Adele very slowly in the US," notes Dickins, who also points to now-Capitol boss Steve Barnett as a rare early Stateside believer in the artist's potential.

"We had sold nearly a million records and worked our arses off, promoting [debut LP 19] and building the touring base for over

a year before Chasing Pavements was even taken to pop radio.

"It was never a case of lighting the blue touch paper; it was a slow process. I think in the long run we've seen the benefits of that approach."

Dickins also has an extra special relationship with Adele's other



label, XL Recordings - to the point that founder Richard Russell is a September client for his work as a producer (Damon Albarn, Bobby Womack, Gil Scott Heron) and for his recently-launched artist project, Everything Is Recorded.

"Richard has singularly had the most influence on everything I've tried to do with September as a company," says Dickins.

"To me, XL is the most important independent label since Chris Blackwell's Island - and that's with the greatest of respect to Daniel [Miler], Alan McGee and others.

"Their policy of not signing too much, so that you can remain focused on each release, really resonated with me - and that directive came from Richard."

Dickins also praises XL MD, Ben Beardsworth, as "a brilliant executive, a very good friend and someone whose opinion I trust implicitly".

Richard Russell has worked with Dickins for over a decade, ever since XL signed Adele in September 2006.

He comments: "Jonathan has integrity; he has courage in his convictions and isn't afraid to make unpopular choices if he believes they are right.

"On numerous occasions I have seen him cut through the noise and establish the right move to make - to the benefit of everyone around him. I also think he's increasingly committed to

"PEOPLE CAN GET SO CAUGHT UP IN 'BLOCKBUSTER' IN THIS INDUSTRY - I PREFER TO FOCUS ON RELEVANCY."

making the most out of life and only doing things he enjoys."

Dickins says that once he's been able to "catch my breath" following the completion of Adele's Wembley dates, the focus is on building September in the US - where the company recently opened a New York office - as well as gradually expanding the London HQ.

He acknowledges that a landmark Stateside signing may be a natural next step, both because he splits his time between London and NY these days and because September "strives to sign exceptional artists, which are rare, so it makes no sense to restrict that to just the UK".

There's also the small matter of September's non-Adele roster, including Jamie T, Paul Epworth, writer/producer Levi Lennox (Zayn - Pillowtalk), Rick Rubin and King Krule - plus hotly-tipped act Rex Orange County and in-demand engineer Tom Elmhirst.

(Funnily enough, Adele's five Grammy wins weren't actually September's biggest result at this year's ceremony - Elmhirst picked up six gongs for his work on 25 and David Bowie's Blackstar. With Paul Epworth nabbing a further two trophies, September's total Grammys haul on the night stood at an impressive 13.)

Then there's Ministry-signed London Grammar and the chart-topping follow-up to their debut LP, *If You Wait*, which sold 1.4m copies worldwide.

"Hannah [Reid] is a world class singer and they've got a beautiful sound which is all theirs," says Dickins of the British group. "You've got to have faith in that."

With the right headwind, could the band's *Truth Is A Beautiful Thing* become yet another blockbuster album experience for September in future?

"People can get so caught up in 'blockbuster' in this industry - I prefer to focus on relevancy," he replies. "That's the most important thing to me. It's about more than just having a big record: if you've got relevancy, you've got a career."

You can tell from the glowing esteem with which Dickins describes XL that independence means a great deal to him.

In his world, however, management 'roll-ups' have begun defining the music business. Is that outcome - a sale of at least part of September to a



Dickins with the September team at MBW's A&R Awards in 2016

giant player - a temptation?

"It might sound crazy, but I want to stay independent," he says. "I'm driven to shape a company without restrictions or a corporate mentality.

"Bigger, in my opinion, has never meant better. I genuinely believe a lot of artists want a level of attention you'll struggle to receive when you're a number on a massive roster."

He adds: "Being independent doesn't mean being 'small'. It's about understanding that sometimes, doing less actually allows you to think more."

Dickins acknowledges that such headspace is only afforded to him by the ability of the tight-knit September team (pictured) - who collectively won the A&R Award for Management Company in London late last year.

"As a business, you're very reliant on the people you work with," says Dickins.

"I've been very lucky to work with people like Rose [Moon]

"A LOT OF ARTISTS WANT A LEVEL OF ATTENTION YOU'LL STRUGGLE TO RECEIVE WHEN YOU'RE A NUMBER ON A MASSIVE ROSTER."

since the beginning; she makes smart decisions, she's tough when she needs to be and she's done a really great job on London Grammar."

Dickins is also full of praise for talented September managers such as Katy Dickson (Tom Elmhirst), Charlie Christie (Rex Orange County, Levi Lennox), Theo Lalic (King Krule), and Hamish Harris (SOHN).

"I'm by far the eldest here," says Dickins. "I'm proud this is a young company - we're the right blend

of experience and youth."

With Adele's history-making achievements now etched in granite, September has proven its proficiency for guarding the interests of artists operating at the very highest level - and it's done so entirely without corporate bloat.

Once you've achieved the unthinkable, notes Dickins, no artist's ambition seems beyond your reach.

"At the end of the day, I want to expand September sensibly and continue to only work with people whose music we actually like," he says.

"Some very successful people want to build an artist management factory, and that's fine - it's just not for me.

"I don't ever want to run a business that focuses on 'volume'. I always want to run a business that focuses on artists."

This interview was originally published in June 2017



John Janick: 'I'm an entrepreneur... and I don't like to lose.'

John Janick acknowledges that when he joined Interscope Geffen A&M as President and COO in 2012, some people out there were quick to dismiss him as a one-trick-pony. And in a way, they were right.

It just so happens his trick was to forge a highly successful record label - no matter its size.

Prior to IGA, Janick had built a mini-empire proudly rooted in pop-punk at Fueled By Ramen - from Fall Out Boy to Panic! At The Disco, Paramore and Jimmy Eat World. Not that FBR was entirely wedded to a core sound: after the label was ingested by Warner in the mid-noughties, Janick signed platinum-selling leftfield pop acts fun. and twenty one pilots.

On the side, the exec also co-ran Warner's Elektra Records in New York, breaking Bruno Mars,

Ed Sheeran and Cee Lo Green.

But the question persisted: could this emo-indie specialist really handle the sprawling demands and diversity of IGA - especially the hardened hip-hop exigency of Interscope?

Five years on, the answer is a resounding yes. All the more so since Janick took over as IGA's Chairman and CEO following Jimmy Iovine's departure to Apple in 2014.

Hip-hop and urban music have flowed in the bloodstream of Interscope ever since the label chalked up a deal with Death Row Records back in 1992.

To stroll around IGA's Santa Monica offices today is to imbibe a visual re-telling of what came next. In addition to a knockout side-by-side mural of Dr. Dre's three studio albums, you'll find

brightly colored mosaics by French street artist Space Invader depicting classic Interscope releases - with Tupac's Me Against The World (1995) and Eminem's Marshall Mathers LP (2000) taking pride of place.

And now IGA has another hip-hop legend to add to these names. Top Dawg Entertainment's Kendrick Lamar released good kid, m.A.A.d city three weeks after Janick arrived at the company in 2012. It sold beyond expectations and cemented Lamar's place as one of the most important artists in the world. Since then, Janick has been at the helm for the release of Lamar's Grammy-winning To Pimp A Butterfly (2015) as well as his latest opus, DAMN.

These two albums have transformed Lamar into a

streaming juggernaut - he currently has 30m+ monthly listeners on Spotify - and both hit No.1 on the Billboard 200.

Lamar is signed to Interscope via its Aftermath imprint, through TDE. The TDE relationship, which has also delivered ScHoolboy Q to IGA, is one of a handful of label allegiances nurtured by Janick since he joined Universal.

Others include producer Mike Will Made-It's Eardrummers imprint, which brought hip-hop duo Rae Sremmurd to Interscope - and spawned a gigantic global streaming breakout last year with Black Beatles.

Janick's team has also inked JV label deals with J.Cole (Dreamville) and producer/songwriter Benny Blanco's Mad Love, whose roster includes Tory Lanez. Other partnerships have been struck with Atlanta's LVRN - who brought 6lack to Interscope - and A\$AP Rocky's AWGE for the hotly-tipped Playboi Carti.



Schoolboy Q

artist development."

Janick's ease with the idea of label partnerships shouldn't be mistaken for a lack of ruthlessness when it comes to Interscope's internal A&R firepower.

After joining IGA in 2012, Janick

"I COME FROM A COMPANY WHERE I HAD TEN ACTS SIGNED, AND IT WAS ALWAYS 'EAT WHAT YOU KILL'. WE HAD TO MEASURE AND READ EVERY RECORD, AND REALLY FOCUS ON LONG-TERM ARTIST DEVELOPMENT."

With his Fueled By Ramen experience in the tank, Janick knows well the balance required to get the best out of independent (or quasi-independent) labels; when to pile on the resources they need, and when to let them operate organically.

"Some major labels are used to throwing everything against the wall to see what sticks," he says.

"I come from a company where I had ten acts signed, and it was always 'eat what you kill'. We had to measure and read every record, and really focus on long-term

- with Iovine's blessing - turned the company's creative workforce upside down. He brought in former Atlantic colleague Aaron Bay-Schuck as President of A&R, as well as ex-Def Jam exec Joie Manda, now EVP of IGA - and recently pinched Atlantic's Sam Riback as EVP/Head of A&R on the pop and rock side.

Janick, 39, has also unleashed the potential of up-and-comers like former intern Manny Smith - who played an integral role in the Top Dawg deal and was last month upped to SVP of A&R.

This team, in conjunction with

the 180+ other staff at IGA, has in recent years worked with the likes of Imagine Dragons, Gwen Stefani, Eminem, Dr. Dre, Lady Gaga, Maroon 5, DJ Snake, Selena Gomez, The 1975, Zedd and Avicii - a roster which Janick says offers "the best in every genre".

New IGA artists currently bubbling under include Machine Gun Kelly, the aforementioned Playboi Carti, 6lack, BØRNS, Billie Eilish, and the recently-signed Daya - all hoping to etch their own mark on IGA's formidable history books.

MBW sat down with Janick to ask about his five years at IGA, how building Fueled By Ramen prepared him for the job, and a host of modern industry issues...

It's been half a decade since you joined IGA. How would you sum up this period?

It's been a great experience. Obviously coming in at a time when Jimmy was still here and could help through the transition was very important.

He was so supportive, and if that wasn't the case it could have been a very different situation. I'm lucky to have had that, and to have had the support of

Lucian through it all. That was part one of the battle; part two was working out how we were going to restructure and shift the company for what the next 10 years would look like.

That meant figuring out the best fit for a streaming world and how we should be marketing in response. It's been a long process but we're in a good place now.

You built Fueled by Ramen over 16 years, from a \$1,000 dorm room project into a Warner-run major concern, before jumping ship to Interscope in 2012. Did you find it hard leaving your baby behind?

It was a really difficult decision. I came in here for what I thought would be a 20-minute meeting with Jimmy [Irvine] and then he said to me: 'I want you to run the company.'

I wasn't looking to leave [FBR]. I was very honest with him, and he was very cool. After that, it was eight months of going back and forth, getting to know one another. So it wasn't like I just jumped straight in.

As soon as I told Warner I was leaving, I called all the [FBR] artists. I had really good relationships with them; I hoped they would be really supportive, and they all were.

The hardest one was twenty one pilots, because I had just signed them two months beforehand. I didn't know I was going to leave when I signed them, and they probably felt a bit deserted.

They were really cool about it, but that was a hard conversation.

You signed twenty one pilots before you left FBR?

Yes I met with the [band] and they were awesome. It was crazy; super-competitive, but I was laser-focused. When I know where something's going to fit and I have a vision for it on the label, things usually work out.

"I CAME IN HERE FOR WHAT I THOUGHT WOULD BE A 20-MINUTE MEETING WITH JIMMY AND THEN HE SAID: 'I WANT YOU TO RUN THE COMPANY.'"

I remember [TOP] did a show in Columbus, Ohio in front of 5,000 people and it felt like an arena show; that's one of the best shows from a new artist I've ever seen.

I'd never previously taken it upon myself to send a company-wide email at WMG before, but when I got back to New York I sent one saying: 'This band is the future of Fueled By Ramen.'

It feels like there was a time when majors had to own everything. You seem relaxed about your JVs/partnerships across Top Dawg, Eardrummers etc - how do you balance that with direct signings to IGA?

The history of Interscope always involved partnerships with great, creative people and entrepreneurs - Dr. Dre with Aftermath, Eminem and Paul Rosenberg with Shady Records. Those relationships are vital to our company. We're continuing the tradition.

Jimmy and I are both entrepreneurs who started a record company, and that still informs Interscope's thinking about being creative on the A&R side and on the marketing side.

As a company, I think it makes Interscope a bit different.

What did your own experiences with Fueled By Ramen teach you about how to treat a 'feeder' label at a major?

I remember after Fueled By Ramen had finished our upstream deal with Island [in 2004], I was going round the labels trying to figure out the right next partnership.

I met with a guy who's a label head now, and he said: 'You have Fall Out Boy, but what's your next one? I can't go to my boss and do a deal unless you have that one now.' I said: 'We're developing a few really exciting artists.' But they just didn't get it.

We did the deal with WMG instead, and our next artist ended up being Panic! At The Disco.

Fueled by Ramen was made up of me and nine other core employees. We signed artists because they trusted that we believed in them - and we would be smart about when we pushed buttons to go to radio etc.

So I know what it's like to build a company that really matters to you, and to also be able to read the right time to let the major label do their job.

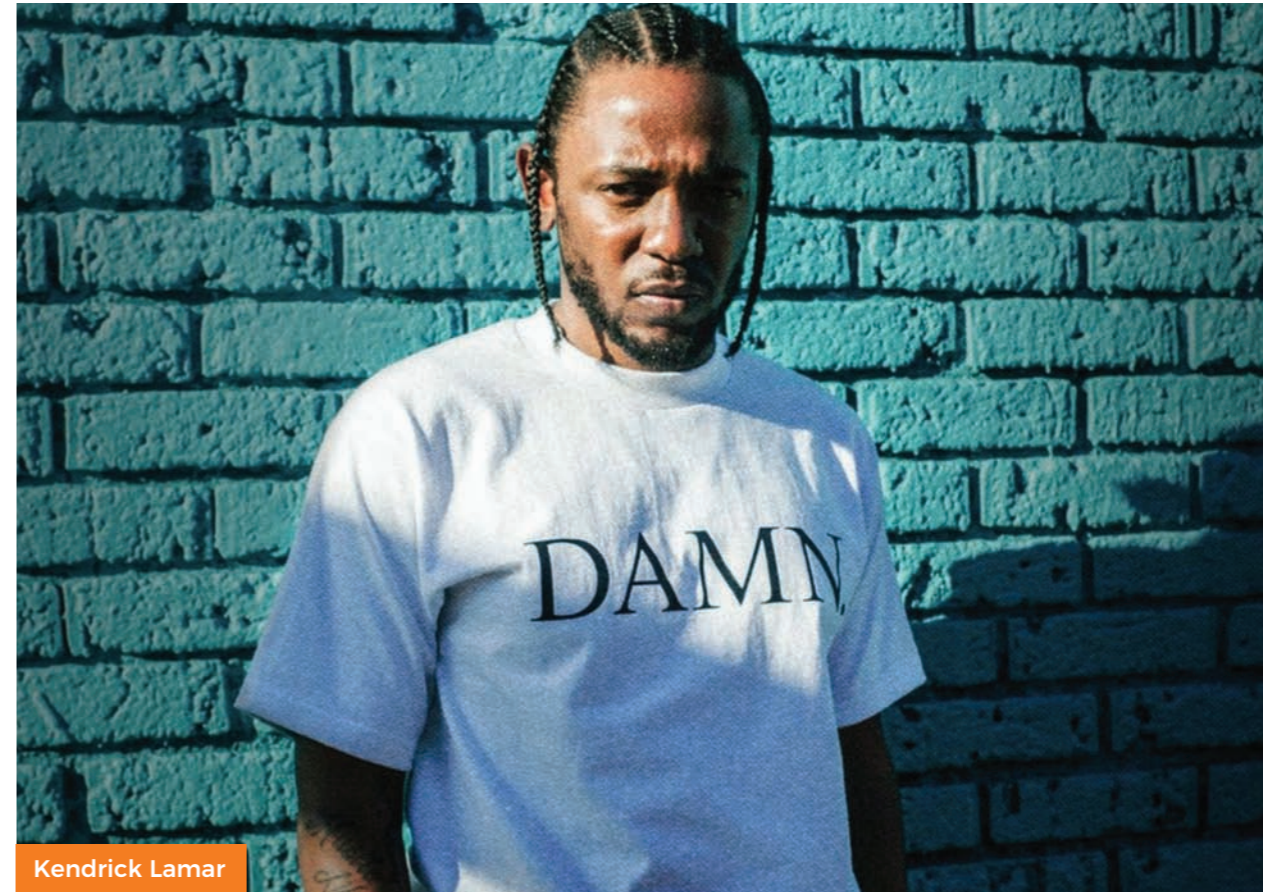
What's it like working with IGA Vice Chairman Steve Berman? He was Jimmy Irvine's right-hand man for a long time - and now he's yours.

Steve's amazing. As soon as it was announced I was taking the Interscope job, I spoke to Berman and he said the nicest, most helpful things. Having lived in New York for eight years, I was a little jaded. Like, 'Why the f*ck is this guy being so nice? Something's wrong!'

He's hugely talented at what he does; one of the best in the business relationship-wise and marketing-wise.

He adds so much value to what Interscope is and the fabric of the company.

Typically people who've taken over from titans at record labels have struggled - but you don't seem to have. Did you feel the intimidation/pressure of



Kendrick Lamar

Jimmy's legacy?

It's interesting. My mind looks at it a different way.

I felt I had a really good run with Jimmy before he left; I'd hoped he was going to stay involved with Interscope in some way for his entire career.

It was very daunting coming in here at the start - especially as we made so many changes within the first three months. But I just had to remain super-focused.

It was important for the people that work here and our artists for me not to worry about how people would view me; I tried not to pay attention to any of my own insecurities.

So in terms of being respectful to the size of the shoes I had to fill, I guess I was concentrating more on the job ahead of me - I had to get down to business and focus.

"IT WAS VERY DAUNTING COMING IN HERE AT THE START. BUT I JUST HAD TO REMAIN SUPER-FOCUSED."

Do you think you've surprised some people who thought you were a bit of a one trick pony - an expert in one field at Fueled By Ramen but who probably couldn't handle a multi-genre company like this?

I hope so. I try not to consider what other people are thinking about me, but I was aware of people saying: 'Oh, he signs certain types of artists.'

People said to me when I took the Interscope job: 'What type of music do you want to sign?' And I said: 'I want the best of everything.' I'd say we're really

strong, the best in every genre, and now we're developing the next crop of artists who will grow to that level.

Did you always suspect that Kendrick Lamar could become a mainstream superstar?

I knew coming into the company that Kendrick was a really important artist, and Top Dawg was a really important executive.

One of my first meetings here was with Top [Dawg], and I really respected what he had built and what Kendrick had done in his career. I've learned a lot from



Dr Dre

working with Top. Whatever Top and Kendrick needed, I knew we had to deliver for them as a company. I knew Kendrick was special - it was obvious.

Why do you think hip-hop/urban is emerging as the genre of choice on streaming services?

Hip-hop has always been really important. I think the same way sales on hip-hop albums surprised a lot of people in the US when Soundscan was first introduced, it's happening again with consumption on a global scale. People dive in and want to know every detail, and become die-hard fans because of that. To this day when you listen to "Lose Yourself" you still get chills, because you lock in on the way Eminem is describing how he started, and what happened from there; he's so precise in his wording, and it's locked into your brain. On Kendrick's DAMN., you're picking up new pieces of what he's thinking every time, like: 'Did that really happen? Did Top and Kendrick's dad really meet?' That focus on lyricism has always been there. Obviously it

helps that there's so much great hip-hop music right now.

What did Black Beatles, which now has over 500m YouTube views, teach you about breaking a song in the streaming age?

"IN THE SAME WAY THAT SALES ON HIP-HOP ALBUMS SURPRISED A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE US WHEN SOUNDSCAN WAS FIRST INTRODUCED, IT'S NOW HAPPENING AGAIN WITH CONSUMPTION ON A GLOBAL SCALE."

We put out two songs with Rae Sremmurd going into the album. They did well but they didn't get to the level we were hoping they would - they weren't big radio records.

We decided to stick with our album release plan because Mike Will, Swae and Jimmy all wanted it out - and we knew to trust their instincts. [After the album release] Black Beatles started reacting on Apple and Spotify, so they put it in some of the bigger

playlists. We used that data to start the radio campaign.

For me, it was a lesson in the importance of what a label can do. We piled on and fought our way through a situation where two songs didn't work as singles,

read what was happening with Black Beatles and pivoted.

When you have a moment like that, to quickly be able to capitalize and make sure every territory around the world is lined up, it's exciting.

A week later, [Black Beatles] was top of the global charts on both Spotify and Apple Music. And of course, it helps to have a great partner in Mike Will - his talent and vision were really critical to the success.

What's it been like having Sir Lucian Grainge as a boss?

He's been fantastic. Lucian was obviously there in the very beginning for me, and suggested me [to Iovine] for this role in the first place. He's been very supportive and understanding of what the vision is for this company. He's really good at providing the help we need, but also giving us the space - understanding that we have our own point of view. Interscope is really unique; it's a brand that has to be curated in the right way. Lucian's always been there as a mentor whenever I've needed the help.

He's also always run his businesses allowing his labels - actually, encouraging his labels - to fiercely compete with one another. What's it like to operate in an environment where Capitol, Republic and Island Def-Jam fight hard for artists?

I love to compete - and I don't like to lose. So long as it's a level playing field, I don't care who I'm competing with. I'm ready for it every day.

You had a serious health scare when you first came into Interscope. What impact did that have on your personal life and your professional life?

It was the early stage of cancer, and luckily it was very treatable. I was fortunate. I literally found out two or three weeks after I started and dealt with it really quickly.

It definitely impacted on me; it made me think a lot about life, especially as I had a newborn son at the time. Strangely it didn't affect my work. That was the crazy time when we were restructuring the company - so I was diving into everything. I had the surgery and came back three days later.

I tried to strike a balance of understanding that I was lucky - that life and my family are so precious - but also that a lot of



Eminem

great people were relying on me at this company. If I'm honest, work was probably a really good distraction - I had my blinders on.

Lots of executives seem quite hung up on legacy as leaders of labels. I'm sure you have an ego under there. Do you worry about how people will perceive John Janick in ten years?

What I most care about, at the end of the day, is that I do the best job I possibly can.

I have to be a great advocate for artists and represent this company as it deserves to be represented. Ultimately, if I do all those things right, then hopefully that's my legacy.

You ran your first label at a really bad time for the record business - when piracy was causing havoc. Today, we're in a cautiously positive era. How optimistic are you feeling about what being a record label means?

All I've ever known for most of

my career were the years that the business was struggling. Now I'm finally getting to see the other side. But, for me, that was a double-edged sword: when I started Fueled By Ramen, the barriers to entry in the music business were being torn down by the internet, and I took advantage. You could suddenly get to kids around the globe via the internet. While that was taking down the value of the business, it was creating an opportunity for me as an entrepreneur to break in.

[Fueled By Ramen] caused disruption in the music business back then, and I try to never lose that in what I do.

Today I have the benefit of working at a big company with a lot of resources - but we're always looking at how to break artists in a different way, and we're always striving to disrupt.

This interview was originally published in June 2017



Quality Control: 'First we're gonna take London - then we're gonna take the world.'

Quality Control Music has a very good claim to being the hottest independent label in the world today.

In little over three years, the Atlanta-based hip-hop specialist has mastered the art of breaking stars in the Spotify age.

Take, for example, Migos: the Lawrenceville, Georgia trio's second studio LP, *Culture*, has just been certified Platinum in the US, months after debuting at No.1 on the Billboard 200.

Culture's lead single, *Bad & Boujee*, is also a US No.1 - and, according to Nielsen, was the most-streamed track in the whole of the States in the first three months of 2017.

Other Quality Control artists include 'bubblegum trap' star Lil Yachty, signed to both QC's label and management operation.

The fast-rising rapper already has a US platinum hit to his

name - *One Night* - and is now averaging around 10m on-demand streams a week. [Lil Yachty's debut studio album, *Teenage Emotions*, arrived in May.] Achievements like these have ratcheted up the ambitions of the two men who founded QC back in 2013 - Kevin "Coach K" Lee (COO) and Pierre "Pee" Thomas (CEO).

As Coach K tells MBW: "This isn't just a music company anymore. It's a cultural experience."

The next step in the duo's masterplan is, unhesitatingly, global domination - which started with London showcases at the 5,000-cap O2 Brixton Academy in April.

Yet Quality Control's ascent to this rarefied level of success hasn't come without its struggles - or its sacrifices.

Take a glance at the video for Migos's breakout 2013 single

Versace: racked with diamond-studded watches and glimmering gold jewelry, it also features an opulent mansion and, oh yes, a live cheetah. Behind the scenes of this unfathomably lavish picture, however, was an independent startup gambling every last penny on celluloid glorification; the convincing presentation of Atlanta knockabouts as authentic aspirational icons.

"We put everything we had into developing these boys," explains Coach K, who was a well-known veteran of hip-hop artist management before launching QC. "It took us four years of peaks and valleys to get Migos to where they are now."

Quality Control has faced down multiple obstacles which will be very familiar to fellow entrepreneurs - especially when Migos started breaking, and financial demands rocketed.

"I'm gonna be real: it was check-to-check at times," admits Coach K. "With Migos, we were scratching our heads like: 'We have \$150,000 in our account, but we have to go with this record to radio now. It could wipe us out... F*ck it. Let's put it on the line.'"

Pee admits that, after signing Migos, the duo showed the group a bag stuffed full of money - illustrating the bountiful sum, and financial risk, the entrepreneurs were about to commit to their development.

Other difficulties along the way have been less typical.

"At one time, 90% of the artists on the label were incarcerated in jail," explains Pee.

"We had a lot of money invested, and tours were on the line that we had to cancel. It got really rocky - legal issues and things of that nature.

"Thank God we overcame it, we figured it out, and here we are."

In Coach K and Pee, Quality Control is run by two entrepreneurs who've been dealt body blows by the music business - experiences that have left them all-the-more hungry for triumph.

Coach is one of Atlanta's best-known hip-hop managers, having handled the careers of Young Jeezy and Gucci Mane through the rise of Atlanta's 'trap' scene over the past decade.

"As a manager, you spend a lot of time, energy and money building artists' brands," he explains. "But, at some point, if that relationship doesn't last, you don't walk away with any equity."

"Four years ago I decided to start something I had ownership in. I saw music was changing; hip-hop was getting younger. I wanted to start a label and develop young, fresh talent no-one had ever heard of."

Enter Pee.

His previous venture, Atlanta-based record label Dirty Dolla, folded shortly before he met his now-business partner.



Lil Yachty

The experience left him with sour memories of music business hardship - but also left him with an impressive studio right in the heart of Atlanta.

In a bid to raise a bit of cash, Pee called Coach to ask him if any of the artists he was managing needed to rent a recording space.

"Coach saw how much money I'd spent on the studio and how dedicated I was to it," explains Pee. "And he said if we signed these guys [Migos] together, we could start something amazing."

He adds: "Me and Coach come from different backgrounds, but

we both have the same vision.

"I've never met a person in this game more honorable than Coach K. I'm so pleased he's my business partner; we can agree to disagree, but we never have any problems."

"When you've got a partnership where there ain't no egos, when you're on the same page with the same vision, you ain't ever going to lose."

The first big acceleration point for Quality Control came in 2014, when it signed a deal for distribution and marketing with 300 - the New York-based label

co-created by Lyor Cohen and backed by Google.

In a previous life, Coach K had worked for 300 co-founder Todd Moscovitz as an A&R exec at Warner Bros Records.

"We knew we were great at getting our music from 0-60, but that we had to partner with a company that could spread it everywhere," explains Coach.

He adds: "The 300 partnership helped give us success across the United States. But about two years into our deal, streaming really started popping - and for the first time, we were watching artists breaking not just in the US, but around the world.

"We were like, man, we need to find a partner on that level."

That partner ended up being Capitol Music Group, with whom Quality Control inked a worldwide JV deal in 2015 (via its Motown and Capitol labels).

Steve Barnett, Chairman & CEO of Capitol Music Group, says of QC's co-founders: "These guys are so smart and so passionate about what they do; their success is the result of having brilliant eyes and ears for talent, strong vision and planning and great execution.

"I'm really thrilled that we're partners in their success and we are helping QC and its artists get to the next level and beyond.

"This is a textbook example of how a major like us can help an independent label - its executives and artists - achieve its goals and stay true to its mission."

Coach K reveals that, having made the decision to leave 300, Quality Control sat down with every possible major label partner - and were close to signing elsewhere - before Motown President Ethiopia Habtemariam presented them with a golden opportunity.

Although he won't be drawn on names, MBW understands that both Epic and RCA were in the frame - before a deal was swiftly agreed with Capitol's Barnett.

"HIP-HOP HAS SLOWED DOWN A LOT IN NEW YORK BUT CULTURALLY IN LONDON IT REALLY SEEMS TO BE AT THE CENTRE OF THINGS RIGHT NOW."

"Coach K and Pee have done an incredible job building Quality Control into one of the most influential independent record labels in hip-hop," Habtemariam tells MBW.

"From day one, it's been a true partnership as we've worked together to move urban culture forward through music and talent that connect globally.

"There's so much more success to come with Coach, Pee and the entire QC movement. We'll be in lock-step with them all the way to help them achieve it."

QC recently brought Migos fully into the fold of its Capitol/Motown deal, via an extension of the JV agreement.

Not since the heyday of its Priority Records imprint some 30 years ago has Capitol shown such commitment to urban music - something that certainly isn't lost on Coach K.

"Capitol were quite open with us that they had a wide open lane for hip-hop," he says. "Before [the QC deal], they were best known for building these really big icon pop artists.

"We realized that if we did what we do on the urban side, and they did what they do to get the word out globally, it would make for an explosion."

Back in the spring, Quality Control took London. Both Migos and Lil Yachty appeared on the bill at Brixton Academy.

"I've been spending a lot of time in London and, to me, it kind of feels like the new New York in terms of hip-hop," observes Coach K. "Hip-hop has slowed down a lot in New York, but culturally in London it really seems to be at the centre of things right now.

"I really feel London's hip-hop artists are about burst out across the world - including in the US."

Coach is putting his money where his mouth is on that score: QC recently signed a US-only deal with Stefflon Don - the UK MC for whom big things are anticipated in the wake of Stormzy and Skepta's mainstream success.

"Stef is about to be a megastar," says Coach, matter-of-factly.

"This music is really beating down the culture in the UK; it's the perfect time for US artists and UK artists to start intertwining."

There is talk of similar Quality Control 'takeovers' coming to New York, Toronto and other cities across the world in future.

"Me and Steve [Barnett] have been talking a lot lately about Berry Gordy; how it's genius the way that he brought the whole Motown thing to London [in the '60s] and made sure everyone paid attention," adds Coach K. "That's what we want to achieve."

Ted Cockle, President of Quality Control's UK label partner Virgin/EMI, is convinced.

"It's so fascinating to tangibly see a cultural gear-shift going on in front of our eyes here in the UK," he says.

"A whole new generation of music and hip-hop fans are opting for the Quality Control sound, its artists and its culture. It's already generating so much heat in the UK with Lil Yachty and Migos and Stefflon Don - and we're only just scratching the surface."

Coach K and Pee realize that, despite striking early success, counting themselves in the great pantheon of hip-hop label mavericks would be premature.



To take another step towards that calibre, they're going to first have to break Lil Yachty as a proven global megastar - as well as significantly boosting the careers of other Quality Control label signings such as Rich The Kid and Twelve'Len.

(QC also runs a publishing division, with signings including Migos, Rich The Kid, OG Parker and Young Greatness.)

But the duo know exactly whose achievements they want to emulate - and, seemingly, exactly how to get there.

"We really built this company from the ground up," says Pee. "People might think it was easy when they see the glitter and the artists shining.

"But we're a proper artist development label; we take pride in taking something unpolished, not well known, and building it up ourselves."

He adds: "I admire [No Limit

Records entrepreneur] Master P, and I admire what Cash Money did - they've sold a billion records. That's pretty amazing.

"But if it's been done once before, it can be done again.

started out as indies and then became majors. I feel like Quality Control could be the next one on that list."

He quickly corrects himself. "Actually... I know we're going

"[PEE AND COACH K] ARE SO SMART AND SO PASSIONATE ABOUT WHAT THEY DO; THEIR SUCCESS IS THE RESULT OF HAVING BRILLIANT EYES AND EARS FOR TALENT, STRONG VISION AND PLANNING AND GREAT EXECUTION."

Steve Barnett, Capitol Music Group

"And with this streaming thing, there's no limit on what we can do. First, we're gonna take London - and then we're gonna take the world."

Adds Coach K: "Def Jam, Interscope and Atlantic all

to be the next one on that list. And we're gonna keep on working hard until everybody out there sees it."

This interview was originally published in April 2017



Stuart Camp: '99% of the time, we're both thinking the same way.'

MBW arrives at Stuart Camp's South London home on a grey, damp summer morning.

He introduces his dogs and offers a cup of tea.

Yes please; milk, one sugar.

He can't find the sugar.

You're not here much, are you Stuart?

Er, no, he confesses, whilst calling his girlfriend for directions.

A big name manager making a hurried call to locate some white powder - it's not the first time, and it won't be the last.

This, though, is a very British version. A very Ed Sheeran version.

Camp has managed Sheeran since 2010, guiding him from the Dog and Duck and self-released EPs to Wembley and world domination.

"I DON'T DO SCREAMING AND SHOUTING - BE NICE, BE FAIR AND PEOPLE WILL WORK HARD FOR YOU."

Between them +, x and ÷ have sold close to 20 million units globally. All three have topped the charts in the UK; x and ÷ both hit number one in the US.

The week we meet, a stadium tour of Australia, New Zealand and Europe (including a run of four nights at Wembley) is

announced for 2018 - and sells out pretty much instantly.

Camp, then, is manager of one of the most successful and recognizable stars on earth - but he does nothing to cultivate the image of a player, or of the hard-nosed power behind the throne.

He has no truck with the cigar-chomping, desk-thumping Peter Grant style of management.

Not only because it's just not him, but because, he says, it just doesn't work. Part of his and Ed's success, he admits, is simply down to being likeable: "I don't do screaming and shouting - be nice, be fair and people will work hard for you".

If being good company is part of the job, then Camp is definitely on the clock throughout MBW's

visit. He laughs a lot, swears a bit and takes the piss at pretty much every opportunity. (Favorite target? Ed, of course!)

He also, once the sugar is found, makes a not too shabby cup of tea. So he should, he jokes, seeing as it was a large part of his job when he started out working for Korda Marshall at the Mushroom label in the late '90s.

We start, though, even further back than that, talking about the music that made Camp want to be part of the business - and the crippling lack of talent that ensured he was destined to stay behind the scenes.

You manage one of the biggest stars on earth, but were you ever musical? Did you think maybe you'd 'make it'?

Oh no. I had a guitar and I could not fucking play it at all. I spent a fortune on effects pedals and made an almighty noise, but never a tune. I had some friends in bands who had some very modest success.

Anyone we'd have heard of?

A band called Jacob's Mouse from my school who toured with Nirvana, which was a huge deal for us, of course, and made you think, okay, things can happen.

Then I went to University in Leeds and did a bit of work at the Town and Country Club - getting in the way, basically.

When I got out of university I wrote some letters to some companies and I honestly don't know how one fell into the hands of Korda Marshall, who was then running Infectious/Mushroom [UK].

I must have had four interviews over the course of a year. It was a very long process for the job I eventually got at Mushroom, which was general assistant/tea boy - £100 a week cash in hand.

Was Korda your first mentor?



James Blunt

He was, yes - and Pat Carr who worked there then too. Korda was always amazingly calm. He has this passion and integrity - and of course he has this tremendous A&R sense. He's also really good with staff. He can manage to forget everyone's name constantly, and yet still make a company feel like a real family unit. There was no notable hierarchy, everyone was valued.

Also, because Mushroom was a small label, you were just thrown in at the deep end. I didn't know what I was doing, but I found out that if you pretended you knew what you were doing for long enough, then sooner or later, without realizing it, you would actually know what you're doing.

Then Mushroom was absorbed into Warner and about six or seven of us went with Korda to what was then East West, working with Funeral For a Friend, The Darkness and Muse. They gave me all the rock bands on East West, which then became Atlantic.

Of course I'd never worked for a major. We'd had people come from majors and work with us at Mushroom, and they'd tell us these amazing stories, like, 'People come and pick up your post for you.'

We'd look at them, blinking, thinking, What?! Do they do any work?!

So, you're feeling at home in major label land, what next?

I think one of the turning points was when Korda had this James Blunt album and no-one was in a hurry to release it. Me and Jasper Burnham, the radio pluggger, both heard it and lobbied for it and I ended up being made product manager. [The album, of course, was 2004's Back to Bedlam, which went on to sell over 11m units worldwide]

The next big change was when Todd Interland and Frank Presland [then heading up Twenty First Artists], who managed James [Blunt], asked me to go into management. I was a bit reticent and wasn't in a hurry to leave the label.

Todd kept chipping away. I think we were probably on our third restructure in less than 12 months at Warner when it began to seem much more appealing.

Korda had gone to run Warner Bros by then. Max [Lousada], who I'd worked with at Mushroom, was running Atlantic and he's lovely - but when you're being interviewed for your own job for the third time, even though you get the wink on the way in to let you know it's just a procedure, it's still a bit much.

In the end I just thought 'fuck it' and said yes to Todd.

You became day-to-day manager for James Blunt. He seems like he'd be fun to hang out with. People probably want to dislike him, but...

Well that was the thing, for that first album campaign everyone said we can't put him on TV, he's too posh. Plus he was military, which in those days people had no real sympathy for, not like today. But we knew him and were saying, You've got to get him on telly, he'll be brilliant - and of course he was. He's one of the wittiest guys I've ever met.

The next thing I was given was day-to-day on Lily Allen at the

time of her second album [2009's UK number one, It's Not Me, It's You], which was crazy.

Again, though, someone who was fun to hang out with?

Oh on a good day, absolutely. On a bad day, I'll book my own flight home, thanks!

You mentioned Ed, when does he appear in the picture?

Okay, so by now Twenty First has become Rocket, and we

He was really good. I mean he looked a mess, he looked like a ginger Robert Smith.

People forget, he had the backcombed hair up to here, I get the photos out now and again to embarrass him. He was very funny, he appeared to have no fear - although he does, he just hides it - and he had the songs.

He had The A-Team, and he had You Need Me; two songs still in the set today that he played that night.

"JACK SAID: 'I'VE FOUND THIS KID FROM SUFFOLK, HE'S ONLY GOT HIS GUITAR AND THIS CRAP PEDAL AND HE SAYS HE'LL DO IT FOR FREE.' FREE YOU SAY?"

had Just Jack, who had been signed to Todd since his earliest days. His third record [2009's All Night Cinema] hadn't been that well received, but he wanted to do one more tour and said he wanted Ed to support him.

Jack'd come across him online and he said, 'I've found this kid from Suffolk, he's only got his guitar and this crap pedal and he says he'll do it for free.' Free you say? Fine. Anyway, the tour kicks off and Jack keeps saying, 'You've got to come and see this kid, he's amazing.'

Ed was managed by Crown at the time, had been for a couple of years, part of the same intake as Jessie J and a few others. So I said, sure, I'll come and see him, but we can't do anything, because we absolutely never poach or even make overtures [to artists managed elsewhere].

I got the train up to Leeds, to the Town and Country Club and, yeah, he was amazing. We had a few beers after the show and I didn't really think much more of it.

What did you think when you first saw Ed live?

And when you met him afterwards, what were your first impressions?

Yeah, we clicked, he was very amiable. Then next time he was in London we spent the entire day in the pub next to the Rocket office. And I said if you ever need anywhere to crash, because he didn't have anywhere to stay at the time...

He was famously of no fixed abode for a while wasn't he?

He was, yeah. People exaggerate it and make out that he was sleeping in the gutter; he wasn't. He did sleep rough a few times, but mostly it was couches.

What's he like as a house guest?

Dreadful. I moved house three times trying to get rid of him. I tried moving to a one bedroom place, but he just said, 'It's okay, I'll sleep on the sofa.'

Then the final show of the tour, Shepherd's Bush Empire, Ed's management [at Crown] are coming down and he was all excited. But when they arrived they said it was probably best they parted ways, there was

nothing they could do for him.

Blimey. Presumably a light bulb went on in your head?

Not straight away, no. It didn't seem right to dive straight in - we just carried on as mates, really. I'd help out, he'd pop by the office, it was all very informal for six months or so.

He went to America and infamously stayed with Jamie Foxx. Although it was only for a few nights. I said to Ed recently, you know we've arrived when Jamie Foxx is giving interviews saying you stayed at his house for six weeks. You know you're big when Jamie Foxx is bullshitting about you! That said, in Jamie's defence, it probably felt like six weeks; I lived with Ed for four years and that seemed like an eternity. Anyway, he came back from the States and I formally became his manager.

How did you formally become his manager? Did he ask you? Did you ask him?

I think... um... you know, I don't really recall.

You don't remember the meeting where you became Ed Sheeran's manager? Probably the most important conversation of your life...

That's bad, isn't it? It would have been September 2010, I think. I do remember signing the contract with him, because we had lunch with our lawyer and he couldn't figure out why Ed was sat there stroking my arm all the way through. Bit weird.

How did you then sign him to Atlantic?

Atlantic had been sniffing round for a while but hadn't really committed - ditto Sony/ATV on the publishing side.

We'd approached other labels; Ed had seen all the labels when he was with Crown and nobody wanted to know.



Then Ed put out the last of his self-released EPs [No. 5 Collaborations Project, featuring Wiley, Jme, Devlin and Ghetts.]

I was in Kew Gardens when I got a phone call from Ed saying, 'Can you screen grab on your phone? Cos we're No.36 in iTunes. We've got to get a record of this, it's amazing - we'll never do better than this.'

An hour later, it's at No.10 and by the time I got home it was No.1. Then the phone calls really started coming - thick and fast.

At this point, you're Ed's manager, but presumably still doing the other bits of your job?

Yeah, I was still looking after James at this point, Ed was my cheeky bit of moonlighting.

It's funny because [today] James and his band keep saying to me, 'Do you remember that time we were in this room and you were really shy, saying, 'Oh I'm looking after this little lad, listen

to this...' And of course then going, 'fucking hell, that's amazing. That would have been Ed doing I Don't Need You on SBTV, that was the calling card at the time.'

So where does the signing story go from here?

Well Max is on the phone a lot more often than he was, and now I can put the phone down on him [laughs]. 'Sorry Max, Universal are on the other line...'

You joke, but of course they were!

They were. And that's when [Universal and other labels] were saying, 'These aren't the same songs - they're different to what we said no to before.'

No, honestly, they're exactly the same five songs.

Sony were in for a while. We played a show at The Bedford where Columbia were coming down, but then he [the Sony

A&R] - I'll name no names - decided he was having dinner with his parents instead.

Then it was just Atlantic and Universal. But it was always going to be Atlantic.

Why was that?

A lot of reasons. Ed Howard [Atlantic A&R] and Ed Sheeran really got on. I think Ed had slept on his bloody sofa randomly after a gig. Also I knew them, and I knew they had the infrastructure and the will to break artists - they'd done Paolo Nutini, they'd done James Blunt.

Plus, out of all the majors, and this is still true, Atlantic are the ones that don't sign a ton of shit, throw it at the wall and see what sticks. They sign something they believe in and they work hard. I do remember getting a phone call from Universal when I was on the way to sign with Atlantic and they basically said, 'Whatever Warner are offering, we'll beat it.'



And I was like, but they were here six months ago and they've never gone away. They were interested before that EP went to No.1; they've actually spent time with Ed.

How many albums was that first deal for?
Six.

And has that been extended now?

Not yet, but there have been a lot of changes in the deal.

In what areas?

The live cut's come down and, y'know, some ancillaries, just the

stuff you sign away as a new artist. And to be fair, [Atlantic] have done very well out of it, we've done very well out of it, and there comes a point you just have to take a sensible look at it. You put those [extra] things in deals because you don't know what the recorded music side will do, but once it's doing fantastic business, well, why don't you give us some of that live business back.

Who were Ed's real champions within the UK label even before the success happened?

The people who are still there. We've got the same promo director, we've got the same A&R,

we've got the same head of label, Ben Cook. The only change is we did have Stacey Tang as our marketing manager for the first record; she was great, she's now at Columbia working on Rag N Bone man and we have Callum [Caulfield] as marketing manager. Other than that, it's still the same team.

Although it's understood to have nearly changed up quite a lot recently, with Max rumored to have been offered a certain job with a rival label in New York...

Yes it did, didn't it!

Obviously we all heard he was offered quite the gig, and I was

like, Come on, you're playing them! And now suddenly he's head of the planet for Warner!

How big a concern would it have been if he'd have gone?

It would have been a concern if we lost Max, yes. Same for all three of them, Ed Howard, Ben, Max. Ed [Sheeran] has always had a soft spot for Max. And Max is often the voice of reason. The four of us [Camp, Cook, Sheeran and Howard], will sit in a room arguing until we're blue in the face and then Max will say something either so profound or so baffling that we'll be like, 'Ahhh...'

"ED WOULD LOOK AT MY DIARY ON THE COFFEE TABLE OR WHATEVER AND SAY, 'I WANT TO WORK TWICE AS HARD AS THAT.'"

Max is good at that; he's a very good, calming and sensible influence on everyone. We're absolutely delighted he's going nowhere and he's definitely 100% still our boy. I remember Max from Mushroom, of course, when he was a hip-hop kid pacing up and down Shorrolds Road like, 'Yo! Yo! Yo!' [Laughs]

He'll hate me bringing that up!

How old was Ed when you first started managing him?

18, 19.

Is a certain level of guardianship part of the manager's job when an artist is that age?

There is, certainly. Pretty much as soon as he signed, before it was even formal, in fact, he did move in with me. It was never a normal manager/artist relationship, it still isn't; I'd never refer to him as my 'client'. It would feel really odd. He does call my girlfriend 'mum'.

He doesn't call you 'dad', does he?

Not to my face, no, but he does refer to me as dad to other people. His mum will say, 'Speak to your dad about it', and he'll say, 'Which one?' He's always had an old head on his shoulders, but in some ways that's tricky, because you'll think he's worldly wise, and then you'll look in the corner and he's playing with Lego.

What were the levels of expectation ahead of the

first album?

Pretty damn high. I remember this as a product manager: if, as a label, you get on with the act and the manager, you work so much harder, there's no way round it.

That's the one thing I took from having worked on the other side - I try and make sure people like us!

Atlantic also recognized the willingness to work. I'd come home from a stint with James, and Ed would look at my diary on the coffee table or whatever and say, 'I want to work twice as hard as that.' And I'd say, How?! There are no fucking days off! He said he didn't care, he just would. And he's still got that ethic.

He was also one boy and a guitar. Internationally, that makes it easy. The international labels have to spend their money to get the artist over. Why spend £100K getting P Diddy and his 50 mates over for a TV show they're gonna cancel anyway, when you can have Ed Sheeran who you know is going to work his arse off and cost you next to nothing?

Ed's often described as 'an unlikely pop star', but it seems like you and Atlantic never thought of him as being niche or a cult - you thought he would be big and mainstream and pop.

No, and to be fair, I remember having a very early meeting with Ben Cook who said, 'You will go on to sell millions of albums.' Me and Ed pretty much spat our tea out. Ben stood by it and he was right. I did have a bit of the raw eyebrows with Rocket at first, though. They were like, Who's that strange boy who keeps coming into our office?

Similarly, whilst he has this everyman, bloke-down-the-pub demeanor, he must also have a steely side, an ambitious side?

He's certainly ambitious. He knows where he wants to be in X years' time. On his computer he has track listings for the next four

albums. They're all rubbish, but he's got them. Yeah, Ed, they're the ones we rejected as B-sides in 2012, do you think I've forgotten? [Laughs]

Yes, he does have ambition and determination and he knows where he wants his career to go. He's always a few steps ahead.

"I REMEMBER HAVING A VERY EARLY MEETING WITH BEN COOK WHO SAID, 'YOU WILL GO ON TO SELL MILLIONS OF ALBUMS.' ME AND ED PRETTY MUCH SPAT OUR TEA OUT."

But there's no cold ruthlessness, he's not cynical and he's not treading on anyone to get to the top - that's the last thing he'd ever do.

He's a very hard critic on himself. He watches every show back. Our joke is that he loves looking at his face. What you looking at Ed? 'Me.'

He looks and learns. He rarely practices playing live, he does it all in his head.

Do either of you stop, take a look around and just enjoy it?

I try and get him to. But the truth is neither of us really have the time. He did take three months off last year, before the album came out; six months really, but three months travelling.

And was that genuine downtime?

Oh yeah, he went on holiidaaay. I've got some photos no-one will ever see. Flip flops with socks on and a whole lot worse [laughs].

He spent a few months in Japan, rural Japan. He really did let his hair down.

So, second album, early 2014. Was there ever a fear that the first LP was a lucky dart?

Yes, because it is that other old

cliché: you've got your whole life to write your first album and two weeks to write your second. And, of course Ed always comes back with his old songs and we turn him round and say no. Again.

He wrote a lot of songs when he was touring with Taylor [Swift], and not many of them made the

cut. I think perhaps Photograph was the only one.

He does write a lot though, and there is a process of whittling down to get to the record.

Who leads that process?

Four of us: me, Ed, Ed Howard and Ben Cook. Max jumps in and out. And Ed's father, actually, also has a say.

How does Ed react to being told, 'That's not good enough'?

It's always a difficult conversation to have, but if the majority say it, he will listen.

Ultimately it is always his decision, and he's never done anything against his will. If he insists something is either on or off the record, it's on or off the record, because he has to be happy with it; it's his name on it.

We've learned it's a really important process, because two or three records that maybe weren't in the original plan can really change an album.

On the third record, is there truth in the story that you and Ed had to insist that Galway Girl was on there and the label had to insist that Shape of You was on there?

Some truth, yeah. With Shape of

You, we were recording drums on a track and Ed said, Oh I wrote this other song earlier, I think I might give it to Rihanna, and he played Shape of You.

To be fair, I was tired and hungry so I wasn't really listening, but Ben Cook started saying, What the f*ck is this?! So you do get those eureka moments. [Cook and Howard] said, 'This has to go on.' With Galway Girl, I wouldn't say they didn't want it on the record, but I don't think they'd have been heartbroken if it had been left off the record.

That leads on to the stance you take on - or rather, against - secondary ticketing: why don't other people boycott it?

Yeah, why don't they? We do it because I think it's abhorrent that some bastard is harvesting our tickets and selling them for £500+. A lot of people don't realize it's not [our fault]. They Google Ed Sheeran tickets and go, 'Why are your tickets £500?' Well they're fucking not.

It makes me so angry. It's just not fair and I think it's disgraceful.

We also don't do VIP tickets and we don't sell meet-and-greets.

Our whole thing is that the girl on this side of the town whose dad has got fuck all should have access to everything that the girl in the big house on the other side of town has access to.

How has what you've done and said affected your relationship with ticketing companies?

Most of them have been great. We went to Ticketmaster, who own Seatwave and Get Me In and said, 'We'll give you extra primary inventory if you don't list our shows on your secondary sites.' And they didn't.

They're obviously getting a lot of business from us anyway, and the minute we see an Ed Sheeran ticket listed on those sites, we're pulling your inventory. So they're playing ball.

And Viagogo?

Well, yeah. That's a whole different ball game. In my eyes, they're operating on the wrong side of the law. The pretense is that they have no presence in the UK - but they do. We shall see. It's a struggle, but we're determined to make a difference here.

So, why don't more people stand up to it?

Because a lot of people are making money out of it.

What's the biggest argument you and Ed have ever had?

I don't think we've ever really disagreed, not over anything major. We both trust each other's instincts. Plus, 99% of the time we think the same way.

Do you and Ed ever catch each other's eye and say/think: there's Drake, there's Beyonce, there's Justin Bieber. And here's us!

Occasionally, yes. Not in a starstruck way, as such, it's more thinking, Yeah, we actually belong here. But I know what you mean.

I remember when U2 played the O2, I had a phone call saying, Bono wants to meet you to talk about Ed. That was bizarre.

You don't cultivate the major player image, the manager as power broker. Is that a deliberate decision or is it just not you?

No, and that's something I touched on earlier. When I was on the other side, when I was the tea boy, I had to deal with a lot of those types, certainly in the '90s there were quite a lot of them - people who thought they could get somewhere by calling someone a c-word.

No, be fair, be nice, and people will work hard for you. And that counts everywhere, for Ed and I; you go to a venue, or to a TV show, the one thing that must happen is, when we leave, they say, 'Weren't they nice, when can we have them back?'



I don't do screaming and shouting. The time I get the label nervous is when I don't talk to them. Actually, don't print that, they'll suss my tactics...

Which other managers do you admire?

Craig Jennings [of Raw Power Management], bless him, was the first manager who taught be that being decent gets you further. He's a fucking oddball, CJ, but I do love him.

Stephen Taverner too, from working with Ash. Obviously Jonathan [Dickins] has done a great job with Adele. I have no ambitions to build an empire though, so we're a bit different in that respect.

Does Ed get annoyed, or do you get annoyed on his behalf, about the sometimes sniffy attitude of critics?

Not necessarily. Ed sometimes takes things personally, but I think it's just part of being a big target. When you're that visible, people take pot shots at you. It's their job to be critical. Coldplay have had it, U2 have had it.

Do you and Ed still believe in the lifecycle of an album?

Oh God yes, 100%. We're not going to do 'tracks'; it's still 12 or 13 songs making a coherent body of work for us.

Is that because that's what the artists Ed admires did best?

Yeah, that and the fact that I'm an old-fashioned old fart.

Are there careers that you and Ed look to as a template?

Springsteen.

What is it you especially admire?

The longevity combined with never compromising on quality - and he's always out there playing live. Oh, and also, he's had same manager for all that time - that's worth mentioning!

Describe Ed in three words:

Talented. Energetic. Focused.

Describe your relationship with Ed in three words:

Unorthodox. Close. Productive.

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Bill Curbishley: 'A lot of artists in the old days were bullied. And I hate bullies.'

If they ever made a movie about Bill Curbishley's life, it would drop your jaw.

One of the most revered artist managers of all time, Curbishley has stewarded The Who's career for the best part of 50 years - while also chaperoning the evergreen efforts of British rockers Judas Priest.

His career has also seen him pull off what some said could never be done: the reunification of Robert Plant and Jimmy Page, which began under Curbishley's charge with the No Quarter album and tour in 1994.

Curbishley ultimately managed Plant for 26 years - from 1982 onwards - and Page for just over a decade. The exec is also a successful film producer, having put together Brit-flick classics such as *Quadrophenia* (1979), *McVicar* (1980) and *The Railway Man* (2013).

Born in Forest Gate in 1942 to a Marine Engineer father, Curbishley was the eldest of six siblings who grew up near West Ham in East London. (One of those siblings, Alan Curbishley, later played for and managed both West Ham and Charlton football clubs.)

As he grew up, Bill became immersed in the mod sub-culture, while forging links with some of East London's most exciting, and least law-abiding, characters; he considered the Kray brothers friends, and even served a prison sentence for armed robbery (for which he has consistently stressed his innocence) before moving into the music industry.

His first music business job was with two old school mates, Mike Shaw and Chris Stamp at Track Records, after which his career



"ROGER AND PETE ARE VERY DIFFERENT PEOPLE - BUT I THINK THEY BOTH KNOW THAT I WOULD STAND IN FRONT OF A TRAIN FOR THEM. THEY COME FIRST."

quickly enjoyed a rampant and inexorable rise - but not without some harrowing moments.

Mike Shaw, Curbishley's early champion, later suffered a car crash while traveling to Liverpool for a Who show and consequently became paraplegic. It's a story which visibly upsets the stoic Curbishley during our interview.

There was also the disaster of The Who's 1979 Cincinnati gig, when 11 people tragically died following a stampede in the Riverfront Coliseum - something Curbishley counts as probably the hardest moment of his career.

Amongst the agony and the ecstasy, there's also been a fair

dose of farce; like when Judas Priest were sued in Nevada in 1990 for allegedly recording hidden messages on their *Defender Of The Faith* album - which, argued the prosecution, somehow led two teenagers to attempt suicide.

Recalls Curbishley: "These ambulance-chasing lawyers said: 'When you get this Judas Priest track, and you play it backwards - you know, like you do - it says: 'Do it, do it, do it!'"

"I said, 'Oh really? Because if I was going to put a subliminal message in an album, I'd put: 'Buy it, buy it, buy it!'"

In the end, the case's judge



The Who

dismissed the suit out of hand.

These days, Trinifold Management founder Curbishley remains deeply involved in the music business, still working very closely with Judas Priest and The Who.

He's also an instrumental figure behind the amazing Teenage Cancer Trust charity, and a trustee of West Ham Boys Boxing Club (you'd have found him pounding the bags on the morning of his 75th birthday in March).

In addition, Curbishley recently became involved with Centtrip Music - the startup specifically designed to help artist managers optimize currency exchange without relying on the questionable practices of big banks.

In an exclusive interview below, MBW asks Curbishley about the highs and lows of his 45+ years in the music business, how digital music has changed the landscape - and, naturally,

working with rock royalty.

Settle in. The man knows how to tell a cracker of a story...

Why do you think you've had such a lasting and loyal relationship with The Who, going back nearly 50 years?

Roger and Pete are very different people - but I think they both know that I would stand in front of a train for them. I've always shown them that they come first.

I've never been afraid to say no to either of them, and I've never really been afraid to make mistakes - because everybody does. I just hope I've made more good decisions than bad ones.

I don't even have a contract with them. There was a point in time I was asked to sign one and I didn't.

We've got agreements on commissions and stuff but my take on it is this: listen guys, if we're not happy then pay me for

the work I've done and we'll go our separate ways. Because to hang on to artists as a manager if things break down is futile.

After 46 years, it'd have taken them a long time to find out they don't like me!

When you took over management of The Who in the '70s, did their career need sorting out?

Oh yeah. I was a determined person in those days, and there was a lot to be changed - their affairs weren't in great shape.

But what I soon found was that I would go into a room to meet with record company executives and rip the arse out of them. I just wanted it more than them. I also found I had the ability to think on my feet - I've always been very good with figures.

Roger, initially, was my champion, and I owe him a lot.

Roger did a solo album [1973's *Daltrey*], and it was all songs

written by Leo Sayer. I went across to Universal - or then, MCA - with the Roger album, plus Leo Sayer's Silverbird, and an album by a Dutch band called Golden Earring, best known for Radar Love.

Universal said: we really like these two albums - Daltrey and Silverbird - but we're not sure about this Dutch band. I said to MCA: listen, they're great live and they're playing the Lyceum in London, supporting someone else - come along and see them.

We get to the venue on the night, and there's an IRA bomb scare. Everyone's kicked out of the

Like what?

They sold all of their record catalogue income and all of their publishing rights to Atlantic and Warner/Chappell some years prior to me joining them. And I, along with George Fearon, their US lawyer, got both back for them - which they still have today.

Jimmy Page felt that if he remastered the catalogue it would sound a lot better. So I went to see Doug Morris, who was running Atlantic. We were old mates.

I said Jimmy wanted to do a remastering job on all the

"I SOON FOUND I'D GO INTO A ROOM TO MEET WITH RECORD COMPANY EXECUTIVES AND RIP THE ARSE OUT OF THEM."

theatre, and they're searching it for two hours. We go back in, and there's nobody from MCA there. I thought, shit.

I phoned up MCA the next morning and said: 'Where were you?' They said, 'We couldn't get anywhere near that venue for the crowds! We've got to sign this band!' And as a result they had a huge album.

What are your standout memories of working with Jimmy Page and Robert Plant for so many years?

I was with Robert Plant from 1982.

A few years later, he approached me about managing Jimmy and I said: look, I'll meet with Jimmy, but you both have to understand that when things come up I'm probably going to have to agree with one half of you and not the other - so you'd better be prepared for that.

It was difficult, because they're totally different characters.

I did things for them which, if asked with their hand on their heart, they should be eternally grateful for.

Zeppelin stuff, but if he does it I want their royalties back. Doug said okay.

The first boxset Jimmy did [1992's Led Zeppelin Remasters] retailed, four CDs, at \$75. It sold 2.2m. It cost Atlantic nothing other than the remastering. And the band got their full royalties back, which they still have today.

Then I went along to Warner/Chappell and said, look I'm getting ready for the reversion of the Zeppelin [publishing] copyrights. The copyright period in America is 28 years - and I told them that [the first Zeppelin songs] were due to revert the next year. They said it was rubbish.

So I said, alright, in that case, I'll go round the corner to another publisher and I'll do the deal right now for them to inherit these songs when they are returnable. There was a lot of huffing and puffing. They came back in the end realizing that we were right and said: 'Okay, what sort of admin deal are you talking about?'

I told them it had already gone

elsewhere, and we'd got \$30m as an advance. They agreed to match it and pay the \$30m for the admin rights.

There was no other deal.

In the modern era, you still get smart people in the music business - sharks, sometimes. But in the era of Peter Grant and Don Arden, you got tough people. How did your background in life, including a stretch inside, prepare you for that music business?

Well, I'll be really honest with you. Most of those 'tough' music business people were only tough in the eyes of these little musicians. They weren't tough in my eyes. It wasn't even a challenge to me.

They were bully boys.

To me, actions speak louder than words. And I actually had run-ins with the two people you mention - Peter Grant and Don Arden.

I did a deal with Don Arden's son for The Steve Gibbons Band to play with ELO on their tour and [in return] agreed for a band they had called Widowmaker to come and do some Who stadium shows.

I got a call from Don Arden some time later, and he said: 'You took a liberty with my son... he gave you eight shows and you only gave him three.'

I said, 'Did you see how many people came to the three? I'll tell you what: if you think I took a liberty, why don't you come round here and I'll fucking take a liberty with you - alright?'

He said he'd be right round.

I got a phone call about ten minutes later from Charlie Kray, we were old friends.

He says, 'Bill did you just speak to Don Arden? He's just come on the phone crying to me. I told him if he goes anywhere near your office he'd be very silly and he wouldn't like the outcome.'

I told Charlie: 'You've just



Judas Priest

spoiled my day.' I never heard from Arden again.

What about Peter Grant?

When [The Who] played Charlton Football ground in 1974, I gave Bad Company their first show. They were supposed to play on the bill below Lindisfarne.

Bad Company turned up late, so I said: 'You're not fucking jumping the bill, you're not going on stage.'

My younger brother, Alfie - who's sadly deceased now - was a good boxer, a heavyweight. I asked him to hang around just in case we got any problems.

Sure enough, into this little portacabin walks Peter Grant with Richard Coles and [Atlantic rep] Phil Carson.

Grant said: 'Who do you think you are?' So I said: 'I'm Bill. Who the f*ck do you think you are?'

I said he'd deliberately turned up late, and was taking me for a c*nt in order to jump the bill. 'I've already done you a right favour putting them on this show, now f*ck off.'

No-one had ever spoken to Grant like that, apparently.

"ALONG WITH LED ZEPPELIN'S US LAWYER, GEORGE FEARON, I GOT THEIR RECORD CATALOGUE AND PUBLISHING BACK FOR THEM."

My brother was standing there with me; to be honest he could have dealt with all three of them himself. In the end, Paul Rodgers and Boz Burrell came to see me and said they didn't know what was happening, and that [Grant] had told them they had lots of time. They're artists - I respected them and believed them.

I let them play but with no encore as we didn't have enough time. They did a great show and that was the springboard to their career.

Was that the end of your relationship with Peter Grant?

I didn't hear anything from Grant

for a long time. And then I gave Maggie Bell the part of the Acid Queen in Tommy at the Queen's Theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue.

Grant phoned up to thank me, so I asked him how he was doing. He told me he wasn't very well and he'd had a bad heart attack. After that, I saw him at a Nordoff Robbins thing and he didn't look too well.

So I said to Page and Plant, 'Now, listen. We're playing Wembley - invite Peter Grant. He's not in great shape. Don't carry this shit with you.'

Reluctantly they invited him, he came into the dressing room, he was quite gracious, and as a consequence they sort of resolved all that bad feeling. Grant thanked me when he came out and unfortunately it wasn't long after that he died.

For me, he was a victim of his own lifestyle - drugs etc. But he was certainly a really good manager. He felt he had to protect Zeppelin, and the whole bully boy thing was his way of doing that. It's a bit-old fashioned and I don't think that's necessary in a manager.

What do you mean?

This might sound a bit immodest, but it's the truth: I don't get intimidated. Not really. If a hitman came in here now with a gun, I mean, we're dead aren't we? They wouldn't waste time threatening us. So therefore a lot of that intimidation stuff has to be bollocks, doesn't it? A lot of the artists in the old days were bullied - and I hate bullies. I used to go into the record companies

heart it once did. We've had the advent of the 'Business Manager'. Oh, really. So here comes this jumped-up lawyer, and it all becomes about money and not about the music. In the end, if the music's right, everything else - the money, the fans - will follow.

I'm really pleased for a couple of people today. Jonathan Dickins, Barry's son, that whole [Adele] story is something else. She writes great songs. And Ed

"I SAID TO PAGE AND PLANT: 'NOW, LISTEN. WE'RE PLAYING WEMBLEY - INVITE PETER GRANT. DON'T CARRY THIS SHIT WITH YOU.'"

and think: these guys went to university and I didn't, but they don't need it as much as me.

You see, I was determined not to go back to where I grew up. At one stage much later it dawned on me that was impossible - money aside, my horizons had broadened so much and there was only one way I was going and that was forward. But the fear of going back is significant, and it stays with you.

Would you say the music business is a better environment for artists today than it was back then?

It's become more of a business, that's true. But it's also far more callous. Record companies have been emasculated, to a great extent, by the internet. In the old days, you'd go into a record company and if they really liked the sound of something they would invest in it.

I don't see iTunes spending a penny on new bands. It's really difficult for new artists to get off the ground these days.

What went wrong in the industry to cause this situation?

I don't feel the business has the

Sheeran, the same. His feet are definitely on the ground. If you looked at a photo of Ed Sheeran, you'd think, who's this little ginger boy? Soon as he opens his mouth, he's got you, with great songs.

Is anyone else in the industry standing out for you today?

I don't know the manager, but my boy Alfredo - who's 18 - is always playing me new stuff and at the minute it's Stormzy.

Not to sound like my dad, but I've told Alfie in the past, I'm tired of these rhyming rap lyrics 'blue and you and too' etc. etc. He said dad, this is different - listen to it. So I did. Time will tell, but the ones who rise to the top are the ones who've got something to say, and it seems [Stormzy]'s got something to say.

What are your views on secondary ticketing.

It's fucking appalling. But the most repugnant thing is that we just did a week at the Royal Albert Hall for Teenage Cancer Trust - Ed Sheeran, The Who and more - and tickets were being sold for ridiculous prices.

And all that extra money that's being made on the secondary

sites isn't going to the cancer victims. Now, there's good and bad money in life - this is bad money. To do that is just atrocious. They should pass a law against it, and it'd be finished.

Why are you excited about what Centrip Music has been doing?

All these years, we've gone along getting our money from the record companies, publishers etc. then doing the audit. And all they focus on is: did you sell 2.1m or 2.15m? They never looked at the exchange rates from different territories. I'm not accusing anyone of being thieves, but the banks could have charged whatever they wanted and the financial departments could have been taking whatever they wanted - nobody would have been any the wiser. Suddenly, this solution comes along. I'm preaching it; it's fantastic. It's about time the rip-offs in this industry stopped. Centrip provides absolute transparency in every area and allows the client to exchange currencies as and when they wish.

Do you worry about how young people listen to music today?

There's no patience. Young people now make playlists because the artists got into the habit of making an album with only two good tracks on it. They're the architects of their own downfall.

I remember the early days of iTunes, when I told Steve Jobs: 'Listen, you're not going to fucking sell Stairway to Heaven - 22 minutes long - for a dollar. It's not happening.' Steve Jobs stole the music business. The biggest robbery in entertainment history.

He took it from under the noses of the record companies, who didn't have the brains to see it.

Have you ever been fired by an artist and if so what did you learn from it?



Yes. Jimmy Page sent me a letter saying he didn't want me to manage him anymore.

I was in New York when I received it. It was the result of the band arguing over royalties.

When I got them their royalties back from Atlantic, Jimmy felt he should have had more of a percentage, because he was the producer of the catalogue.

The other two engaged with him and agreed to give him a bit extra. I said: 'Are you happy with that?' He said yes, but he obviously wasn't.

He felt that I should have backed him more strongly in this but I didn't really agree with his concept. When they sold their royalties he was paid extra for his producer piece. When I regained the royalties it was a group royalty and I couldn't see any logic in splitting it differently.

He said he wanted to leave, and I was okay with that.

With Robert Plant, it was the reverse - I left him. I resigned on a point of principle which really meant something to me.

No regrets. We had a good relationship for 26 years. It's over

What was the point of principle?

To define this carefully for you: when I give my friendship to someone, it's total, unconditional. I don't think he deals in the same currency. Strangely enough, most artists don't have any friends from their past. It's really weird.

I suppose you can't go back to the pub and say to your old mate George: 'Oh yeah I just got back from San Francisco and before that I was headlining so-and-so.'

They'll think: 'Would you listen to this prick?' I, however, still have friends from my school days.

After all of these years in the business, what's life taught you?

The real riches in life are what you've got after they take away the money - and that means friends, family and principles.

Money is a transitory thing. It's a very short distance from driving the limousine and sitting in the back of it - one does well to remember that.

Can you ever see a day you end up washing your hands of the music business?

If music's in your blood or in your water, it's there for good. You can't piss it out or bleed it to death. I like to say they won't bury me when I go: they'll cremate me, put my ashes in an egg timer and still have me working!

This interview was originally published in June 2017



Steve Barnett: ‘Your faith has to be greater than your fear.’

We’ve got bad news for Capitol Music Group’s rivals: Steve Barnett is a tough man to wear down.

It’s in his genes, we’re afraid.

Barnett’s mother, Evelyn, is still going strong at 105 years old, living in the family hometown of Wolverhampton, UK.

We’re guessing she wouldn’t love the cuss words her son detonates in anger at EMI’s shameful neglect of the iconic Capitol Tower in the major’s latter years. So let’s leave it to star Capitol signing Katy Perry - and her candid observation about Barnett’s performance as Chairman/CEO versus the wayward Terra Firma and Citibank eras: “It’s nice to have a head in there who knows what

“WE’RE VERY RESPECTFUL OF CAPITOL’S PAST - BUT IT’S THE FUTURE WE’RE EXCITED ABOUT.”

the f*ck they’re doing.”

As you might be able to guess from Barnett’s immediate genealogy, quitting does not come naturally to him.

So it was a shock to many when, in November 2012, the British exec officially announced

his departure from Sony’s Columbia to join Universal’s newly-acquired Capitol.

Barnett spent 16 years at Sony in New York. First came Epic Records - where he rose to President in 2001 and within 12 months broke Modest Mouse, Franz Ferdinand and Los Lonely Boys. Then, in 2005, he transferred to Columbia, where as Chairman he enjoyed huge success breaking the likes of Adele and One Direction, while working with AC/DC, Beyoncé, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Jack White and Neil Diamond.

Barnett formed a highly prosperous partnership at Columbia with fellow Brit Rob Stringer - now CEO of Sony Music

Entertainment. As Columbia’s success mushroomed, so the rumor mill whirred about whether the ambitions of both executives could be contained within the Sony system.

Sir Lucian Grainge was privy to those rumors - and wasted little time acting upon them.

MBW interviews Steve Barnett on the executive penthouse floor of the iconic Capitol Tower.

Casting a confident shadow in the direction of Hollywood and Vine, it’s filled from head to toe with staff across 13 floors - floors which house Capitol itself, in addition to CMG subsidiaries such as Motown, Harvest, Caroline, Astralwerks and Blue Note.

The Tower is a monument not only to Hollywood’s glamour-soaked glory years, but also Vivendi and Universal’s faith in the future of the record business.

The cylindrical edifice has been determinedly (and expensively) restored by UMG, starting with the moment Lucian Grainge and Barnett decided to pull the business’s core staff back to the West Coast. Having splurged \$1.9bn acquiring EMI in 2012, Universal was subsequently forced by the EC to dispose of Parlophone - snaffled by Warner in a \$765m deal.

That left Capitol and its esteemed catalogue - from The Beatles to the Beach Boys, The Beastie Boys, Frank Sinatra and Nat ‘King’ Cole (plus exactly one frontline superstar in Katy Perry) - as the flagship for Grainge’s high-stakes buyout. It had to work. Steve Barnett had to make it work.

Barnett, little over four years into his tenure, is deeply serious about returning Capitol to its former glories. “From the outset of this journey, we’ve always been very respectful of the past, but it’s really the future we’re excited about,” he tells MBW.

“To get to where we want to get to, we’ve still got a lot to achieve.”



Barnett with Niall Horan and Sir Lucian Grainge

After joining Capitol in 2012, Barnett quickly began transforming the company from the inside out. His first major hire was unexpected: respected artist lawyer Michelle Jubelirer arrived three months after Barnett as EVP of Capitol Music Group.

As a partner in west coast entertainment practice King, Holmes, Paterno & Berliner, she represented Frank Ocean, M.I.A., Odd Future, Ke\$ha, Avicii and Pharrell amongst others.

Says Barnett: “There’s something special about Michelle. We don’t always agree, but she’s very smart, makes great decisions and is fiercely loyal to artists.”

He adds: “EMI had such a terrible reputation in America for their business affairs being impossible to deal with and for not having good relationships with their artists. I thought that Michelle would change that immediately, and she did.”

The arrival of Jubelirer, who has since stepped up to COO, was the first signal of a dramatic changing of the guard at Capitol.

With Grainge and Vivendi’s reputation on the line, Barnett

- who cut his teeth in the music business managing AC/DC in his twenties and thirties - couldn’t go easy on any areas of weakness.

Barnett’s most high-profile executive hiring, fellow Brit and A&R veteran Ashley Newton, quit Columbia to become Capitol Music Group President in 2016.

Others who were brought to Capitol by Barnett include CFO Geoff Harris, who joined from Universal Music UK; EVP of International Robbie McIntosh; Motown President Ethiopia Habtemariam; EVP of A&R Nate Albert, who signed The Weeknd to Republic Records; and EVP of Promotion Greg Marella.

Additionally, the label has welcomed SVP of Marketing Mitra Darab; Josh Kahn, who heads digital marketing with Meredith Gardner; Caroline and Harvest General Managers Piero Giramonti and Jacqueline Saturn; SVP of Label Sales Vince Szydlowski; SVP and Head Of Media Ambrosia Healy; and Branding and Licensing head Kate Denton.

Capitol, now comfortably established as a Top 5 frontline

label in the US market, leapt forward in 2014 with Sam Smith's UK-sourced debut *In The Lonely Hour*. The LP has now sold more than 10m copies worldwide.

Big-hitting frontline artists signed to CMG today include Smith, Niall Horan, Paul McCartney, Beck, Lil Yachty, 5 Seconds Of Summer, Mary J. Blige, Alison Krauss, Neil Diamond, Ryan Adams, Troye Sivan, Tori Kelly, Calum Scott, Erykah Badu, Hey Violet, Gavin James, Rich Homie Quan and Maggie Rogers.

In our in-depth Q&A below, MBW probes Barnett on the drastic changes he's made at Capitol since arriving, the size of the company's operation, his retrospective thoughts about his Columbia tenure - and where he wants to take Capitol over the next half-decade.

When you arrived at Capitol in 2012, you rung the changes. Which area of the team did you feel were weak and needed improving?

I'd come from a really great company. Rob and I will always be proud of what we accomplished together at Columbia. Coming here felt a little bit like going from Manchester Utd to Leeds Utd; it should be a big club, a big label, but it wasn't. And the quality of the personnel wasn't anywhere close to where it needed to be.

I'm a firm believer that if you're going to make a change with an executive, it can't be change for change's sake. You've got to find somebody better. I had told Lucian at the beginning that it would take three years to get it completely right, and it actually took a little bit longer.

Michelle [Jubelirer] really started this journey with me. Some people at the time were surprised, but she's proven to be one of the best hires in my career

- she immediately changed the tone. Like anybody, I made mistakes. Sometimes things don't work. But your faith has got to be greater than your fear. If something's not right, I've got a time-clock in my head of no more than two years; after that, you've got to deal with it.

What difference did Lucian Grainge make in hiring the likes of Michelle, plus Ashley Newton from your former place of work?

A huge difference. Lucian was very involved in [Capitol] from day one. I couldn't have done it without his support.

Cards on the table: what's the difference between your relationship with Lucian and the one you had with Doug Morris?

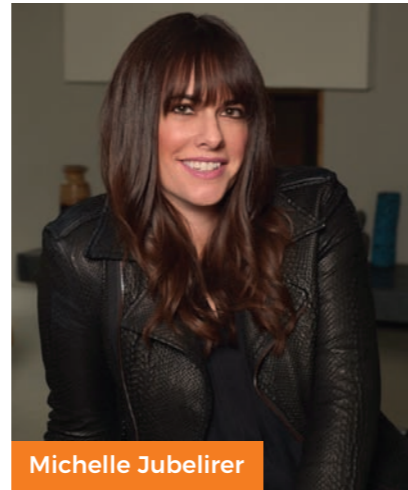
Lucian is very thoughtful, very pragmatic. But the main difference has been his complete and total engagement with me and our company. He's also been very supportive to me, my wife Nancy, and our entire family. To move across the country at this stage in our lives was no easy

"TERRA FIRMA MADE MANY MAJOR MISTAKES. WE WANTED TO BRING CAPITOL BACK TO ITS CULTURAL HOME IN HOLLYWOOD. IT'S A STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE."

thing. Everybody needs a boss. And Lucian is the type of boss you don't ever want to disappoint.

When you wake up in the morning, you need to feel that the person you report to - who, trust me, in my case is always challenging me to be my best - is there for you. It makes you feel better about yourself. Lucian just wants to win. He makes you think: 'I want him in my corner.'

You upped sticks from New York after 16 years to join Capitol.



Michelle Jubelirer

Once you put pen to paper, did you have moments of doubt?

No, because I'm not that kind of person. I did come in and see the Tower at its absolute worst.

But it took one phone call with Lucian and Boyd [Muir] to fix it, and they agreed. And the next month the renovation process started. Terra Firma made many major mistakes, not the least of which was moving the company to New York. And, obviously, this building was really in disarray.

We wanted to bring Capitol back to its true cultural home in Hollywood.

If you read any business book, the first impression of a company is made when people walk through the door. I felt that [the Capitol Tower] was a strategic advantage for us - but only if it was brought back to its former glory. And that's been proven right.

You've barely stopped hiring - and firing - since you got here.

The process of improving the personnel of an entire company is complicated, and we had set the bar very high.

There were a number of former EMI employees who were very talented and are now thriving in our new structure, but, yes, we obviously needed to bring in some of the very best people. Which we have done.

What did you learn from your experience with Adele at Columbia? And the big question... could that level of success happen ever again with another artist?

I think it could. That was a textbook experience: a manager [Jonathan Dickins] who was honorable, extremely smart, and recognized that a knowledgeable and capable team was in place at Columbia. He didn't negotiate with anybody else.

Rob and I absolutely believed 100% in her. She was obviously an enormous talent, with the potential to become iconic, and she was incredibly self-aware about who she was and where she wanted to go. There were some bumps and rocky roads in those early stages, but our belief never waned.

From the outset, she was an extraordinary artist. No-one could have predicted the unprecedented scale of her eventual success, but both Rob and I thought she fitted perfectly into the culture and history of Columbia.

Some people at the time had been very critical [of the signing]. Dealing with Martin Mills was a highly contested negotiation, but it worked out brilliantly and XL were great to partner with.

Some people thought she was too English and it wouldn't translate [in the US]. That didn't matter to us because we felt she was so talented and totally unique. One of the best memories of my career forever



Sam Smith

more will be working with Jonathan and her, as well as Rob and the team, on that 21 campaign.

Do you miss working with Rob Stringer?

I don't look back in that way. It was such an unusual circumstance because he had been a good friend of mine personally for a very long time [before Columbia] and Nancy and I were very close with him and his family.

I really felt that it had kind of run its course when what was Sony Music ended and Columbia was separated from Epic. It became too congested at the top of the company, and I talked to Rob about that at the time.

Ultimately, I felt it was time for

me to do something different - something that could be my legacy. The process of leaving was very difficult for me. I was very fond of the team at Columbia, which remained intact for that last amazing three-year run we had, and enjoyed tremendous relationships with those amazing artists. Plus, as you said, my family and I were very rooted on the East Coast. My prevailing feeling was that if I didn't accept the opportunity Lucian had offered me at Capitol I'd spend the rest of my life regretting it.

Was it difficult telling Rob you were leaving?

I never got a chance to because it leaked to the media. If I had to do it all over again, I'd have handled it differently. I owed that to Rob.



Sir Lucian Grainge

I didn't handle it the right way, but neither did they. For somebody that had contributed so much to that company over 16 years and with only a short time left on my contract, the way that they handled my exit was very disappointing.

How do you think history will judge Universal's buyout of EMI, including the disappointment of losing Parlophone?

The Parlophone sale was obviously very disappointing, but I knew it was being divested before I came in. Once it happened, though, it was a significant loss to our US market share.

Lucian was very clear to me about what the starting point would be. It's not easy for [Capitol] because we're like a startup competing against the best in class - Interscope and Republic.

If there's one criticism I hear from others about Capitol, it's that it's overly-resourced: this building is almost a token of that, and there are somewhere around 400 staff. So... is CMG financially sound?

We proudly announce when people are coming here, and are respectfully much quieter when people are leaving, so maybe that leads to the impression that we've

got more staff than other places. But our number of people is on par with the other labels.

People forget that we have a fairly large staff at Capitol Christian Music Group in Nashville, which is run by the highly respected Bill Hearn and is the dominant Christian market share leader. Lucian is very happy with our progress.

I asked some of your staff for anonymous questions to ask you. A sensible one to start: You have a good life, you have no need for money and you've turned Capitol around. Why do you continue to do this?

It was very difficult for me to leave my team and artists at Columbia; many people whose careers I'd been involved in for so long.

All the young artists we've signed and developed at Capitol - I take pride in inhabiting the required leadership role. And then I think about Katy Perry who was so wonderful to me personally at the beginning. She knows that she has my complete support and that of everyone at the company.

I believe all of our superstars feel that deep support, and that's had a very real impact on attracting some of the greatest artists to Capitol recently.

We're so honored that Paul McCartney has come home and that we'll be presenting his new music to the world and caring for his enormously important catalogue. And, of course, Barry Gibb has just chosen us as the home for The Bee Gees catalogue. What a deep and lasting body of work they created.

It's hard to express just how important and significant it is for those artists to be joining us, and it would have been unimaginable for this company five years ago.

I owe it to Lucian, Boyd and the Universal team for believing in me, and I take this responsibility very seriously. This will become my legacy. I enjoy coming to

work, I enjoy working in this building. I love the people I work with. This is a very collaborative company.

You say everyone needs a boss; you've got one of the most notorious in the music business. What's it like working for Sir Lucian Grainge?

I don't think him 'notorious' He's super-smart and ambitious in the best sense of the word. To me, he's like an NFL owner; that's a small, very elite group, and they've all been hugely successful to get to that position.

When a [coach] is 8-0 and on his way to the Super Bowl, it's great - but if you lose two home games, they're like, 'What's going on?!' That's Lucian. And I think he has every right to ask that question. Which he does.

In some ways we're like-minded people. He's English, he likes football, he's very family oriented - that all helps. If he'd been some tech guru or some corporate raider, I'm not sure I'd have felt the same about joining him.

I have enormous respect for him and like him as a guy very much. Some people say to me it can be daunting dealing with him, but I must say I've never found that. I've found him to be open, honest and wanting the best for his team and his artists. He's also been involved in every level of the business, and I've found him to have a deep understanding of the process.

How did managing AC/DC prepare you for the rigors of the recorded music business?

They taught me more than anybody else; it's always about the long game with them, and I draw upon that every day in running this company.

It was never about the money. It was always about the fans and the music. They never changed.

Angus never lost his blue-collar upbringing. There was a right way you had to do things.



Vic Mensa

What are the upsides and downsides of being in the Universal Music Group system?

The upsides are Republic and Interscope - and the other labels, which combine to give Universal the dominant worldwide market share. The downsides are Republic and Interscope.

It's hard for us because we're going against the best in class and it can get very aggressive. We're all very competitive, but not in a way that's detrimental to Universal.

I particularly have a lot of respect for Monte Lipman; what he's built with Republic and their consistent success.

Internal competition aside, the most meaningful upside is the quality of UMG's senior management team: Boyd Muir, Jeff Harleston, Michele Anthony, Bruce Resnikoff and Andrew Kronfeld. They are all so helpful to Capitol and supportive of what we're doing.

Capitol under UMG started to fly

“AC/DC TAUGHT ME MORE THAN ANYBODY ELSE. IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT THE LONG GAME WITH THEM - IT WAS NEVER ABOUT THE MONEY.”

with Sam Smith, Five Seconds of Summer and Bastille. Have you got over the hump of being overly-reliant on UK and international repertoire?

I think so. We have an unusually close relationship with David Joseph. He's a great guy. I only ever knew him as a competitor previously, but he's been so supportive. We've sold more new English music than any label in America in recent times, so that music is always going to be important for us. Whether it's from Nick Raphael or Ted Cocker

or any of those guys [at UMG in London], we'll treat those records like they're our own.

Sam Smith helped redefine this label, no question about it.

If you could go back to the Steve Barnett who joined Epic in 1996 and have a chat, what advice would you give him?

I'm from Wolverhampton. My whole life I've loved music and I've been blessed to work with some incredible artists.

So I'd say: you have to have ambition, believe in what you do, don't focus on the failures, be honorable with your artists, surround yourself with good, talented people, and it's always about the team.

In this business, it's very easy to get a bad reputation and it's very hard to keep a good one. That's why I've always set out to do things the right way, and I try to instill that philosophy in everyone I work with.

This interview was originally published in November 2016



Clive Davis: 'The music business is especially tough. You have to count on resilience.'

There are music industry legends, and then there is Clive Davis.

In a career stretching across half a century, Davis has played an instrumental role in the development of hugely popular talents from Janis Joplin to Bruce Springsteen, Billy Joel, Aerosmith, Miles Davis, Paul Simon, Barry Manilow, Aretha Franklin, Carlos Santana, Usher, Gil Scott-Heron, Patti Smith, Lou Reed and Alicia Keys.

One name, however, will always slightly stand out from the rest: Whitney Houston, who Davis tracked down and signed to his own label, Arista, in 1983.

An uncommonly trusting creative companionship was struck with Houston, whose records Davis A&R'd from her 1985 debut LP right through to her sad and untimely death in 2012.

Other massive commercial successes dusted with the Davis magic have included a raft of records made in partnership with fellow entrepreneurs.

In 1989, Davis and Arista co-founded La Face Records with producer/writer Babyface and LA Reid. The R&B-leaning label broke superstars including Outkast, TLC, P!nk, Usher and Toni Braxton.

Four years later, Davis once again partnered with a young US entrepreneur. This time it was Sean Combs, aka Puff Daddy, for Bad Boy Records - which brought the world Notorious B.I.G., Mase and Faith Evans, while smashing down doors for hip-hop culture at mainstream radio.

It hasn't all been hits and happiness for Davis, however; he's had to meet steeper challenges during his time than most.

He had a terribly traumatic start in life: both of his parents



died within a year of each other when he was a teenager living in Brooklyn, New York.

Davis went on to receive a scholarship to Harvard Law School - where he graduated in the mid-1950s.

From there, Davis began his career as a lawyer - at first, outside the record business. He joined CBS/Columbia's legal department in 1960, and within seven years was running the label.

Following a titanic run of success at Columbia, in 1973 Davis was unceremoniously fired - and publicly shamed - for allegedly misappropriating company funds.

As shown in the new Davis documentary on Apple Music - 'The Soundtrack Of Our Lives' - the exec bounced back with astonishing force, creating Arista Records in 1974 and forging one

of the most successful music corporations of all time.

Davis eventually left Arista in 2000 to found the quasi-independent J Records. It was supported by nine-figure financing from BMG, before promptly being majority-acquired by the company.

Today, Davis is Chief Creative Officer of Sony Music Entertainment in New York, and is currently working on new material from the likes of Jennifer Hudson and Johnny Mathis.

Aretha Franklin calls Davis, "The greatest record man of all time."

Simon Cowell admits that, "Deep down, we all wanted to be Clive Davis."

MBW recently had the rare chance to sit with Davis and collect his thoughts on A&R, US radio streaming's impact on

the music business, the most talented executives he's worked with and much more...

How are you Clive?

I'm good. It's a very special time right now. You've got to identify when things are special and appreciate it.

What do you hope an executive making their way up in the music business today might learn from 'The Soundtrack Of Our Lives'?

In life, a lot of things occur by accident. You've got to see the opportunities and take advantage of them.

My whole story is based on early luck. Originally I never thought of working in music.

The first law firm to hire me didn't work out because their major client got merged - it left them vulnerable. So I had to move to another firm, where Columbia Records was a client.

There have been a lot of 'what if?' moments in my life - you've got to stay aware of that.

Not everything in your life has gone your way, though...

I was fired from Columbia and had to endure a painful two year witch-hunt - and I can tell you that getting vindicated in the [media] doesn't get the same size headlines as when people are speculating that you've done God-knows-what level of wrongdoing.

No-one's life goes up, up, up - and this is an especially tough business. You've got to deal with crises, hopefully not in abundance. You've got to be able to face adversity and count on resilience.

The other thing this film shows is just the wonder of music; how it accidentally came into my life and then totally transformed it.

I certainly don't have to be working in music today, I choose



Davis and Aretha Franklin

to be. It totally fulfils me.

Would you relish running a label now as streaming takes over and listening habits change?

I've always relished it. It certainly was a tough period prior to streaming; the public felt that music should be free, and labels were economically affected with reductions in staff.

Because of my good fortune I've endowed an institute at NY - The Clive Davis Institute Of Recorded Music. I felt I could make a difference and provide career opportunities for those [young people].

But when I would go down there for a few years, they got scared: 'Are we preparing for a career in an industry that has no future? Is this a business in

jeopardy?' Now music seems healthy and economically secure again, but there are things we've got to be vigilant about.

What do you mean?

I love great voices. I stand for great voices, and I believe in them. I'm very concerned that [US] urban mainstream [radio] is becoming so dominated by hip-hop that the big-voiced artist - which is such a part of our history - might be relegated to an 'adult' format that doesn't allow them to become as vital and important to us as Aretha and Whitney were.

I'm nervous about what's happening. Where's the next Aretha coming from? Where's the next Whitney coming from?

For me, Jennifer Hudson has that voice. But radio is still the

most important format to trigger an artist breaking through.

Also, where will the next Springsteen and Dylan come from? I like EDM, I like hip-hop, but not to the point that it homogenises all music - and you don't get the kind of stars that I'm so proud of having been part of my life.

Why do you think hip-hop has emerged as such a strong genre in the modern era?

I'm just glad I was there at the beginning, understanding that this could happen - maybe not quite to the extent that it's now happened, but that there would be a revolution and that hip-hop could be vitally important in mainstream music.

Even before the Bad Boy deal I signed Gil-Scott Heron who was one of the original hip-hop artists. It's not a surprise to me that hip-hop has [exploded].

But as I said, it's healthier if hip-hop doesn't dominate so much that it makes us forget that we need the next Aretha Franklin and the next Whitney Houston.

[Hip-hop's] growth is healthy, but not if it puts blinders on urban mainstream radio so they don't give the next Luther Vandross the opportunity to do for the next generation what Luther did for the last generation.

Streaming is heralding a new era of data-led A&R - using statistics to root out the next big artist and trend. What do you think about that?

What you've just described is both a risk but also something to bear in mind. The challenge is the same as it ever was. I don't care where you find the artist, or which data you go through, you've got to look for the next headliner - the next great artist.

Otherwise you end up with a single, not a career; people buy a hit record and have no curiosity about what the rest of



Davis and Sean Combs

"YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK FOR THE NEXT HEADLINER - THE NEXT GREAT ARTIST. OTHERWISE, YOU END UP WITH A SINGLE, NOT A CAREER."

your album sounds like. Artists I discovered 30, 40, even 50 years ago are still headlining all over the world; whether it's Springsteen, Billy Joel, Santana, Barry Manilow - that's the key.

And what gratification that this hasn't been an ephemeral career, not a one-hit-wonder; it's artists that decade after decade the public remain interested in.

Which modern day label leaders most have your respect?

Oh, I'm not getting into that!

Each of those dominating market share and doing so with artists that are special - those people have my respect. It's hard to respect those that have no hits

and don't command any market share, although they might be nice men or women.

What are your thoughts on the post-Doug Morris era at Sony with Rob Stringer as CEO?

The same aspect that has distinguished Sony under Doug and Rob is so similar; they're both true music men. Both have been guided by music all their lives.

So to answer your question, it's actually the same era. They're wonderful colleagues. Doug has had a wonderful career and Rob is enjoying a wonderful career.

I'm glad that the prevailing spirit within that is a respect for music and artistry - and that spirit is identical in both men.

Will LA Reid be back in the music business?

He's a very talented executive, and he's always been very talented. Of course I expect him to be back.

What is it about you that's able to spot executive talent in the likes of Sean Combs?

It was all from interviews - sitting and talking with Puffy about



Davis and Whitney Houston

his vision that hip-hop could dominate. He wanted to be with the most successful label in Top 40, which was Arista.

As he says, he would come every other week to 'school'; to sit in my office and soak it up. [Hip-hop] wasn't a field that was my area of expertise but it resonated with me.

One thing I'm most proud of is the fact that Arista - and the family that it came to represent - never bought another company, never paid a multiple, to gain market share. Everything was homegrown. In financing LaFace with LA and Babyface, financing Bad Boy Records with Puffy Combs and financing and starting Arista Nashville, we did it all from scratch.

You lost both parents when you were a teenager. What impact

on your desire to succeed in your career did that have?

The most impact of any event in my life. You never get over it.

Losing both within the same year; having to uproot myself from Brooklyn to go live with my only sibling who was seven years older than me.

The drive, the need: I had no money [after his parents died], and I certainly had no money to pay for school if I didn't get scholarships. It motivated my giving back by establishing the Institute in my name at NYU, and it motivated my work ethic to accomplish all this.

Work to me is pleasure - because, to me, music is not work.

Losing a loved one that's irreplaceable is forever emotional; it's regret - regret of things they haven't seen, of not meeting my children or grandchildren. It's a

hole in your life. Losing Whitney reminded me of how empty one's life is when a loved one prematurely gets taken from you.

How do you establish a relationship with an artist that is so strong, you can say to them, This isn't good enough, and they'll take it on board without a tantrum?

You've got to be very careful before you become too liberal with constant advice.

It's about getting a track record that gains the respect [of artists], so they know your advice is backed up with being right more often than wrong.

What we're talking about is being very careful to recognise the difference between an executive and an artist. Notwithstanding history, I never submit material to a

self-contained artist. You don't give [other people's] songs to rock artists.

Some people do today if it means getting them on streaming playlists!

You don't give songs to Patti Smith! You don't give songs to Bruce Springsteen! You don't give songs to Alicia Keys!

But when you become the creative partner for those artists that need material, that when [A&R] is more than just signing them. I found every song that Whitney Houston recorded.

Your track record is your calling card. And if you have a real good track record it helps your case.

It's a tough battle. Artists have their own feelings, they believe what they want to believe and they resist everybody - including myself - if they believe otherwise. And they should.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given in the music business and who gave it to you?

It was actually given to me by my mother. I was a straight A student at school. And I remember she said, Learning and school work and reading is great, and I encourage you to do it. But people awareness, street smarts - that's very necessary.

You can't live in an ivory tower, you must immerse yourself in other people; you've got to get to know other people. You can't just be a book-learning smart person.

That's the best piece of advice I've ever gotten.

You've shown yourself to be a skilled producer as well as what you could call an 'executive' A&R. How important in your mind is some hands-on musical experience and/or ability in the world of A&R?

It's very important. That's how you collaborate, how you get acceptance of advice. That's



"YOU'VE GOT TO BE VERY CAREFUL BEFORE YOU BECOME TOO LIBERAL WITH CONSTANT ADVICE. IT'S ABOUT GETTING A TRACK RECORD."

how you determine how to bring the best out of a situation for a given artist.

For rock artists... stay away! You interpret those artists without bastardising their integrity. So when you have a Patti Smith peeing on stage and spitting down her mouth, let her do her thing; don't homogenise it.

You've got to know when to stand back and do nothing and when to collaborate.

With Whitney, I was the one, with my A&R staff, who narrowed down hundreds of songs to 20. Then she and I would share a hamburger every album and talk about how we'd narrow down the 20 to 10.

What is the proudest moment of your career to date?

Without question, the proudest moment was at the start of J Records. I was making tens of

millions of dollars a year [at Arista]. I'd signed [Santana's] Supernatural and produced it, I'd produced My Love Is Your Love, and it was the most profitable year in our history.

But [Bertelsmann] wanted to elevate me to a corporate chairman. Some people had interpreted, wrongly, that I'd peaked or that I was too old or something. There was no way that was accurate.

When anyone turned 60 in Bertelsmann they either left or they became a corporate something or other.

So there was this big uproar, and I was ready to leave to accept a huge offer from Universal. And to keep me - because they all-of-a-sudden realized, 'Oh my God, he's really leaving' - [Bertelsmann] gave me the biggest label deal ever made: \$150m to start J, plus five platinum artists, plus new artists including Alicia Keys.

So, the proudest moment... They did not put a limit on the number of executives who could come with me from Arista to J.

I made a list [of who he wanted to transfer over]: from the President, Charles Goldstuck, to the executive vice presidents, Tom Corson and Peter Edge... I went down the entire A&R staff, the heads of marketing, the heads of promotion, the heads of press. The top 18 executives.

I couldn't offer them a penny more than what they were making [at Arista]. Bertelsmann, however, had the ability to tear up their contracts and offer them double [to stay at Arista] - and in many cases did.

And 18 out of 18 came with me to J Records. Overnight - other than the few artists staying at Arista - all 18, with families, showed how much they believed in me. It's still quite startling in terms of industry history.

This interview was originally published in October 2017



‘Artist managers are missing out on millions by over-relying on big banks.’

The following piece comes from Tony North (pictured), Co-Founder & CEO of Centtrip Music. Well-known for working with artists and businesses to help get them an optimum currency exchange deal, Centtrip says it aims to “reduce the friction, headaches and costs associated with international payments and expenditure”.

The music industry now operates in a global marketplace.

Artists, managers and content owners are becoming increasingly sophisticated at servicing international fanbases - with whom it has never been easier to create viable commercial relationships.

The continued growth of the live music market, the ever-quickening pace of the streaming revolution, burgeoning

merchandising opportunities and the demand for music from other creative industries such as film, advertising and TV means that there are more and more revenue streams coming online.

For established artists, both core and ancillary incomes have taken a sharp upward tick in recent times.

Yet with that growth comes the need to resource effectively. More income streams mean more work

- which means more pressure on managers (and anyone else financially involved in artist careers).

It is not unreasonable, therefore, for these people to become somewhat overwhelmed and to prioritise some activities at the expense of others.

The foreign exchange (or FX) market has seen a similar transformation of its business in recent years.

The financial technology (‘FinTech’) industry has ushered in a range of alternative solutions to the traditional banking sector - and this in turn has thrown up a number of interesting possibilities for the music industry.

Established artists, managers and content owners have become extremely good at running international businesses that generate huge amounts of income - income that is often paid in different currencies.

debits cards are also expensive, generating even more fees when used abroad.

Often, for the sake of an easy life, this isn’t questioned - but it can end up being a very expensive way of doing business. In plain terms, taking the path of least resistance is costing the music industry an awful lot of money.

Financial institutions have been overcharging the music industry for years - it’s outrageous.

“FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN OVERCHARGING THE MUSIC INDUSTRY FOR YEARS - IT’S OUTRAGEOUS.”

Yet those same people are often overworked and under-resourced. It’s not a surprise, then, that something like an FX strategy might get pushed to the bottom of the ‘to do’ pile. Especially because a lot of people are simply uninformed about the importance of FX in the first place.

Put simply, this lack of understanding means that they are leaving many millions on the table. Whenever income is generated abroad and converted into another currency (say, US dollars into UK sterling) it’s not unusual for traditional banks to make a hefty charge.

Not only do they convert the currency at an often-unfavourable rate, they add expensive fees on top. Using traditional credit and

They rely on the fact that artists and their representatives being unaware of the opportunities available to them.

Our company believes this is wrong and has created an alternative that allows artists, managers and content owners to take control - by purchasing foreign currency at significantly better rates with transparent, fixed and fair fees, utilising easy-to-use technology and our experience of the FX market.

In conjunction with our currency account, we have launched our Centtrip prepaid Mastercard that allows the pre-loading of currencies for a fraction of what the major banks charge - very useful for tour managers who have to pay out in numerous different currencies while on the road.

FinTech allows the movement of money quickly, transparently and cheaply. It can be done through an online dashboard or an App and every transaction can be seen in real time.

There is no longer any excuse for hiding behind opaque systems and out-of-date practices.

We already work with some of the biggest artists in the world. The feedback from them so far is that a better understanding of how to move money around internationally, with more efficiency, has really opened their eyes to what they have been missing out on - and to what is possible moving forward.

With the international audiences getting bigger all the time as established territories and emerging markets become better connected, the ability to manage currency effectively will become ever more important.

It’s time to de-mystify this extremely important part of the financial process. It’s time for the music industry to wake up to the possibilities that the FX market offers.

For too long artist managers in particular have settled for a poor service that offers no transparency - one actually designed to siphon off as much money from their transactions as possible.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

Centtrip
MUSIC

Because Centtrip is an approved financial institution, and international governments take such things rather seriously, MBW is obliged to include a legal bit in order to run Tony’s wise words. Here it is: Centtrip Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority as an Electronic Money Issuer (EMI). Our firm reference number is 900717. The Centtrip Prepaid Mastercard card is issued by Prepaid Financial Services Limited pursuant to a license from Mastercard International Incorporated. Prepaid Financial Services Limited is regulated and authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority as an E-Money Institution (registration number 900036); their registered office is Fifth Floor, Langham House, 302-308 Regent Street, London W1B 3AT. Centtrip Limited is registered and based in the United Kingdom. Company No. 08651 138 Registered address: Clere House, 3 Chapel Place, London EC2A 3DQ © 2017 CENTTRIP LTD.



Peter Edge and Tom Corson: ‘We don’t keep the lights on here if we don’t successfully develop new artists.’

Peter Edge and Tom Corson know what makes RCA tick.

The duo were appointed leaders of the historic label by former Sony Music CEO Doug Morris in 2011, and have since repeatedly proven their prowess at breaking talent at a blockbuster level.

Standout successes have included the transition of Miley Cyrus from a Disney star to a boundary-breaking pop behemoth, as well as helping Kesha reclaim her rightful place at the top of the Billboard 200 earlier this year with comeback album *Rainbow*.

In 2016, RCA signing Zayn became the first British male artist to debut at No.1 in both in the US and UK with his first solo single, *Pillowtalk*, before a No.1 album swiftly followed. Meanwhile, fellow RCA signings Alicia Keys and Britney Spears joined Sia in charting in the Top 5 of the Billboard 200 last year - while No.1 US albums were secured by Kings of Leon and a cappella outfit Pentatonix.

Other talent broken at the label under the tenure of Corson and Edge has included Elle King, Bryson Tiller, G-Eazy, Walk the Moon, Miguel, Ke\$ha, Pitbull and

Mark Ronson. New RCA priorities in 2017 included All My Friends singer Tinashe, Nigerian One Dance collaborator Wizkid, hip-hop artist Goldlink and electro-pop band Muna - while we’ve also witnessed a new No.1 US album from Bryson Tiller, with fresh efforts from P!nk and Miley Cyrus recently making their mark.

And one of the label’s biggest breakthroughs of 2017, Texan teenager Khalid, is tipped for big things after landing a Top 5 album in the States.

MBW visited Corson (pictured right) and Edge (pictured left) in Sony’s New York HQ to chat

about the future of Sony Music under Rob Stringer, how they approach streaming and radio - and the golden rules of their A&R strategy...

First things first: Doug Morris hired you. What will you miss about his leadership as CEO?
Tom Corson (President/COO, RCA Records): One of Doug’s great characteristics is that he really coaches and supports executives. The first time we met him six years ago he said, ‘Make yourself proud,’ and he really meant it. He wants his executives to win, but he also supports you through the ups and downs. But we are thrilled with [his successor]. Rob is the best choice and we’re looking forward to hearing his vision.

Peter Edge (Chairman/CEO, RCA Records): Agreed, Rob is a great music guy. I think one of the reasons Doug has been able to run all three major labels is because he knows how to support and encourage others. He’s in the business of trying to make everybody succeed. That’s very unique.

Doug has created an incredible camaraderie at Sony. He encourages people to work together. Maybe that’s not always the case in large companies, where people like to pit others against each other. Doug encourages everyone to get along and not build big walls.

What’s your overarching strategy at RCA and what are the qualities that inspire you in new signings?

Peter: The music comes first. We are not a promotions-driven company - we are an A&R-driven company.

We place emphasis on artist development and doing unusual things that not everybody would take on.



Khalid

Tom: There was only one other label that wanted to sign Miley. Everybody actually thought we were a little crazy.

She’d had one kind of hit and at that point it was very unusual to transition a teen star into a proper pop star. It wasn’t a

cheap deal, so that intimidated some people too.

But when we met her we thought she was a force of nature. She didn’t want to play by the rules and she wanted to do her own thing. Off she went and made a record with some input

“THERE WAS ONLY ONE OTHER LABEL THAT WANTED TO SIGN MILEY. EVERYBODY THOUGHT WE WERE A LITTLE CRAZY. IT WAS VERY UNUSUAL TO TRANSITION A TEEN STAR INTO A PROPER POP STAR.”

and guidance from us. Across Bryson Tiller, Walk The Moon, Elle King, Pentatonix, A\$AP Rocky, Miley and G-Eazy we're covering hip-hop, pop and urban.

We are diverse and we want to be hitting every major category in contemporary music.

Publishers and managers would say A&R is happening more and more outside of labels. Would you agree?

Tom: Yes, a version of it is. But it depends what you define as artist development.

The very earliest stages of artist development are most often not done by any record label. And it's a dirty secret that even indies often just pick up [individual] records and the artist is left to find their way.

Artists have to be fairly well-groomed by the time they get to any major record label; what we do is develop the artist further.

Most artists aren't ready to talk to the media when they get here; they don't really have their right band together; they don't have the infrastructure behind moving that band forward; they may have the wrong publicity person - if they have one at all. They usually have no understanding of how international works, when to 'go' and when not to 'go'.

You've got to understand how your record is moving and how to read it and analyze, which takes years of expertise.

What's more important: streaming playlists or radio playlists?

Pete: Both. While some people may feel that radio is old-fashioned and streaming is where it's at, the truth is you need both to have a real hit.

Tom: Radio has more mass appeal scale at the moment so it drives [the campaign] home, but streaming is critical. You can have a streaming hit that's not a



Bryson Tiller

radio hit - very rarely vice versa. But there are a lot of people who aren't signed up to streaming yet who listen to the radio and you've still got to reach those folks.

Which one should come first: streaming or radio?

Tom: Generally, streaming. The discovery process happens online these days.

How difficult is it to make breaking an artist financially viable in 2016?

Tom: The economics of most music companies [today] is that with the superstars, you do well. The margins aren't quite as high [with breaking artist signings], but the volume's good.

With a breaking artist, you're taking on a lot of risk so you take [more margin]. And then the artists grab more back as they go through the growth process

- then we're happy to share more. When it 'goes' it's a nicely profitable business.

Even in the streaming age?

Tom: It's getting better as streaming grows. A year ago I would have said, 'We'll see'.

Now it's an important part of our business and getting more important every day.

How has the A&R process changed in recent years?

Tom: So many records now [begin life] streaming or on YouTube or whatever - so the good news is that there are a lot of signposts out there that didn't prior to the last 10 years. But that also means you can get caught 'speeding' very easily.

There's a difference between proper artist development and just 'reading' the success of existing records.



Kings Of Leon

Kings of Leon had their first US No.1 last year at RCA. Is there a big enough appetite for rock music to break through today's hip-hop and pop dominated streaming charts?

Pete: We're investing in alternative rock because we believe that there'll definitely be another wave of success [in that genre]. [It will come] as that [alt-rock] audience realizes the streaming model is something for them, and not something to be shunned for whatever reason.

Tom: The rock genre has lost market share to hip-hop and dance - it's just what it is. People don't listen to rock the way they used to 15 or 20 years ago. But there are other opportunities.

Culturally, the genre barriers are down. It's not naff to be into dance in the US anymore. That was a real issue here for a long

time; you were either a hip-hop guy or a rock guy.

The beauty of streaming is that it doesn't define genres as rigorously as radio stations do. Radio stations are all about selling advertising, and that burden is very tough. They have to

approximation right now - it's the best attempt at box office rankings [based on revenue].

It's the music business, so we're not talking about critical and social success here.

We're also talking about one segment of the industry - there's

“THE ROCK GENRE HAS LOST MARKET SHARE TO HIP-HOP - IT'S JUST WHAT IT IS. BUT THERE ARE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES.”

be super-right with their choices, otherwise they lose retention; listeners will punch the button and go to the other station.

Which charts most accurately reflect success?

Tom: Soundscan's total consumption chart is the best

live and other things [not taken into account in charts]. I certainly wouldn't say The Rolling Stones aren't successful because they maybe don't sell [records] the way they used to. Charts are marketing tools, when we really get down to it. Yes, they're a barometer of what's going on, but



Kesha

they inform people about what the broader populous thinks is worth listening to. Each genre varies, the scale is different in certain genres, so you have to be aware of that. But [labels] are in business to make money. And at the end of the day, we don't keep the lights on here if we don't successfully develop new artists.

Pete: What's good business to us is not what's best on the charts. It's clearly very connected, but sometimes you can do really well with things and it doesn't necessarily reflect where they are in the charts.

What's your policy on exclusives?

Tom: We treat it on a case-by-case basis. We've had some, not a lot. They serve a purpose from time to time. We feel that, in general, they put the consumer at a disadvantage - they encourage piracy and exclude people.

What's your verdict on Apple

“BOTH MAJOR AND INDEPENDENT LABELS INVEST SIGNIFICANTLY IN ARTISTS; WE'RE ONE OF THE FEW PARTS OF THE FOOD-CHAIN THAT TAKE THE RISK DOLLAR-WISE.”

Music and Beats to date?

Pete: There's a lot of great creative stuff happening. Zane Lowe's a fantastic music guy.

Tom: I hope they continue to broaden the funnel of what Apple in general has to offer. They have a huge reach - how can we leverage that more for the music service? That [kind of thinking] would be very welcome. It could

be something as simple as just the next model of the iPhone or iPad embedding Apple Music. They embed Wallets and Apple Pay, why not the music service?

I'm sure there's a very good business reason they don't do it, perhaps because of licenses and what-not, and that's probably something we [as the music business] have to answer for.

Amazon has this year properly launched its Unlimited streaming service. Is there space in the streaming market for all of the current services?

Tom: At the moment, definitely. If you look at what sells on Amazon vs. [the music] that streams elsewhere, they're somewhat different. So that tells you there's a consumer who maybe won't easily convert to Apple, Spotify, Deezer or whatever. There's definitely an opportunity with the scale Amazon has on a global level, their Prime program, and their Echo.

Pete: They're very mainstream. That's what we like about Amazon. They get to an audience that perhaps Apple Music doesn't.

Give us a prediction for the future of digital music...

Tom: Something big will happen in the streaming world; maybe there'll be some buy-out by a major platform of [another] streaming service.

Maybe Google will buy SoundCloud...

Tom: Something along those lines. Or even Pandora. Everyone forgets about Pandora - their premium [\$9.99-a-month] service looks pretty good. And here's one: pay attention to Amazon.

Amazon are world beaters, they get the consumer. They've had some misses, [but] they've got Alexa right and music integrates very nicely with that. You can go from a few million subscribers very quickly to tens of millions. If Amazon gets it right they can make a lot of money from music. And now they have the hardware vehicle with Echo - just like the iPod launched iTunes.

Pete: Alexa is very neat. It's a fun new angle to access music and it's super easy - . I noticed a lot of people who are more casual music listeners are really loving the whole AI/personal assistant experience, whether it's Alexa or the Google Home unit. Voice activation is going to be really big. The Echo is an innovative product that's affordable and could be a game changer.

What would you change about the music industry, and why?

Tom: I would have a more legally representative partnership in our deals [with artists] which spans all income streams - so that we're more aligned in terms of live, merchandise and so forth.

That would be a better model for everybody, not just for us.



Pink

You're talking about '360' deals.

Tom: Yes, but I hate that term because it diminishes the notion of a partnership. It feels like we're grabbing. Both major and indie labels invest significantly in artists; we're one of the few parts of the food-chain that take the risk dollar-wise.

Yes, artists take a risk by signing to a label - but we sign artists for hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars and then we put the same amount into [further development] to find out what we have.

The '360' [contract] sounds better than it is for labels. Very rarely you get more than 10%, maybe 15% of an artist's [ancillary rights]. A true partnership basis would eliminate some friction that is sometimes there.

Could it exist? Yeah. We do deals that are a step in that direction. But it's probably not going to happen in the near future - [the current standard] is kind of grandfathered in.

Pete: I wish people were more dedicated to artists and not just looking for songs. We're in a very song-driven era. Generally, I feel like a rich cultural space was created when people were very invested in artists.

The '70s, '80s and '90s were a rich time for music. People's attention span is too small, I think that's a big piece of it - nobody's got the time.

Tom: When we grew up there were no video games, there was no online, there were three TV channels.

Pete: We weren't distracted by loads of stuff like constant cell phone messaging. Instead you might want to study what was in that Bowie album, which was actually interesting art; maybe something more fulfilling than getting another 'Like'.

This interview was originally published in January 2017



Mike McCormack: 'I believe we've got by far the UK's best A&R force.'

If you've spent decades in the belly of the music business - immersed daily in its triumphs, its tribalism, its power battles and its politics - does it eventually blunt your perspective on whether an artist is actually any good?

On the one hand, all of that experience is bound to have refined your antennae for a hit, not to mention your mastery of the factions you need to conquer for your best chance of climbing the charts.

But on the other, perhaps with every platinum record you nail up on the wall, you inevitably shuffle one step further away from the

This hiatus enabled the exec to see things from the unblemished viewpoint of a music enthusiast - a stance he hadn't witnessed since entering the entertainment biz by pulling pints at Dingwall's nightclub in Camden in 1980.

"Working in a different industry for a while gave me a lot more clarity on what it was I needed to achieve," he tells MBW.

"By the time I left music, I was running out of steam; I'd almost forgotten what it was that made me a good executive in the first place.

"Now, I know exactly what I'm here to do."



"MIKE HAS AN INNATE ABILITY TO SIGN, DISCOVER AND DEVELOP ICONIC TALENT AND CATALOGUES, AND HE CONTINUES TO BE A KEY VOICE ON MY LEADERSHIP TEAM."

Jody Gerson, UMPG

purest perspective in existence - that of the punter.

This quandary was on Mike McCormack's mind when he decided to leave behind the music biz after 35 years in 2014.

McCormack's decision, catalyzed by personal tragedy, left the UK industry without one of its most talented A&R minds, and one of its most well-liked characters. Over the following two years, McCormack became a successful sports agent for cricket stars, before returning to Universal Music Publishing UK as its MD last summer.

It's been just over a year since McCormack took over as Managing Director of UMP UK, succeeding his friend and long-term boss, Paul Connolly.

MBW catches up with McCormack in his penthouse Fulham Broadway office during something of a golden run for the company - recently capped off by it bringing home a record eight Ivor Novellos. One of McCormack's biggest moves since returning to UMPG was the signing of British producer/writer Steve Mac, who officially joined Universal's roster in January.

Mac has been behind a swathe of UK Top 5 hits this year including Ed Sheeran's Shape Of You, Rita Ora's Your Song and Liam Payne's Strip That Down, as well as Clean Bandit's Rockabye and Symphony - a startling run of success which has already led some to tip him for a Grammy nomination in 2018.

"Steve is an extraordinary talent and there's so much more to come from him," says McCormack. "It seems like every single thing he's touched this year has come out and smashed it."

McCormack explains that since taking over at UMP UK, he's been determined to broaden the company's reputation beyond signing long-term album artists to compete more forcefully in the world of chart singles. In addition to Mac, this has been evidenced with signings such as Jonas Blue, Dua Lipa (via TAP Music) and Ed Drewett (Little Mix, One Direction) - who will join UMPG from Warner/Chappell after this year closes.

The boss has certainly noticed. Jody Gerson, CEO and Chairman, Universal Music Publishing Group, tells MBW: "Bringing in Mike has helped unify our global company, and he shares my vision for making this the best music company in the world and the premier home for songwriters.

"Mike has an innate ability to sign, discover and develop iconic talent and catalogues, and he continues to be a key voice on my leadership team."

Other recent successes at UMPG UK include 'Jin Jin' Bennett who co-wrote Jax Jones' You Don't Know Me (which has sold almost 1m in the UK), while a JV with indie Best Laid Plans has given the major a share of eight songs on the double-platinum-selling debut album from Rag N Bone Man. The signing of a certain Harry Styles - in conjunction with Jody Gerson's



Steve Mac

"TO GET MY PERSONAL RESPECT IN PUBLISHING, CERTAINLY, YOU HAVE TO DEVELOP WORLDWIDE SUPERSTARS. THAT'S WHEN YOU SHOW HOW GOOD YOU ARE."

UMPG team in the US - hasn't hurt McCormack's mission.

"We signed Harry in my first few months as MD," recalls the British exec. "Jody and I talked about it and immediately went: 'You know what, we should do this.'"

"How many global superstars are there his age who really have that charisma and are an established name worldwide? If we want to show how ambitious we are as a company, we've got to step up - this was us stepping up."

Other emerging artists McCormack's team has bet on of late include singer/songwriters Tom Walker, Tom Misch, Grace Barker and Rex OC, in addition to Irish pop duo Picture This and indie act Bad Sounds.

Mike McCormack first joined Universal Music Publishing in 1999 as Deputy MD under Paul Connolly, with a brief to run the company's A&R team.

In the 18 years since, UMPG's London team have signed and developed some of the biggest album artist/songwriters in the world - including Adele, Coldplay, The Killers, Florence + the Machine, Mumford & Sons, Bastille and Chase & Status.

Many of the talented A&R team who were by McCormack's side for these signings remain at the company today, including the likes of Caroline Gale (nee Elleray), Mark Gale, Darryl Watts and Frank Tope.

"I think we've got by far and away the best A&R force in the UK," says McCormack, proudly.

"All of the senior executives in that team have got great track records and are very well-respected.

"And on a junior level we've got some really exciting up-and-coming executives too. We'll let them make some mistakes, as everybody does, and we'll support them and nurture them."

McCormack knows the importance of having a good team around you better than most. The exec started his record label career in the early '80s at A&M Records, before moving on to Virgin Music Publishing as A&R Manager, where he signed the likes of Terence Trent D'Arby, Stereo MCs and all of the members of Take That - before heading up the A&R team that signed The Verve and the Prodigy.

He moved on to run the A&R department at RCA Records in London in the early '90s, having huge success with Take That, while hiring a young Simon Cowell to work on made-for-TV pop stars. After RCA, in the late '90s, McCormack joined Simon Fuller at 19 - helping the British mogul set up a sports agency, as well as working across various

music projects - before making the jump to UMPG.

MBW sat down with McCormack to ask all about his ambitions with UMPG, his view on recent major industry issues - and what A&R means to him in 2017...

What did you learn about the music business in your two years away from it?

Taking some time out was the best thing I could have done. I'd run out of steam; I'd lost the desire. I really didn't want to be the guy sitting in A&R meetings failing to get excited about new artists. My mind was on other things. Going outside and having a separate challenge meant I became a consumer of music, rather than someone always trying to facilitate an artist's success. It was the best healing process I could have had.

When the opportunity came up to return, I was ready for it. I had clarity; I knew this company from top to bottom and I knew how good it was across every department. The one piece of the jigsaw missing here was that it needed to be a bit re-energized and dragged slightly back more into the mainstream.

If you look at all our signings over the last 18 years, musically there's some of the best artists that have ever come out of the UK. But, like all things, you've got to have a healthy balance between what's going on in the chart, and long-term artists you develop over time. We've set that rhythm now.

The UK has been a tough market for breaking new acts in the past few years. Why do you think that is, and how have you responded?

Streaming's added such a huge curveball into the game of A&R. Before, you'd have an impact date and you'd pull back the elastic and then let go - after which, you knew if you were in the game or dead in the water.



McCormack and Simon Fuller

Now, when you pick your horse, you have to stay with it. It takes so long to get proper traction - you have to commit and take a long-term perspective.

A&R has always been like trying to hit a target you can't see. Now it's like trying to hit the bullseye of a target you can't see!

But, to a certain extent, the 'rules' of A&R haven't changed: If you make a brilliant record, and the company supports it and sticks with it, you'll have those magical moments where things completely kick off.

Look at Rag'N'Bone Man. [Columbia UK's] Julian Palmer did a brilliant A&R job, but it took a long time to make and then break that record.

New artists are now competing with all the music that's come before - as well all the music around the world.

That means you have to set the bar extremely high - or be saying something so pertinent and so relevant to your audience that no music from the past says it better.

How are you finding it working with Jody Gerson?

When I first spoke to Jody about the job, I instantly liked her. The first thing she said to me was,

'I want to make this the best creative company in the world.'

That was exciting to hear.

She said she'd give me and the team here her full support, and she's been absolutely true to her word; whether that's signing something big like Harry - on which we were arm-in-arm - or other occasions where I've wanted to pass on something that might have had a lot of heat.

Jody's a tough taskmaster, but she's fun to work with - and has a great sense of humor.

Are there any other reasons you decided to come back to music, and Universal in particular?

During that period where I was having a really tough time, Universal were unbelievably good to me. Lucian [Grainge] wrote me a hand-written letter - he could obviously empathize with my situation. Paul [Connolly] was great and gave me all the time and space I needed.

There was never ever pressure from anyone to throw myself back into work. That really stuck with me. The other thing I learned at that time was about the supposed cynicism of the record industry - you know, the Hunter S Thompson thing: 'A cruel and

shallow money trench...'

All the way through that time, David Joseph, Jason Iley, Max Lousada - they were all still inviting me to events, or for a cup of tea. I had nothing interesting to tell them, or any information that would better their careers, and yet they all kept in touch.

When the opportunity came to return to the music industry, I didn't have to 'renew' my relationships, because none of them ever stopped.

Also... the word 'family' is bandied around a lot within the music business, but at Universal it felt like I'd genuinely come home.

I would never consider working anywhere else. Simple as that.

What did you learn working with Simon Fuller at 19 that you can use today to advantage Universal?

Simon is a unique character. It's no accident as to why he's been so successful.

I've never met anybody who's as fearless as he is, or who thinks as big as he does. He's uninterested in things that don't have a huge amount of ambition.

You look at what he's done with the Spice Girls and American Idol and it shows that.

And - this is the most important bit - he's achieved all of that success without bullying anyone. He's done it all through charisma and pragmatism. And I've never seen anyone better at dealing with artists than him.

He taught me a hell of a lot.

You worked with Paul Connolly for a very long time at UMPG. What's it like flying solo without him here?

It's funny. I've worked with Paul for so long, we know each other incredibly well. We had a very different way of working - I was more outgoing, he preferred to be in the background.

I think I've got balls of steel - that man's got balls of titanium!



Simon Cowell

He really is hardcore and I love him for it. During those 18 years with Paul, he taught me how to be slightly less impulsive than I would have been without his direction. He really thinks things through and doesn't let any outside influences affect his judgment.

He's built a brilliant company here. It's a bit odd not having him around, but it's also a good thing because I can put my own stamp on [UMPG], and do what I felt we need to be doing more of - particularly mainstream-wise, where we let opportunities go in the past. I still get on with Paul very well, there's no bad blood between us at all.

How do you feel about the private equity money now flooding into the music publishing business?

It shows that this industry is healthy and is growing, otherwise it wouldn't be there.

How it affects us competitively? There's often a point in most negotiations, at crunch time, where there's more money on the table from someone else - particularly if that party is in

danger of losing the deal.

We just have to convince the writer this is the best home for their copyrights. That's always been the case.

UMPG has been quite loud and proud about the transparency of its admin systems in recent years. That obviously comes in the wake of Kobalt shaking up the industry.

When Kobalt came into the industry, it definitely had a big impact. Everyone had to up their game. I have no doubt in saying that our systems are world class now. I don't know if that strapline of 'transparency' or being 'the most efficient collection engine' is even that relevant anymore.

To get my personal respect in publishing, certainly, you have to develop worldwide superstars. That's when you really show how good you are.

Multiple co-writes seem to be becoming more prevalent in the pop music world. What's your take - is it healthy?

If it's a means to an end in terms of writing a worldwide No.1 hit, then so be it.

That said, all of my songwriting heroes were at most partnerships - whether it's Strummer/Jones or Leiber /Stoller, or 100% writers like Paul Simon or Rod Temperton.

Ideally, I'd like [multiple co-writes] to be less of a norm, as it makes clearances and licenses much more complicated.

If you have huge worldwide success with a 50/50 or 100% writer, not only do you reap the benefits of it commercially, it's just a hell of a lot easier to exploit.

Is it true you hired Simon Cowell back at RCA? What was he like back then?

Myself and Jeremy Marsh brought him into RCA.

Simon is such a brilliantly funny character. Things really weren't working out for him at Arista, and Jeremy came to me and said: 'What do we do about Simon?'

I said I'd have him in my department in a heartbeat, because he's unique. And he's obviously gone on to prove just how unique he is.

When he came into our A&R team, he needed a bit of a hand round the shoulder. He'd lost



McCormack and Caroline Gale

Which other standout mentors have had a real influence on you during your career?

At A&M, Derek Green. At the very start of my career I was a sound engineer, then I did some PR.

Derek was the person who said: 'Why don't you become an A&R?'

There's something Derek said to me back in the eighties that's

made us write all of our offers out by hand - every single one - so we'd understand every point. If you can listen to what an artist really wants and bespoke a deal around it, it's a huge help.

After that I went to work with Jeremy [Marsh] and Hugh [Goldsmith] at RCA. They taught me a lot about team-work.

Jeremy was so much fun to work with. Very ambitious, but also brilliant at running a team full of different characters - including Pete and Keith at Deconstruction, myself, Nick Raymond and Simon Cowell.

He really taught me the value of getting an eclectic bunch of people to work well together - and that's definitely something I still prioritize today.

Last but not least, my sis Maria McCormack who sadly passed away last year. She gave me a copy of Ziggy Stardust and Who's Next? when I was 14 - that's when I fell in love with music - then Kristy, my fiancée, who's a massive music fan and helped me rediscover my passion for it.

This interview was originally published in September 2017

"THE WORD 'FAMILY' IS BANDIED AROUND THE MUSIC BUSINESS, BUT AT UNIVERSAL IT FELT LIKE I'D GENUINELY COME HOME."

some confidence and needed to be reminded of how good he was at what it is he does.

It's in his book, and it's absolutely true, that I said I want you to be Gary Lineker - stand by the goal and wait for the ball to be passed to you; I don't want you running around the midfield.

The point being: wait for the right opportunity, even if it takes six months to a year, and put it to bed. And that's what he did with Robson & Jerome, Westlife... and it's kind of gone off from there.

only become more relevant the longer I've worked in the industry: There's only three things that matter in A&R: 1) The artist - as in, their ability, their talent and their charisma; 2) The artist's attitude - as in, their tenacity and their will to make it work; 3) The artist's manager. You can't underestimate how much difference a great manager makes to an artist's career.

He was completely right.

Steve Lewis taught me a hell of a lot about deal-making. He

Jason Flom: 'Unless you're 100% sure your artist is wrong, go with their vision.'

There's not a lot the top tier of the music business can throw at you that Jason Flom hasn't dealt with.

Flom started in the record industry in 1979, aged 18, as a junior merchandiser at Atlantic Records - eventually working his way up to Chairman and CEO of the fabled label in 2003.

Along the way, he worked under the likes of Ahmet Ertegun and Doug Morris, while signing and developing acts including Kid Rock, Matchbox 20, The Corrs, Hayley Williams, Skid Row, Tori Amos, Trans-Siberian Orchestra, Jewel, and Sugar Ray.

In 2006, he moved to EMI to become CEO and Chairman of Virgin Records, where he signed Katy Perry, before moving to head up Capitol Music Group (also then an EMI company) - where his roster included Coldplay, Lenny Kravitz, 30 Seconds to Mars, Corinne Bailey Rae, KT Tunstall, and Joss Stone.

In 1995, he founded Lava Records - initially a joint venture with Atlantic before Flom got the name back from Warner in 2009.

Since then, Lava has been working in partnership with Republic Records, signing and breaking artists including Jessie J and Lorde, who recently returned with Green Light - the lead single from her acclaimed album Melodrama.

In early 2015, reports emerged that Lava's deal with Republic was up for expiry - and that both sides were permitted to buy each other out.

MBW recently caught up with Flom for an exclusive interview, and asked him all about his major label experiences, his approach to A&R, his relationship with the Republic team - and being



fired by Lyor Cohen in a bizarre manner back in 2005...

How has streaming changed the process of A&R for you?

It's hard to think of an industry the size of the music business which has been as dramatically disrupted as it has.

The good news is that all the doomsday people have been demonstrably proven incorrect; there were people eight or nine years ago who were saying the music industry was going out of business. Now we see a big resurgence, which is fantastic.

Streaming is a very interesting tool for research. That's an aspect of the business Doug Morris really

pioneered many years ago; he taught so many of us to look for the signs - not just to use your ears, but to use your brain and be a little scientific about this very unscientific business.

Streaming provides you with very rich data, which is good and bad because it can be confusing.

There are some examples, like Justin Bieber, who develop a tremendous online following and then turn out to be global superstars. But then there's others who have had tremendous success digitally and it hasn't translated.

What's the best advice you've been given in your career and who did it come from?



Ahmet Ertegun - arguably for a long time the greatest record executive of them all - told me that unless you're 100% sure the artist is wrong, go with their vision. A great example of that is when I'd signed Kid Rock and was working Devil Without A Cause [1998].

The album had sold about 5m copies - Bawitdaba and Cowboy had been huge hits - and he wanted to put out a song called Only God Knows Why as the next single. The Head of Promotions at [Atlantic] calls me and she has a group of program directors on the phone from one of the radio chains. They said: 'We just want you to know, if you put out Only

at it. They turned that principle into the biggest record company in the world.

Why do you enjoy working with Republic so much?

Well, Monte and I used to have a friendly rivalry. We competed for artists on several occasions. It seemed that every time I was breaking something, he and Avery were breaking something.

We'd talk several times a year and compared notes. But when I left Capitol, I thought: 'These guys are great at breaking new artists, and I love breaking new artists. So let's join forces.'

Republic is not a political place. I always say Monte and Avery

a lot of people there who weren't on my side.

Every record company has its own priorities. But dealing with that is my job; when an artist signs with me they get to be on the biggest record label in the world, and all the leverage that goes with that. But they also get me in there stirring the pot - running around people's offices and getting them excited, and calling in favors from different places to add that special sauce.

There's never a perfect situation; it's not even perfect when you're running a record company. I ran Virgin and Capitol and at the time it was a very tricky situation to navigate.

You worked under Guy Hands for a short time after he bought EMI.

I left soon after he took over. I didn't want to be there.

It was an amicable split - they wanted me to stay. But they also wanted to change the structure of the company and that was not permitted under the terms of my deal, so it made perfect sense for me to leave.

I didn't understand Guy Hands' vision. So it was thank you, good night. But now [Capitol]'s part of Universal, it's obviously made a huge difference.

A while ago, there were reports Lava was in a buy/sell situation with Republic - that either of you could take full control. How did that end up playing out?

We just decided to extend the deal, instead of doing any kind of transaction. I think the best is yet to come for Lava, and with the business rebounding I think it was a good decision for everyone.

When I sold Lava the first time to Atlantic, it was a good deal for everyone.

They sold a lot of records with the artists after the purchase that were part of the deal.

Based on the information I have now, we're going to have

a very good run and I like being [at Republic]. We'll see what the future holds.

In your experience, what are the best things and the worst things when it comes to major record companies?

Major record companies are just great, there's nothing bad about them - I'm kidding [laughs].

At the end of the day, record companies are made up of people. The name on the label doesn't matter.

If you're working with great people who have your best interests at heart and who have leverage to help the artist succeed to the highest level they can, that's how it's supposed to work. This won't be shocking to anyone, but obviously a major label has to work with a certain a volume of product. So you're always going to have to compete with other artists for the priority slots. That's where good management comes into play. Proper management, most people would agree, is more important than ever today.

Is it true that Lyor Cohen handed you a PR announcing your resignation from Atlantic in LAX airport in 2005?

That is absolutely true. It was a strange set of circumstances.

I was in Aspen on vacation with my family; I was on my way through Los Angeles to go back to work in New York.

Someone from Lyor's office called me and told me he was coming to LA, so why don't I meet him in the airport.

In retrospect, that sounded strange. But it's like the mafia - you never see it coming.

I met him at the gate. We were walking down the corridor, and he showed me a bit of paper announcing my resignation. So I said: 'I'm gonna go call my lawyer.'

It was really bizarre because I heard Lyor got on a plane right



Lorde

afterwards and flew back to New York. He could have just called me into his office in New York, and saved himself flying across the country and back.

The whole thing is a surreal memory.

Was that typical of your working relationship with him and have you spoken since?

Yeah, we've spoken since. In fact, I got the Lava name back from him in a golf game - we've played golf together a few times.

It's not personal; it's business. We didn't have a great professional relationship and it didn't work out. He's done fine, I've done fine.

What is the key factor in making you want to sign an artist at any given time?

One of my heroes is David Geffen. David described it to me one time as instinct, and that's

perfect. It just hits you and you think: 'I get this.'

You seem to avoid A&R conservatism with Lorde, despite the high stakes of her as an artist.

Well, Lorde does not pay attention to trends. She's her own person - she does what she feels, at whatever time she feels like doing it. Creatively and musically she's the most independent-minded artist I can ever remember working with.

She has her vision - no-one's going to sway her from that. And you can't argue with the results.

She is the Lorde - the Lorde of everything, that one. There never was a more appropriate name.

She may be from another planet. I'm really not sure.

This interview was originally published in April 2017

“DOUG MORRIS TAUGHT SO MANY OF US TO LOOK FOR THE SIGNS – NOT JUST TO USE YOUR EARS BUT TO USE YOUR BRAIN AND BE A LITTLE SCIENTIFIC ABOUT THIS VERY UNSCIENTIFIC BUSINESS.”

God Knows Why, you're going to kill this guy's career.'

I said, what do you mean? They said, It's a country song, it has no chorus and it's out of tune.

And I said, well, all of those things are true, but it doesn't really matter - he's told me on numerous occasions this is the most important song to him.

It became the biggest hit of them all, and we ended up selling another 6 million records off the back of it.

Doug Morris taught me, amongst other things, to pay attention to what the customer wants. He said: 'Whatever your opinion is, that's fine. But if the public is telling you something - because they vote with their wallets - you have to respect that.'

He taught a lot of us that principle. Ultimately, Monte and Avery [Lipman] became the best

can't sleep at night because they don't have all 200 of the Top 200.


They're very competitive. But as much as this is an ego-driven business, they don't have much of an ego about this stuff.

They're interested in hits - they don't care if I found it, you found it, or the f*cking cleaning lady found it. They just want their records on the charts.

The other thing is, they have the best staff. Just look at the people: Charlie Walk, for example - the best in the business at what he does, unequivocally.

How does your own ego deal with sharing A&R duties with the Republic team?

That's always a tricky thing. But I lived that way when Lava was at Atlantic. At that time I had to generate all my own heat because, let's just say, there were



Willard Ahdritz: 'We're building a company for the future of the music business.'

According to Goldman Sachs, the good times are coming back to the recorded music business.

In a recent report, the financial giant forecast that, by 2030, the worldwide record industry would be turning over in excess of \$40bn every year. \$28bn of this sum, it suggested, will purely be down to paid music streaming.

Considering that, in 2016, the worldwide recorded music trade generated just over \$15bn in total revenues, these seem like very optimistic figures.

Yet for Kobalt founder and CEO Willard Ahdritz, such numbers, if anything, appear a little conservative.

Ever since Kobalt was established 17 years ago, Ahdritz has been projecting multi-billion-dollar growth for the entertainment business in the streaming age. Now, he believes the music industry's revenues can – under the right conditions –

“I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT MUSIC WILL TRULY BE GLOBALIZED IN THE COMING YEARS. WE HAVE A BIG BALANCE SHEET TO HELP ARTISTS’ CAREERS.”

treble over the next five years, up towards \$50bn.

Such optimism is contingent on two questions in his mind: (i) Is the music industry truly willing to maximize the potential laid out in front of it?; and (ii) Once billions more dollars do start pouring back towards labels and artists, how can musicians best take advantage... without giving away their copyrights?

Back in March, Kobalt rejuvenated its distribution and services platform for independent artists, AWAL. Enabling unsigned creators to maintain ownership of their rights has long been a core philosophy of Kobalt's music publishing and label services businesses. But now, Kobalt was stating its intent to reach artists earlier in their career – developing and empowering them so that they never had to encounter a music business contract from a position of weakness.

“Every element of Kobalt is based on the idea of transparent technology and services to help creators,” explains Ahdritz.

“This enables a model where we are 100% aligned with our clients, based on the ‘principal agent’ - a core idea that aligns management and owner to create better returns.

“Fundamentally, it is this: if I own your rights, then every dollar

I have to pay you [in royalties] means my value goes down. I have no beneficial interest to give you more money. But if we have aligned interests - which describes the relationship between an artist and a service provider - then there are significant economic upsides for both of us as your business grows.”

It's on this principle that AWAL lays out its offering to emerging acts. Kobalt takes 15% of artist royalties in return for offering digital distribution and other services – including unique insights into Spotify and Apple Music, plus access to Kobalt's global streaming playlist promotions operation - without claiming any ownership of copyrights. To join AWAL's curated roster, artists can apply online - or be discovered by AWAL/Kobalt's A&R team.

“We have to put facts on the table,” says Ahdritz. “Personally, I believe a lot of creators, artists, and managers would have taken different decisions in the past if they had all the facts available.”

He cites an artist who was recently offered a \$400,000 advance from a major label – before Kobalt informed them that, if they maintained their copyrights instead, they had \$750,000 waiting to be paid out from Spotify.

Adds Ahdritz: “We have done a lot of cash advances over the last three years with AWAL, and we make a decision of support for artists at different stages based on the data.

“We have a big balance sheet to help support people's careers and help them break out.”

Success stories that Kobalt has developed through AWAL this year have included self-releasing American artist Lauv, who has accrued hundreds of millions of streams across his catalogue - including ‘I Like Me Better’, which recently went top 30 on Spotify's global chart. Other users of AWAL



Ray BLK

include Ray BLK - who won the highly influential BBC Sound Of... poll early in 2017 - as well as fast-growing new artists such as Tom Misch and Vérité.

These four artists have attracted close to 500m Spotify streams so far - the sort of eyebrow-raising figure which Ahdritz says is “validating our strategy”.

AWAL's A&R approach, says Ahdritz, isn't about “drilling for oil” while making big bets like the major labels. Rather, he points out, AWAL is “building sustainable careers step-by-step, making intelligent investments based on data”.

He adds: “I've heard it estimated that maybe 5,000 [self-releasing] artists today are having commercial success - by which I mean the ability to live from creating music and touring without the need for other income. I really believe in the coming two or three years AWAL can play a huge role in lifting that above 100,000 artists.”

Ahdritz has long been a believer in the global potential of streaming for artists - and he's more confident than ever that the reach and monetization of online consumption is about to explode.

It's for this reason Kobalt acquired and re-launched AMRA in 2015, the company's independently-run global royalty collection society.

“I firmly believe that music will truly be globalized in the coming years,” says Ahdritz. “It's already starting - with Beats being the first global radio station and Spotify's global playlists allowing artists to reach global fans. Just look at the explosion of Latin artists on the charts right now.

“But the fact remains, there are hundreds of millions of people around the world without easy access to digital music. That will all change. With the continued build-out of local network infrastructure in these undeveloped markets, more music fans will come online.”

He has a point: current estimates suggest global paid-for music streaming subscriptions will reach around 150m by the end of this year. Consider that an estimated 3.75bn people around the world will have an internet connection in the same time-frame, and the prospective growth of Spotify and Apple Music et al becomes clear.

“I work closely with the great



Tom Misch

streaming services and I know that when those gates open, they'll be ready to offer an amazing product that fans will pay for," says Ahdritz.

"Kobalt's tech infrastructure will make sure all of these artists are getting paid their royalties.

"That last point is especially important because of the new money that will flow as a result.

"Today, in many emerging markets, it's a couple of local guys doing their best to track thousands of songs being played in hundreds of locations, in an excel spreadsheet; lots of money being left on the table.

"With the market opened up, it will drive new local music economies, and it all starts with getting artists paid.

"Everyone will have equal access, piracy will erode and no longer will there be the traditional gatekeepers who control volume and stifle an industry.

"It will create to the most vibrant music industry ever,

for fans and maybe more importantly, creators."

The streaming utopia Ahdritz describes, of course, will make a lot of people very rich indeed.

Some of those people will be investors in vast music corporations which own stacks of catalogue. And others will be investors in digital services like Spotify, possibly valued in the tens of billions.

Ahdritz sees no reason whatsoever to condemn the latter over the former - and detects a sharp irony amongst those that have done so in the past.

"The music industry can be a little bit strange sometimes," he laughs. "[Labels] want to earn 100X on their risk investment into artists, but they don't always like other people's risk capital getting a return in the tech sector!

"Sometimes people forget that the tech sector has raised and spent billions helping artists and labels to sell their music."

He adds: "There are [music executives] now reaching their

yearly budgets in quarter two - they are seeing the enormous benefits of streaming. So if the people who invested half a billion dollars in Spotify then go on to get a return on their money, I say congratulations."

[Ahdritz and Kobalt, it's worth pointing out, do not have a financial stake in Spotify.]

Ahdritz's optimism over streaming is most effervescent when it comes to the future for artists themselves.

"One day soon, a fan, anywhere in the world, will be able to listen to any song in any language from any part of the world," he says.

"All of this consumption will create more data, which artists will be able to transparently see. It will inform them on how best to engage a target audience - socials/advertising/etc. - across the globe.

"Artists will be more in tune with their fans and reach them instantaneously. And because these artists are getting paid, it will create music economies

in new markets all around the world, because today [these territories] aren't set up to handle all the local and global royalties that need to be paid.

"It will contribute to the largest warehouse of music ever. All at the fingertips of anyone around the world."

As for Kobalt, the company continues to fire on four fronts: music publishing, neighbouring rights, recordings and global digital collections (via AMRA) - a collection of divisions Ahdritz collectively calls his firm's "music stack".

In the year ending June 2017, says Ahdritz, Kobalt's revenues - ie. gross royalties collected - jumped 29% to around \$370m.

He now expects the company's turnover to land somewhere around \$500m in its current financial year.

the music industry, Ahdritz notes that Kobalt has seen a five-time multiplication on streaming volume in the past 24 months alone. He adds: "I've never been more excited about the future and our mission. We were designed for this large volume and complexity.

"I'm doubling my 100 person tech team in London to stay ahead of digital music's growth across the globe so we develop the best products and tools for our clients."

Ahdritz certainly has capital to play with: Kobalt has raised just under \$90m in Series D funding this year, mainly from media giant Hearst Entertainment.

Comments Ahdritz: "I think it's clear that some music companies are run a certain way, so I will just say you do not build or change industries by focusing on yearly-



Vérité

40 creative staff worldwide - and upping Laurent Hubert to President & Chief Revenue Officer.

On the neighbouring rights front, Ann Tausis' team has signed the likes of Prince, The Lumineers and Keith Urban, among others.

Kobalt has also finalized the integration of RAL & Fintage to make what Ahdritz calls "the largest private neighbouring rights agency in the world".

Combined with AWAL and - especially - AMRA, Ahdritz confidently says that Kobalt's "music stack" offers a "level of insight and collection so comprehensive that it is five years ahead of anything else that exists today".

Yet the achievement at Kobalt which clearly pleases him the most is notably more personal.

"The idea of not owning someone else's rights is more than just theoretical," he says. "It is about offering freedom to artists. And freedom is worth so much - whether that's economic freedom, democratic freedom or creative freedom.

"To me, those freedoms are simply fundamental for a person to live a happy life."

This interview was originally published in October 2017

"KOBALT'S MUSIC STACK OFFERS A LEVEL OF INSIGHT THAT IS FIVE YEARS AHEAD OF ANYTHING ELSE THAT EXISTS TODAY."

And although some competitors still point the finger at Kobalt's status as a loss-making company, Ahdritz is unapologetic about the continued investment in Kobalt's rapid expansion.

He comments: "There's a lot of momentum not just at our company but in the industry - people are waking up to the idea of making money from music again. What's exciting for me is thinking about the future music industry and building for that. The [record business] needs more tech, more infrastructure, if we truly want to get this to a \$50 billion industry, because it's only going to get more complex as digital music scales across the globe."

Highlighting the complexity which lies around the corner for

based structures. I'm lucky to work in the private environment - it has allowed Kobalt to build for over 15 years to create great value for everyone, and that's what we're continuing to do."

Meanwhile, Kobalt's flagship publishing business continues to land big deals. Kobalt Music Publishing recently signed just about all of Foo Fighters for their new album 'Concrete and Gold', while in the UK, it signed Rudimental and Fraser T. Smith over the summer.

Following the departure of Richard Sanders earlier in the year, Kobalt has given its senior team a more creative bent, hiring respected A&R specialist Alison Donald in the UK while promoting Sas Metcalfe to Chief Creative Officer - overseeing

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John Josephson: ‘Our objective isn’t to be the biggest. It’s to achieve the best outcome for songwriters.’

SESAC, one of the most ambitious companies in music, is now officially backed by Blackstone – one of the most powerful private equity companies in the world.

SESAC hasn’t put an official figure on Blackstone’s buyout, which has taken the for-profit collection/licensing society out of the hands of Rizvi Traverse Management. But it’s pretty easy to estimate the pricetag: somewhere between massive-bucks and megabucks.

[Blackstone’s average investment in portfolio companies totals hundreds of millions of dollars. Rizvi reportedly

bought its 75% stake in SESAC for approximately \$600m in 2013.]

SESAC CEO John Josephson says that Blackstone’s money will, over the next decade, help fuel SESAC’s aspirations to become a truly global rights management powerhouse across performance, mechanicals, sync - and even master rights. Plus, you can’t imagine the presence of \$35bn-valued Blackstone will do much harm to SESAC’s mission to increase songwriter payouts from the likes of Google, Facebook and the US radio industry.

Yet according to Josephson, the biggest immediate advantage

of Blackstone’s takeover will be stability. SESAC is Blackstone’s first investment under its new core private equity strategy.

This is specifically designed to hold private equity investments for much longer periods of time than traditional PE funds - expected to amount to a duration in excess of 10 years.

That suits Josephson, who says SESAC has much more to get done worldwide.

SESAC’s global game plan is two-fold: (i) expand its active presence as a multi-rights licensing group across Europe and the rest of the world; and

(ii) pull together mechanicals, sync and performance rights in a manner beyond that of its US competitors.

Part (i) got a big boost last year when SESAC joined forces with Swiss collecting society SUISA to create Mint - a JV to administer and license rights across Europe.

Its EU ambitions were also boosted when SESAC hired SOLAR’s Alexander Wolf to head up its International team. Part (ii) became a reality with one of the most significant deals in recent music publishing history: when SESAC acquired US mechanical rights clearing house The Harry Fox Agency from the NMPA in 2015.

Impressive moves like these have helped attract 30,000+ clients (‘affiliates’) to SESAC’s books, including Bob Dylan, Randy Newman, Green Day, Adele, Kings Of Leon, R.E.M, Zac Brown and Neil Diamond.

MBW caught up with Josephson to ask him all about what Blackstone’s investment means for SESAC and the future of music rights. We also inquired about SESAC’s rivalry with ASCAP and BMI, the current state of global licensing - and how Josephson believes Facebook and YouTube should evolve their treatment of songwriters...

Ultimately, what does the sale to Blackstone achieve?

In a way, I see the acquisition by Blackstone as a coming of age moment for SESAC.

The first thing it does is create stable ownership: we now have an owner with a clearly stated intent to hold its investment in SESAC for an extended period of time. Secondly, Blackstone has both extensive financial resources as well as the desire to provide additional capital as we execute on our plan.

Obviously, we will need to reach a consensus with the team at Blackstone regarding any



Randy Newman

“OUR MESSAGE IS SIMPLE: MUSIC LICENSING SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN A FREE AND FAIR MARKET. IT CAN’T BE A BAD THING TO HAVE BLACKSTONE ALIGNED WITH US.”

prospective investments we want to make but once we’ve reached that consensus, we know the capital is available.

We also believe that having a sophisticated investor like Blackstone aligned with the music rights community as we articulate our legislative agenda could be valuable not just for SESAC, but hopefully the entire music community.

What agendas might you be referring to?

For example, in the U.S., we’re in an ongoing dialogue with the legislative community about how to best achieve fair compensation for songwriters.

Our message is simple: music licensing should take place in a free and fair market. It can’t be a bad thing to have a company with the resources and sophistication of Blackstone aligned with us as we pursue that dialogue.

It might not solve anything immediately, but it has the potential to level the playing field somewhat when you have the tech industry giants devoting enormous resources to pursue their own agenda in Washington.

How far away are you from your aspirations to become a truly global company?

There are two approaches: in the first case, you can try to issue “global” licenses today. I don’t disrespect the intent, but I think the reality is that we as an industry are still quite a way off being able to truly license seamlessly on a global basis.

In the alternative, you can take the checkerboard approach we're pursuing by expanding, initially, on a territory-by-territory basis; focusing on the regions where the real bulk of the dollars are, and growing from there.

Our goal is to be able to actively monetize musical works on behalf of our affiliated writers and publishers across multiple geographic territories, and we are building that capability.

Our SUIA JV represents a first step towards a new focus on Europe. And we're also thinking over the long term about Asia, as well as other regions. There is still an incredible amount of fragmentation which exists in the

from that because these rates become the benchmarks many licensees use when they're negotiating with us. We're able to make decisions more quickly and on a more dynamic basis. That is because we're smaller, nimbler and for-profit.

In the context of the disappointment that was the collapse of the Global Repertoire Database project, are you now a threat to localized mechanical and performance rights societies across Europe and beyond?
I don't see us as a threat. We're trying to take steps to achieve greater efficiency in the marketplace and fair outcomes

“PART OF OUR STRATEGY IS TO FOCUS ON THE COPYRIGHTS WE BELIEVE HAVE THE HIGHEST VALUE. THAT ISN'T CONSISTENT WITH TRYING TO BE THE MARKET SHARE LEADER.”

industry — both across geographic territories and, especially in the US, across different rights types.

I would hope that over the next five years you'll see more and more of SESAC's growth coming from outside the States.

As a private company, Do the Consent Decree restrictions placed on ASCAP and BMI give you a big market advantage?

In net terms I actually think they're a hindrance to us.

They force ASCAP and BMI into a situation - and this isn't knocking either of them - where they're under enormous pressure to agree to rates in their negotiations with licensees that don't necessarily represent the fair market value of the compositions in their respective repertoires. Notwithstanding the fact that we're not a regulated entity and they are, we suffer

for rights holders. I think all industry participants stand to benefit as a result.

We come at it from two perspectives. First, we think the fragmentation of rights categories in the States has created inefficiencies in the marketplace - and that by re-aggregating mechanical and performance rights, you can achieve better outcomes for licensees as well as rights-holders.

Secondly, the major digital platforms operate their businesses on a global basis, yet the rights they need to secure are enormously fragmented across various territories.

We believe [there are] economic efficiencies that can be shared by both end users and rights-owners from having data about compositions across multiple markets.

I'm not so focused on who

might think we're a threat as I am on creating an outcome that serves both the interests of our clients and users of music worldwide. This takes time and focus, which Blackstone's investment will support.

In the US, do you have aspirations to be the No.1 performance society? Is that possible in the shadow of ASCAP and BMI?

That's not our objective, and it's not one we focus on. We have a long runway of growth in our business before we begin to approach either of them in size or scale. When you look at our market share across different categories of music today - we're a very meaningful player, just as GMR is. Our objective isn't to be the biggest. It's to achieve the best outcomes for our affiliates, provide the highest level of service in the marketplace and to operate in a highly efficient manner. To do that, part of our strategy is to focus on the copyrights we believe have the highest value. That approach isn't consistent with trying to be the market share leader.

You mention interest in administering or collecting royalties for sound recordings. What do you think might be your first step into that world?

I don't think there's any immediate opportunity. It's a logical aspiration, but a long-term one. I imagine we're not alone and that some of the larger players in the market may also be thinking about this, and trying to figure out how over time they can position themselves to administer, if not license and clear, both masters and compositions.

But I think it's still some way off, for a variety of reasons.

You've mentioned YouTube and Google. How would you

encourage those businesses to alter their models as regards music as time moves on?

It's a different answer for each of them.

For YouTube, it's an issue of working with them to think more constructively about the value that music brings to their business. YouTube's effective revenue share with the music industry is much lower than other digital platforms. In addition, they often like to talk about how much of what's happening on their platform doesn't involve music. But the reality is that even if, in the first instance, something is not 'music consumption' per se, they're using music to get people to their platform, before monetizing that in a hundred different ways.

I would hope over time they take a more collaborative, constructive view and recognise how valuable music is as a driver of their business.

For Facebook, it's a question of the degree to which they integrate active monetization of music into their product offering.

Music is so elemental to what drives activity on social platforms. Facebook has so many opportunities to optimize the user experience and enhance engagement with product innovations that also involve active monetization of music.

My hope would be that they begin to move more aggressively in this direction, and that they secure the licenses required for them to do so.

Ultimately, premium user experiences require premium music. We believe digital services will recognize this as their businesses evolve.

Direct licensing in the US - particularly between major publishers and the likes of Pandora. Does that concern you for SESAC's future?

It's had a de minimis impact on



Green Day

our business thus far. On a go-forward basis it will have some impact - that's a reality of the marketplace: publishers who control rights should have the freedom to do what they want with them.

For us, it will be more a factor that reduces the growth we see from the digital platforms rather than something that leads to a decline in our digital revenue.

If you talk to digital platforms, many of them don't want to do direct licensing with publishers - they would prefer to clear music through the PROs.

Our view is actually not to fight direct licensing, but rather to get on board with it - to innovate and embrace it.

Since we acquired HFA, we've been speaking with many independent publishers about how we can work with them to facilitate direct licenses for digital platforms that integrate their performance and mechanical rights, with HFA/Rumblefish acting as the administrator of these licenses.

Are you interested in ever owning/acquiring rights?

Our focus is 100% on providing value-added licensing and administration services to writers

and publishers, at the highest level of service we can achieve. We don't have any plans at present to own rights ourselves.

Should the typical streaming/master payout split change... and are you optimistic it will change?
I'm optimistic because it can't possibly get worse!

If you've studied the history of music, when you go back to the origins of copyright in music; it was all about the writers. The composers were the stars. The artists performing [their songs] were struggling to make a living.

The industry has subsequently evolved to a place where the artist, not the writer, is the one the consumer thinks about when he or she listens to a song. That's created its own economic reality in terms of the split between writers and performers.

That shift, however, has been exacerbated by the fact that two-thirds of music publishing income is subject to governmental price controls.

I'm speaking from my own book here: I feel that the current allocation of value is often unfair to writers.

This interview was originally published in January 2017

Craig Kallman: 'We look for a spark of originality and something special.'

"See you down the road, stay cool... you sort of invented the concept."

In any other office, Bono's snappy tribute to Atlantic founder and A&R legend Ahmet Ertegun would hit you in the face as soon as you walked through the door.

But in this office, an office which immediately engulfs you in the enzymes of record business history, its frame modestly rests at knee height, just pleased to make the cut.

This is what's known in Warner's Broadway HQ as 'Ahmet's Room'; a meticulous recreation of the great executive's original professional crucible, where you'll find personal mementos involving the likes of The Rolling Stones, Phil Collins, Clive Davis and Seymour Stein - plus a gaggle of Grammys.

It's a sacred place for Craig Kallman.

2016 marked Kallman's 25th anniversary at Atlantic Records.

Hungry to invigorate the major label with independent, inventive music heads, Ertegun and his then right-hand man, Doug Morris, swooped for Kallman's dance specialist Big Beat Records in 1991.

The impressive young New Yorker, who'd built Big Beat by selling vinyl out the back of his dad's car, was soon anointed as a protegee to the executive pairing.

"I think about making Ahmet proud all the time," Kallman tells MBW, fresh from seeing Atlantic pick up 18 Grammy nominations - including the shock of critics' darling Sturgill Simpson getting a nod for Best Album.

"In my mind, he's truly the greatest A&R man who ever lived. Obviously it's very humbling

and daunting to try and fill his shoes, but it means we come in every day and think: 'Okay, is this artist truly worthy of the Atlantic brand?'"

He adds: "I absorbed many of the fundamentals of what

"I THINK ABOUT MAKING AHMET PROUD ALL OF THE TIME."

built Atlantic as a disciple of Ahmet and Doug, and I use them every day."

There's a physical reminder of these fundamentals right at the heart of Atlantic's head office: a state-of-the-art recording studio at the top of a mezzanine staircase leading up from the company's in-house performance area.

The record-setting OST of smash musical



Hamilton, for one, was worked on within its walls last year.

Kallman, his colleagues tell us away from the Dictaphone, is regarded as the 'right-brain' of Atlantic. His fellow co-Chairman at the top of the company for the past 12 years, marketing, digital and promo specialist Julie Greenwald, is naturally the opposite segment.

It's a fairly clear delineation: Kallman takes care of A&R, while former Def Jam hotshot Greenwald makes sure everyone who needs to listen, listens. (Case in point: Atlantic US has two radio departments to make sure each of the artists of its wide-ranging roster gets the cheerleading they deserve.)

There are other interesting quirks to co-Chairmen Kallman and Greenwald's Yin and Yang: his A&R approach is clearly soaked in Atlantic's timeless creative principles, while Greenwald (as covered in our exclusive interview elsewhere) is hungry to embrace new technological advancement.

Whatever the inexplicable chemistry behind their entwined efforts, it's working.

Market-share wise, Atlantic Records (and its family of sub-labels, including Fueled By Ramen, Big Beat, Elektra, Canvasback, Artist Partners Group and Roadrunner) is having its best two-year spell in recent history - thanks to hits like Twenty One Pilots, Hamilton, Bruno Mars, the Suicide Squad OST, Panic! At The Disco and Melanie Martinez. In 2017, further huge success has come from Ed Sheeran, Lil Uzi Vert, Charlie Puth and more.

"Julie and I both grew up in the industry where our earliest days were super-DIY and entrepreneurial - where you're the underdog constantly trying to make it," Kallman says of his colleague. "We've both experienced building something small from the ground up. We're cut from the same cloth."



Bruno Mars

He adds: "Julie's an extraordinary leader. She's incredibly motivational and she cares about people to a degree in a way you wouldn't normally attribute to the record industry. And then she's wildly creative at the same time.

"She's also the most ferocious person when it comes to breaking a record. If you're an artist, I don't think you could

pick a better warrior to go into battle for you."

One particularly interesting aspect about some of Atlantic's biggest successes of the past decade - including multi-platinum smashes like Ed Sheeran, Bruno Mars and Wiz Khalifa - is that they were dropped by rival labels before Kallman and his global team signed them up.



Sturgill Simpson

What does that tell us about Atlantic's 'underdogs constantly trying to make it'?

Says Kallman: "Often this business can get suckered into,

"Whether it's Bruno, Ed, Sturgill or Skrillex, you're looking for those ingredients which have a super spark of originality and something special.

"OFTEN THE MUSIC BUSINESS CAN GET SUCKERED INTO THE QUICK FIX, AND IF IT'S NOT QUICK ENOUGH, MOVING ON TO THE SHINY NEW PENNY."

'I need it now, I've got to make my quarterly numbers' - the quick fix, and if it's not quick enough, moving on to the shiny new penny.

"We have the luxury of being able to take a long-road view on things. Julie and I both grew up with diverse palettes, not just what was moving on Top 40.

"That's when you can say: 'I'm going to bet on you, but I'm going to give you sunlight and water for a very long time until it works.'"

From Melanie Martinez to Lil Uzi Vert, Charlie Puth and Kevin Gates (who both released Gold and/or Platinum-certified debut LPs in the US last year via APG), Atlantic doesn't seem

to be having too much trouble breaking its priority new artists.

Yet current widespread industry logic dictates that bringing through an 'album artist' amid the slow-moving bog of Spotify's charts is an arduous task.

Has streaming really made breaking artists harder?

"I would argue that in some respects it's harder and in some respects it's easier," replies Kallman. "It's harder from the standpoint of the volume of releases - the fans are deluged. The fact we're even more fervently competing for your time - against social media, TV etc. - has also made it harder.

"On the flip side, avenues that are so democratic which speak to how the public is responding - like YouTube, Spotify and Apple Music - make it easier because the gatekeepers at radio [are less

exclusively influential]. There's an ability to be more true to the artists and not worry so much about whether you fit a format at radio to get to the next threshold."

Outside of WMG, Kallman speaks of his respect for A&R thoroughbreds such as Monte Lipman, Pete Edge, Dave Massey, L.A Reid, Rob Stringer and John Janick, as well as Doug Morris, of course ("he really is formidable").

"It's gotten to be a small enough industry now that there's a benefit for the tide to rise for all of us and restore the business to a place of health," says Kallman.

"We really should be rooting for each other's success, and that can sometimes gets lost in the cut-throat competitiveness of it all."

By any measure, Kallman's quarter-century tenure at Atlantic is remarkable.

A stretch as head of an individual major label is more typically in the single figures - before the likes of Sir Lucian Grainge or Doug Morris come a'poaching, or a rocky signing record leads to the exit sign.

Kallman says the incentives keeping him at Atlantic haven't come from above, but from all around him.

"Both Julie and I have spent a long time together building this team," he says. "When you get the opportunity to work for your home-grown people, for so long, you develop a rhythm. You can speak in shorthand, you can sometimes telepathically operate. It allows us to be hyper-productive and really efficient."

He adds: "I think the reason we've been able to break more new acts than any other label year-in, year-out is because all of us have worked for so long together. Today's artists are smart about the industry -

they know it's usually executive musical chairs all over the place.

"Artists sign to people who believe in them, and they want to know you're going to be there to fulfill the dreams you're promising them.

"You can't do that if you're jumping around to the next company for a bigger payday."

He adds: "We run the A&R department here differently to any other A&R department; it's all for one, one for all.

"A&R is usually cutthroat and

very individual-driven - if you think about Geffen, where Gersh, Kalodner and Zutaut were all trying to kill each other.

"We're kind of the opposite at Atlantic today. Everyone helps and contributes to each other's records."

Many people know that Kallman has stockpiled an extraordinary record collection. Not many people know exactly why.

His latest tally of mint edition vinyl, he tells us, has topped 800,000 items - and he's certain he'll surpass the million mark before long.



This compendium began in panic. At the dawn of the CD's arrival, Kallman was being told by the music business that the new format would "eviscerate" vinyl - a forecast that wasn't far off the mark.

Deeply concerned that the sound quality of his favourite recordings would be diminished forever more, Kallman began amassing an arsenal of immaculate vinyl for future generations - a mission that hasn't halted even as vinyl has enjoyed a noughties revival.

Kallman's obsession with sound quality has now translated into support for new HD digital recordings technology MQA, which he believes could represent the next big achievement (and payday) for the global music business.

"We've dumbed down music for too long because convenience trumped quality," he says. "Now, bandwidth and streaming capabilities mean you can have it all."

"Real studio master quality is attainable now, which is a really enticing proposition given that we've been downgrading the quality of sound for decades."

"As the streaming services get more and more traction and get healthier we're going to see a real exciting appetite for higher quality. It's an exciting new chapter for the music industry."

MQA is set to make a big splash, following a special unveiling at CES in Las Vegas.

2017 is a banner year for Kallman, as he celebrates 30 years since he created the Big Beat label - still operating today as a subsidiary of Atlantic (Skrillex, Galantis, Robin Schulz).

As Kallman and Atlantic continue to progress, the influence of history - and of the company's vivacious father figure - will never be far away.

"Ahmet was the consummate record man, partier and lover



Ed Sheeran

"WE REALLY SHOULD BE ROOTING FOR EACH OTHER'S SUCCESS, AND THAT CAN SOMETIMES GET LOST IN THE CUT-THROAT COMPETITIVENESS OF IT ALL."

of music," says Kallman of Atlantic's founder.

"He was just magnetic, so artists trusted him and revered him. Ahmet taught me the importance of building the right relationship with the artist, while allowing them the freedom needed for their creativity to blossom. And how to add value, make it fun - an exciting journey."

Adds Kallman: "I love what I do. My aspiration is simply to keep building and growing the best record company. I owe it to Ahmet as the founder of this place, and to the legacy of Atlantic, to keep infusing it with the best artists I possibly can."

This interview was originally published in December 2016

WE COLLECT EVERYWHERE





Pascal Nègre: 'The music business used to be about the indies vs. the majors; now it's the quick vs. the slow.'

Pascal Nègre has been busy.

The revered French executive sent shockwaves through the global business in February 2016 when he left Universal Music Group after 26 years.

It was later suggested that Nègre had experienced a fractious relationship with Vincent Bolloré - a powerful 20%+ stakeholder in UMG parent Vivendi, and the man Sir Lucian Grainge ultimately has to keep happy.

In the weeks following Nègre's high-profile departure, MBW and other industry chatterboxes began speculating over where he might end up.

We needn't have bothered: in the blink of an eye, Stage Two of his career was already up-and-running. A fortnight after departing his role as CEO of Universal Music France, Nègre became a key player in the team behind emerging French artist Claudio Capéo.

Capéo's self-titled breakthrough album was released in July last year, signed to Jo&Co - the label founded by Nègre's friend (and former UMG colleague) Sébastien Saussez. To date, it's sold over 400,000 copies.

In recent months, Nègre has also been behind the launch of two successful startups.

The first is his very own independent label, Six et Sept - which arrived this year as a joint venture with RTL Group and its subsidiary, M6, the second-biggest television channel in France.

Six et Sept is being run on a day-to-day basis by Julien Creuzard - the former head of Capitol and Polydor in France, who last year launched the Elektra label for Warner in the market.

Nègre's other new venture - the one taking up the majority of his time - is #NP, a Paris-based management company established in partnership with



Claudio Capéo

Live Nation. #NP's gameplan, according to Nègre, is to become a "serious management company in France" - a market whose artists, he says, are typically looked after by independent

the biggest acts in France".

In this age of increasing artist empowerment, #NP represents a delicious contrast for Pascal Nègre's career. For quarter of a century, he was an unassailable

place of employment.

In an exclusive and candid interview, MBW quizzes Nègre on his new love for artist management, why major labels are going to need to start pinching ideas from publishers - and, naturally, that controversial and much talked-about exit from Universal...

"WHEN I WAS YOUNG, A LABEL WOULD SIGN AN UNKNOWN ARTIST... THEN PROMOTE THEM [ACROSS THE COUNTRY]. NOW THE OPPOSITE IS OFTEN TRUE."

operators. Less than a year in, #NP is making remarkable headway.

The company already boasts some of France's biggest acts on its roster, from Julien Clerc to Marc Lavoine, Matthieu Chedid and Carla Bruni.

It's also working with stadium-selling diva Mylène Farmer on a services basis. Nègre says the ambition is to eventually sign a limited roster of "nine or ten of

figurehead for the major record company approach.

At UMG, Nègre was instrumental in breaking artists such as Lady Gaga, Eminem, U2 and Mariah Carey in Europe - alongside a string of hugely successful French acts.

Now, he's firmly on the side of the performers themselves - and hasn't forgotten a single trick from his previous

Blockbuster acts are increasingly taking control of all elements of their career - and their copyrights. #NP offers artists label-like services across A&R, promotion, marketing, brand partnerships, social media and streaming. that puts you in a great position as a manager, but if you still had your previous job, it would give you a bit of a headache...

Exactly. I agree.

We can see that artists - big acts, but also smaller acts in hip-hop and dance especially - are



Carla Bruni

acting more and more as their own production companies.

They want to control all aspects of their monetization.

So they want either a license deal, with the major helping to market and promote, or they increasingly just want a simple distribution deal.

It's a big change we're going to see happen more and more.

I'd imagine that artists like Chance The Rapper will inspire lots of young artists to think that way.

Yes. If you are in hip-hop or EDM music today, you can produce your record at home. So the cost of production is less than ever.

At the same time, by creating your buzz on the internet with social networks, you are your

“THE MAJOR LABELS WILL DO A LOT MORE MONEY ON BACK CATALOGUE, AND THEY WILL DO LESS MONEY ON BIG ACTS.”

own media. And the more 'mainstream' media - radio, TV, press - are looking what's happening on social networks. It's changed the game.

When I was young - ten years ago [laughs] - a record company would sign an unknown artist, someone maybe just known in their home city.

Then you'd start to bring in TV

and radio and begin to promote them [across the country].

Now it's often the opposite: record companies are signing artists who already have buzz and momentum behind them.

As someone who was in a major label environment for so long, what does that mean for the majors? Are they going to increasingly become distribution companies? How do you see them evolving?

My feeling is that record companies are going to become more like publishing companies; the record company model of tomorrow will be the publishing company model of today.

What we call 'distribution' in records, they call 'admin' in publishing. They also do co-



publishing deals, which is [like] a grant of a licence. There is nothing new in this business!

Won't that present economic challenges for the majors? BMC CEO Hartwig Masuch recently suggested that as artists demand better royalty splits on streaming - especially via licensing or distribution deals - the majors' margins will get squeezed...

I don't think it will be a big economic challenge for them. The reality is that on big acts, [the majors] will do less money than before - but they will still make a lot of money.

Back catalogue is going to deliver a lot of turnover and profit to these companies. If you look at the revenue share of catalogue on

physical [sales], it's around a third of the business. But in streaming, it's around 55%+. So on the one hand, [the majors] will do a lot more money on back catalogue, and on the other hand, they will do less money on big acts.

Again, it's the model of publishing: your back catalogue provides a lot of cash, which you invest in doing admin deals, advances and co-publishing deals. I don't think it is a big problem.

Presumably then, the most talented A&R people in major labels will increasingly end up as independent operators... or making the switch to join management companies.

If you are suggesting that management companies can

“IF YOU ARE SUGGESTING THAT MANAGEMENT COMPANIES CAN BECOME A SORT OF ‘RECORD LABEL OF TOMORROW’, I THINK SO.”

become a sort of 'record label of tomorrow', I think so.

But I've learned something. I'm an old guy: I started in this business 30 years ago, when 90% of the industry was not owned in terms of distribution by three major companies.

There were eight major companies and big [independent] labels - Motown, Island, Chrysalis... you know the names. In each country, you'd also have big independent labels - Barclay or Carrere in France, for example.

We forget about that today. During the '90s, the majors acquired a lot of big independent labels, and after that - because of the market decline [due to piracy] - we got concentration with a lot of mergers [like EMI into Universal]. When the music market is back, and growing over the next ten years, you'll see exactly the opposite. I'm convinced about that.

We'll see a new generation of strong independent labels?

Yes. We can predict that the record business is going to double in the next five years. So naturally there will be space for a lot of new people.

I'm speaking both about artists who are going to produce and market themselves [on their own labels], and also new independent labels.

You're going to see the

independent label back, stronger than ever. That's why we have created Six et Sept.

I think that some new acts still need a label to invest today. That will often depend on the genre of music. You can do a hip-hop or electronic record at home. But if suddenly you want to do a big pop record, or a record with amazing musicians or an orchestra, you need somebody to pay for that.

If you're famous, you might be able to pay for it yourself. But if you're not, you're going to need a record company.

A big question: do you miss working for Universal?

Universal was a part of my life. But since I left I've already done tons of things. So the answer to your question is no.

I love meeting people; I love beautiful encounters. Suddenly, you meet an artist or somebody special, and you start doing new things together.

I continue to do that with artists and my team.

I love writing new pages in the story of music. And that's exactly what I'm doing today, working within an exciting new model.

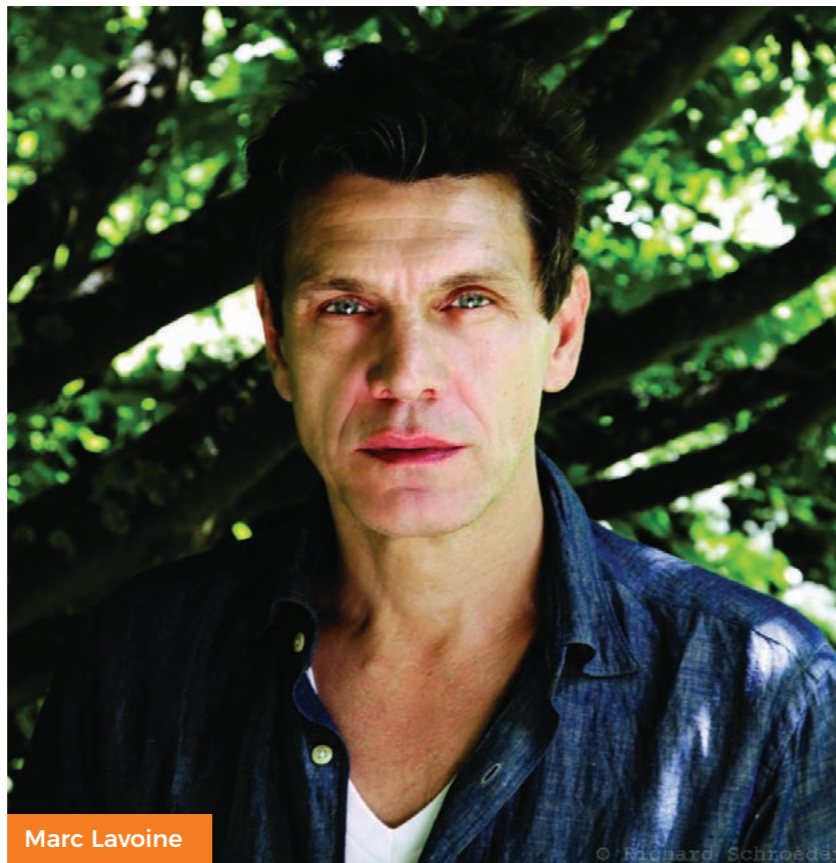
How would you sum up that 'exciting new model' in today's music business?

For a long time, the battle was between major and indie - the big and the little.

Today, the battle is between the quick and the slow. When you are little, it's easier to move quickly - and that's so exciting.

There were some reports around the time of your exit from Universal that there was some friction between you and Vincent Bolloré at Vivendi. Can you still deal with Universal?

We've done a deal with Universal for Claudio Capéo [in continental] Europe. Carla Bruni is on Universal and Marc Lavoine is on Universal.



Marc Lavoine

“DO NOT FORGET THAT LUCIAN GRAINGE STARTED IN THE PUBLISHING BUSINESS. I THINK THAT WILL HELP HIM A LOT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.”

It is not a problem.

How are you feeling about the nature of your exit from Universal Music now?

For me, I need to have a fit with my boss. I really appreciate Grainge. But there was no fit between Bolloré and me. And when there is no fit, you stop. In the end, it was a fantastic thing for me. It allowed me to have a new adventure and build something different with a strong partner in Live Nation, who are fantastic. I have a good feeling with Live Nation's people and M6's people too. I believe it's

easier to be where I am today than to run a major company - because there you need to adapt a big boat to the new conditions of the market. Those new conditions are changing rapidly.

A quick word on Sir Lucian Grainge: why did you get on with him, and what do you make of how he's running Universal?

Grainge is running a company which is No.1. End of story.

It's interesting to hear you say you 'fit' with him...
I knew Lucian since when he



“LIVE NATION ARE REALLY PROFESSIONAL AND THEY LOVE ARTISTS - THAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO ME. AND THEY ARE EXPANDING IN A SPECTACULAR WAY.”

the artist. Live Nation are really professional and they love artists - that is really important to me. And they are expanding in a spectacular way.

John [Reid, Live Nation international boss] has been extremely supportive. I always believe you make more intelligent decisions when you can talk to other people and you're not on your own.

The idea with Live Nation is exactly that: to share a vision, and to move quicker.

If you look at Artist Nation, and all the management companies working within that in the US, it's really impressive and really clever.

Do you have any ambition to expand #NP into London, New York or Los Angeles?

No. We want to be known as the artist management specialist in France. Inside Live Nation, there are very impressive management companies working in the US and UK - they don't need me there.

But in the second stage of #NP's growth I will meet my famous colleagues to see if we can help in France.

Anything I haven't asked that you'd like to say to the world?

Yes. I'm really, really happy.

This interview was originally published in April 2017

was running Polydor and I was running a label in France - 25 years ago. He was a baby in the UK, I was a baby in France. He grew up, and I grew up.

During the 10 years when he was running UMGI [Universal Music Group International], we worked closely together with Max Hole and Boyd Muir.

That was a fantastic adventure, and UMGI was a real success - it's because of that success that [Grainge] became the king of Universal Music Group.

I really appreciate Grainge. He's clever and he's a real A&R guy. Do

not forget that Lucian started in the publishing business. I think that will help him a lot over the next five years, for the reasons I have discussed.

What does Live Nation's investment and partnership mean for #NP?

The game with Live Nation was first and foremost to create a serious management company in France, and we've done it in a couple of months.

In France, there are lots of managers who are the brother, the sister or the best friend of



Golnar Khosrowshahi: 'If the livelihood of songwriters is threatened, the music industry as a whole is threatened.'

On February 22, Rag'N'Bone Man collected the coveted BRITs Critics Choice award in the UK - pipping two other UK acts set for big things, Dua Lipa and Anne-Marie, to the annual prize.

New York-born Reservoir was proudly applauding from the sidelines - but they would have been delighted whoever picked up the gong.

Reservoir's writers made crucial contributions to the three hits which have propelled this trio of bright young things forward.

In Rag'N'Bone Man's case, it was Human - a No.1 record in no less than 12 markets, co-written by Reservoir client Jamie Hartman. For Dua Lipa, it was Blow Your Mind (co-written with Lauren Christy), and for Anne-Marie it was the global streaming smash, Alarm - co-written with Reservoir's Ina Wroldsen.

Reservoir's claim to boosting blockbuster British artists in 2017 doesn't stop there, either: Wroldsen also co-wrote Rockabye by Clean Bandit (ft. Anne-Marie), which topped both the UK and Australian charts.

What's fuelling this run of success for Reservoir, which recently climbed inside the Top 10 US publishers by market share?

Well, acquisition helps. The well-funded private company has swooped for two respected UK indie publishers in recent years.

It snapped up Reverb Music in 2012, which saw more than 30,000 copyrights ingested into Reservoir, in addition to 100 active songwriters - including Hartman (James Bay, Christina Aguilera), John Fortis (Ellie Goulding, The Prodigy) and Peter Gorden (Depeche Mode). And a year later, Reservoir bought out London-based P&P Songs, which owned over 1,000 titles and worked with a small roster that included Wroldsen (Calvin Harris, Jess Glynne, Little Mix).

Both of these takeovers came in the wake of Reservoir's



Jamie Hartman

“A&R WILL BE, AT SOME POINT, ONE OF THE ONLY PARTS OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS THAT CANNOT BE AUTOMATED. IT IS THE HUMAN TOUCH OF OUR INDUSTRY.”

2010 acquisition of the music publishing assets of TVT Music Enterprises - and its roster which included Scott Storch, Lil Jon and the Cinematics.

This buying power would mean little, says Reservoir, without a company-wide commitment to invest in top A&R talent.

Rather than mothballing Reverb as a stale catalogue acquisition, for example, Reservoir has pumped resource into the company as its strategic UK base.

The firm is still run by former Reverb boss and A&R specialist Annette Barrett, who has worked

with artists including the likes of George Michael, Elton John, Madonna, Prince and Sting across a 30-year career.

Elsewhere, Reservoir has hired 20-year UMPG veteran Donna Caseine (Mariah Carey, Alanis Morissette, Ariana Grande) to run its A&R efforts on the West Coast. Caseine recently brought over the Grammy-nominated Lauren Christy (Bebe Rexha, Chris Brown) to the company.

In Reservoir's New York HQ you'll find ex-Def Jam/Columbia exec Faith Newman (SVP of A&R and Catalog Development) as well as Hussain "Spek" Yoosuf (SVP of Creative and A&R) - working across a roster which also includes 2 Chainz, Devo Springsteen (Kanye West, John Legend), XL, Nitin Sawhney and Joey Bada\$\$ - plus Offset and Takeoff from Migos.

"People said publicly a few years ago that A&R was dead," Reservoir COO Rell Lafargue tells MBW.

"We couldn't disagree more. Every creative person needs human beings to talk about ideas. There's no app, no portal, that can ever replace A&R."



Annette Barrett

The President & Founder of Reservoir, Golnar Khosrowshahi, echoes these words.

While other companies crowd about their admin and technology ability, says Khosrowshahi, Reservoir is primarily focusing on A&R; the one area of the music business, as she puts it, which "cannot be automated".

An elected NMPA board member, Khosrowshahi is well-versed in wider industry issues, and offers some firm opinions on how the music industry should evolve in the years ahead.

MBW sat down with Khosrowshahi to ask why such a focus on A&R exists at her company, where she feels the music publishing industry is moving - and what the business can expect next from her acquisitive company...

What's the secret behind Reservoir's success this year?

We have put together, over the years, a creative team which I believe has an equal balance of experience and forward-looking mentality on the industry.

If you look at the past 20 years of the music business, companies have suffered not because they didn't have experience, but because there's been a little bit of denial as to how this industry has changed. That's part of it. But we also have a very high-quality, driven team which knows its songwriters and can help them on the creative trajectory that is suitable for their careers. It's not a cookie-cutter approach.

It's not 'let's just get them in all of these sessions in LA that everyone knows about'.

We take a bespoke approach; we are essentially curating these careers. It's our contractual and fiduciary responsibility.

Why as a business are you so confident in investing in frontline A&R?

It will be, at some point, one of the only parts of this business that cannot be automated - that cannot be replaced by an app or some kind of back-end technology. It is the human touch of our industry.

I don't see the business justification to invest in

songwriters but then not have the creative [executive] talent to support that investment.

If we're going to spend money, whether it's \$1,000 or \$100,000 into a songwriter, we better have the ammunition behind it to bring that investment home.

You have money to spend. You've acquired businesses like Reverb, P&P and T&T in the past. What's your ambition?

We would very much like to see ourselves in a top position, size-wise, within the independent publisher marketplace.

We want to maintain this curated approach to catalogue, and give bespoke attention to songwriters with a sense of independence - but scale is very important in this business.

Are you actively looking for acquisition targets? And if so, what are you looking for?

We are always actively looking. We prefer to look at absorbing assets rather than companies.

That being said, Reverb and P&P Songs were both transactions that were company

acquisitions, but for specific strategic reasons.

In Reverb, we found a group of like-minded individuals who we believed we could work with on a long-term basis. It was a turn-key, high quality way to establish a footprint in the UK.

We're always looking to diversify the catalogue, and we also want to diversify the roster: we don't want to be in a situation where our songwriter talents are duplicated.

If we have four or five songwriters who excel in the same milieu, then we're not really interested in adding to those areas. We see a pretty robust [music publishing] transaction environment right now.

Across Donna, Annette, Faith and yourself, Reservoir's senior executive team looks a little more diverse than many others in the music business...

This happens to be probably one of the industry's strongest A&R teams who also happen to be women. They have the career to back it up - and the success stories to back it up.

It wasn't deliberate, but it has come about and I'm proud of it.

I'm surprised at how clients, songwriters and people in the industry find it such an interesting fact. We've simply put the best people we've found in the positions that they're in.

Los Angeles is becoming a hub for songwriting talent. Do you have ambitions to expand on the West Coast?

It's the logical next step, and at some point we're going to need an office out there. That will be changing sooner rather than later.

You were elected onto the board of the NMPA. What are your biggest concerns about the monetization of this side of the business?

Today, our biggest concern is the

100% licensing issue [in the US].

That's a logistical concern: the back-end of [music publishing] is already difficult enough to manage. How does one even put the controls in place to effectuate that kind of a policy?

Also, as we see this streaming market grow, we need to get to a place where creators are compensated in such a way they are not having to incrementally 'sell their product' 100 times over to make the same amount of money.

That's a big concern - and all the data, forecasts and projects call for significant growth in that area. Streaming is here to stay. We need to figure out how the creators are going to be compensated. That's probably our most important job.

Can you see a day when the currently split between masters and publishing royalties will be adjusted? Especially when the three biggest record companies now effectively own the three biggest publishers?

I'm very optimistic we are going to get to a place where the publishing rights and creators' rights are recognized.

Because here's the alternative: if the livelihood of songwriters is threatened, the music industry as a whole is threatened. I don't think people will allow that to happen.

One concern I've heard is that it might be more cost-effective for the majors to allow the master right to hold the bigger value. Will they therefore be incentivized to make a change?

While in the immediate sense, you might be looking at the current profitability, they need to ask what that [split] means for the future. Because it means both sides suffer.

I remain optimistic about it, even if, for the near-term, it doesn't look as cost-effective for certain companies.

There seems to be a groundswell of support - outside maybe Spotify - of the idea of songwriters being paid on a per-stream basis. Is that something you're in favor of?

I am, and I'm optimistic it can be achieved. I'm generally in favor of formulaic approaches that simplify what we do, and the transparency that goes hand-in-hand with it.

What we do is already complicated enough. The more we can do as an industry collectively to simplify that, the better in my opinion.

That's one of the [industry's] big problems today: when you want to put a value on something, it takes a significant amount of time to work out the method you're using to do so.

Final question: why have you plumped for music publishing with Reservoir, and do you have a plan to move beyond those rights into masters, management etc?

We have interest in moving beyond publishing when it makes strategic sense and enhances our service offering.

If you look at the business and consider which parts of it are going to become automated over however long, what other human touches [outside A&R] can we add? Management is obviously interesting from that perspective.

We did acquire some master rights - the Philly Groove and Nickel Shoe label catalogues - as a result of a 2012 acquisition.

When it makes strategic sense for us to [buy] more master rights - when it puts us in a position to license at 100% [across masters and publishing] - that's super-captivating.

But it always has to meet the criteria of helping us provide a better service to our songwriters.

This interview was originally published in January 2017

Denis Desmond: 'The support we give artists speaks for itself.'

Any assessment of Live Nation's 2017 will, now and always, come with a caveat.

The world's largest live music promoter is, undoubtedly, having a successful and strategically interesting year. It has been voraciously acquisitive and it has sold a lot of tickets.

In the UK and Ireland alone, for example, in June, it admitted 1.1m fans to shows. That's 26% up on last year. And it has plenty of major tours lined up for the back half of the year.

But.

One of its shows, Ariana Grande at the Manchester Arena on May 22, was the subject of the most sickening terror attack. 23 people died and over 200 were injured when the most heartless, joyless, soulless lowlife imaginable used a suicide bomb to target teenage pop fans - some going to their first ever gig, some on their first proper night out without their parents.

Less than two weeks later, of course, in that same city, 50,000 people of all ages, genders and sexualities danced their hearts out and arses off to lovely, glittery pop music. Millions more watched through tears at home, feeling more connected and more love than the fuckwit who carried out the attack could have ever imagined.

Denis Desmond, chairman, Live Nation UK & Ireland reflects: "Obviously the initial reaction was one of total shock. It was a Live Nation show, staff were traumatized.

"It's an atrocity that in your worst nightmares you wouldn't have expected to happen, but unfortunately, these are the times that we live in.

"What can we do going



"THE BIGGEST THING THAT'S HAPPENING IS PEOPLE ARE CARRYING ON. THEY WILL CONTINUE TO GO TO SHOWS."

forward? I think security is always evolving, the body searches will continue, but it's a balance, you don't want to put fear into people when it comes to going to a show.

"People are more vigilant, doors are opening earlier - and people are happy with that. They like to see a big police and security presence, they like that everyone is searched; there is an element of inconvenience, but it makes people feel more comfortable.

"Overall though, the biggest thing that's happening is people

are carrying on. They will continue to go to shows.

"They, we, are not going to let a tiny number of fanatical killers stop us; that is not going to happen."

Live Nation's June numbers back that up, of course, and make them worth celebrating - even, for once, by those who may express concern about LN's increasingly dominant position

Desmond (pictured, main) has been in the live business for over 35 years and has a 15 year+ partnership with Live Nation in the form of co-owned LN-Gaiety Holdings (Reading & Leeds, Latitude, DF Concerts, MAMA, Academy Music Group).

He made his name in his native Ireland, with his family-owned promotions company, MCD (which has a 70% market share in the country).

He was always, however, a player on the global stage - and now he's a player within live music's ultimate global company.



U2 and Noel Gallagher at Twickenham (pic: Danny North)

How have you found being chairman at Live Nation UK & Ireland and what have you learned since you've been in the belly of the beast?

Well, for a start, there's a great team of people here, starting at the very top with [CEO] Michael Rapino. The people who work here aren't tired. There's passion and there's energy and I love that. There's definitely an eagerness to succeed, but equally to enjoy it.

You look at bands who come in, like Pearl Jam, for instance; 20 years ago Ticketmaster was the devil [to them], and now they're part of the Live Nation family and they're looking at investing in a venue in Seattle with us.

And you look at people like Madonna and U2 who have been with the company for decades. That goes beyond any contract. That's about working with people and about helping people.

You mentioned Michael Rapino. How much does his personality

and drive shape and steer Live Nation?

I think what he's achieved is quite phenomenal. He's really passionate about what he does.

The thing about Michael is, he loves music. It's not about the numbers. He goes to shows, he enjoys going to shows, and he has great relationships with the artists. A lot of the deals that are done come down to those great relationships that he and Arthur [Fogel, president, global touring] have, and their understanding of what those artists needs.

And they don't bullshit. When they say they'll deliver something, they deliver. And that's crucial. That trust that they've developed over the years is so important. Michael is an inspiration and a pleasure to work with.

When comparing timeframes in the live business, there will always be some fluctuation depending on who's out on tour, but your June increase of 26%

suggests a deeper lying upward trend than just a fortunate confluence of big name artists on the road, right?

Very much so.

The market is strong at the moment, the live industry is getting bigger and bigger. I think the great thing about it is that the industry is 60 years young and has grown to the stage where it caters to everyone, from six years of age to 76 years of age - a huge cross section of people and a huge range of shows.

And, of course, underpinning everything is the fact that there's nothing better than a good live show. And artists who put on good shows and invest in the shows, they see the returns, they see the loyalty, they see people coming back.

What have the UK highlights been this summer?

Depeche Mode, certainly. For a band that is going strong after 35 years old to sell out the Olympic



Depeche Mode at the Olympic Stadium in June

Stadium [in June] was a huge result. They delivered an amazing show and, quite rightly, got staggering reviews.

Similarly, for Guns n Roses to sell out two shows at the Olympic Stadium, 140,000-odd tickets, and to not only sell it out, but to deliver two spectacular performances and get rave reviews, just brilliant. I think a lot of people would have gone there not sure what to expect and were blown away.

Jeff Lynne's ELO at Wembley Stadium, that was the biggest gig ever in his career, and that sold out well in advance.

Then in July we've had U2 and Coldplay, both of which again, spectacular shows. Stadium wise, it's going very, very well.

The acts you've mentioned are 'heritage' acts and, whilst it's an old bugbear, how much do

you keep an eye on the grass roots side of things and how concerned are you about the next generation of stadium acts coming through?

I think the next generation is definitely out there. All you've got to do is look at the recent sales for The Killers arena tour, practically every show is sold out - multiple nights in London, multiple nights in Birmingham and Manchester. The Killers can be around for as long as they want to be.

Royal Blood are doing three sold out shows at Ally Pally, which is very strong for a band that's only on their second album.

Rag N Bone Man's doing really well. Drake was a huge tour for us, Bruno Mars was very, very successful, we're looking at dates for Kendrick Lamar late this year/early next year. Kanye West will come to Europe some time next year, so there are plenty of big

artists out there on their way up.

A classic example is Queens of the Stone Age. They've been around 15 years now - they've played the festivals at 3pm in the afternoon, they've worked their way up the bill and they're now a headliner and they will be headlining their own open air shows next summer.

They've already sold 20,000 tickets for their Wembley Arena and O2 shows which are coming later this year [in November].

Twenty One Pilots are no doubt a headliner of the future, as are The 1975 and Catfish and the Bottlemen, who recently did Finsbury Park for us, where we sold 32,500 tickets.

Who's the best live act in the world today?

There are a number of spectacular acts playing today. I'll deflect your question slightly

by telling you the best shows I've seen this year: U2, Coldplay, Adele, Take That and Hans Zimmer - there's the curveball, the Hans Zimmer show, but you see it and, Wow, that's good.

Guns n Roses at Slane Castle, in front of 80,000 people was also a special show for me personally.

I'm guessing you'll have had mixed experiences with that band over the years?

My first experience with them was 25-odd years ago, when, again, they were playing Slane Castle, and in those days you had to do the shows there in daylight.

I remember they were due on stage at 6:30pm, and at 6pm Axl was still in his hotel 25 miles away. This time around, he was there the day before and they went on stage 10 minutes early. They played for three hours and it was awesome.

Do you think Axl's stint with AC/DC changed his mindset a little bit?

I think most definitely. He clearly has a huge respect for AC/DC and I think the discipline that band has, and has had for 40+ years, rubbed off on him. I think Angus [Young, AC/DC guitarist] was very much an influence.

As the revenues have increased in the live sector, how has that changed the dynamic between companies like yourselves and the record labels?

I suppose the big change is that initially bands toured to sell records and now the live income is the major source for most artists and the record is the trailer for the gig.

You bring your music out, you raise your profile and you announce your tour.

The record companies still play a huge and important part in marketing the acts, marketing them globally, and, to give them their due, they do write that



"THE MARKET IS STRONG AT THE MOMENT, THE LIVE INDUSTRY IS GETTING BIGGER AND BIGGER."

cheque, from day one, and invest in those artists.

I wonder how they feel, then, when they put in that effort, time and money in, and then the majority of those artists' revenues come from the live side. That's an issue for them isn't it?

It is, but I think the investment is probably more about time and effort than it ever was, and less about money. The days are gone of big cheques and big advances. No one's spending a million making a video these days.

Plus there are a lot of '360' deals still out there, which means they are getting a percentage of live revenues.

What does ambition look like for Live Nation look like these days?

Just to continue to do what we do well. We're very good at selling tickets. Globally we have 100-odd offices, we invest in talent worldwide, we believe in music, we believe in the live performance, we believe

in supporting artists, so a lot of the deals we're doing are development deals, where I suppose we have kind of replaced the record companies, from an advance point of view.

So when you have artists coming along saying they would like to spend X on production, because we're about to go on tour, that money can come from Live Nation, and that's us investing in the artists, that's us saying, we believe. And it can be a big investment.

So yeah, it's great selling out stadiums, it's great having big festivals, but we're also committed to new and up-and-coming acts and we put a lot of time and effort into the future.

We will continue to grow, we will continue to launch new events, we will continue to develop the Lollapalooza brand internationally, which is already very successful in Berlin and this year is in Paris, you'll see one or two more of those happening.

We will continue to develop the Wireless [Festival] brand; it's gone into Germany and will go into Spain next year.

The Download brand has gone into France last year and Spain this year. We'll continue to make those sort of moves.

Do you sometimes think Live Nation gets a bad rap from rivals and the press because of your size and success?

Actions speak louder than words, and the support we've given to artists over the last seven or eight years speaks for itself.

You will always get somebody who says, 'I'm totally indie and I don't want to part of Live Nation' - and that's to be admired as well.

On top of that, if you're successful, there's always someone who's going to have a dig at you; that will never change.

This interview was originally published in July 2017



Steve Boom: 'Music streaming still needs to get a lot easier for consumers.'

Did you know that Amazon owns the world's biggest paid-for music streaming service?

Cards on the table.. that claim relies on a bit of a technicality.

Based on Amazon's \$6.4bn revenue in 2016 from 'retail subscription services', the latest estimates suggest that the company has around 65m Prime members worldwide.

These Prime subscribers - who pay an annual fee for speedier delivery of goods and other perks - automatically gain access to (and therefore technically become customers of) Prime Music, the ad-free, limited-catalogue tier of Amazon's music

streaming offering.

Prime Members can pay an additional \$7.99-a-month (or \$79 a year) to gain access to Amazon Music Unlimited - a full on-demand service with 30m+ tracks, including the odd major exclusive (most notably, the Garth Brooks catalogue).

That same service will cost non-Prime members \$9.99-per-month, while a budget \$3.99-a-month offering will get you all the music... locked to a single Amazon Echo speaker.

The Echo, and its voice-assistant Alexa, is Amazon's not-so-secret weapon against the likes of Apple Music and Spotify - and has been

"ECHO WAS INSTALLED IN AROUND 6% OF US HOMES BY THE END OF LAST YEAR, LESS THAN 18 MONTHS AFTER IT ARRIVED ON SHELVES."

designed to put even the most technologically inept consumer at ease. Ask Alexa to 'play the song that goes "drinking fast and then we talk slow"', for example,

and she will instantly oblige with Ed Sheeran's Shape Of You.

Such accessibility has made Echo a smash hit: in January, CIRP estimated that over 8m units of the device had been sold in the US since its public launch in July 2015.

Echo was therefore installed in around 6% of US homes by the end of last year, less than 18 months after it arrived on shelves.

What's more, for the music business, Amazon Music Unlimited - and its symbiotic relationship with Echo/Alexa - is defining itself rather differently to Spotify and Apple Music.

Senior label types tell us that rock and country artists skew far higher on Amazon's platform in the US than elsewhere - surely good news for those who fear such genres are destined for marginalization as hip-hop, EDM and pop dominate global streaming charts.

Steve Boom is the VP of Amazon Music in San Francisco - and the exec in charge of making the big calls around the development of Amazon's service.

In an exclusive interview with MBW, Boom discusses Amazon's ambitions in digital music, streaming's potential to grow globally, the tricky subject of artist exclusives and free vs. paid - plus the small matter of how we're all going to listen to music in future...

According to the latest stats from MiDIA Research, the worldwide paid-music streaming audience is believed to have topped 106m people in 2016. How much bigger can that get, and what needs to happen to accelerate that growth?

We believe it can get a lot bigger. We've already seen a pretty dramatic shift in the fortunes of the industry over the past two or three years as a result of streaming becoming more popular. And we think we're right

at the beginning of the story.

One of the biggest things that needs to happen [for optimum growth] is that streaming needs to get a lot easier for consumers.

If you look back into the old world, whether you flipped on your radio or stuck a CD in the tray, music was a lot simpler for everybody to use.

With streaming, you have to download mobile apps, then go through the process of subscribing [with credit card details] - stages that make it much harder.

Part of the excitement around Echo and Alexa has specifically been around how much easier it makes things.

In which ways specifically does Alexa make that process less painful - and why should music rightsholder be excited?

One is how you subscribe. Let's say you ask Alexa to play the new song by Imagine Dragons and Alexa tells you it's not available in Amazon Music Unlimited - but that for \$3.99-per-month you can subscribe. All you have to do is say 'yes' to begin your free trial, and the music starts playing.

Because Amazon has your credit card [details] stored - because people have that trusted relationship with us - it's the easiest way to subscribe to music that has ever existed. Bar none.

People in the music business get super-excited by that because it takes all of the difficulty, all of the friction, out of streaming music.

[Alexa] allows music into our lives in a much more pervasive way. When you use something every day and it's effortless like that, of course you'll be willing to pay for it.

There are countless examples of how a voice interface connected to a speaker is changing the way people interact with music in a very positive way. Not only is music streaming



Steve Boom

very early, but the adoption of products like Echo is very early as well - and we've already seen profound results.

Who are Amazon Music Unlimited's potential customers and how do they compare to those of - for example - Apple Music and Spotify?

Amazon is pretty large and continues to get larger - so our potential customers are everybody.

That being said, at our foundation we're an e-commerce company. So our customer base tends to start at young adults and go older from there.

The young family is kind of the sweet spot for Amazon as a company - adults with young children. That's when people become very loyal Amazon customers because their lives change in a fundamental way; they start spending a lot more money and the convenience and trust of Amazon becomes more and more important.

If you look at how people consume music on Amazon, it's different to the other services. In the US, you'll see a much stronger presence of rock and country compared to the other platforms. That's all forms of rock - whether classic rock, alternative rock, indie rock etc.



Our charts are not as heavily dominated by urban music as Apple's. Their target customer seems to be a particular music genre lover, and our charts reflect a more diverse taste in music.

As we grow, and as Alexa grows, our audience will change. We will bring new demographics into music streaming who are not currently paying for it today.

Since we entered music streaming with Prime Music, our focus has been on growing the streaming market segment - not on trying to take people from other services.

There's a lot currently being written about the flawed business model of music streaming for the likes of Pandora and Spotify. What's your view?

[Music streaming] is a business that requires scale, given the economic structure of the industry. It doesn't work for companies who don't achieve that scale - but it works for us.

Amazon's been committed to music for a long time. Next year will be the 20th anniversary of us

"STREAMING DOESN'T WORK FOR COMPANIES WHO DON'T ACHIEVE SCALE - BUT IT WORKS FOR US."

selling our first CD. Our customers have a trusted commerce relationship with us, and that makes us a natural player in this industry.

Are you considering opportunities above the \$9.99-per-month level (ie. 'super-premium' offerings or cross-media subscriptions) and how could Amazon's unique market position play into that?

We're very customer-driven and if we find customer demand in additional areas then we'll certainly explore them.

Amazon Music Unlimited, to some level, is evidence of that.

After we launched Prime Music,

we spoke with our customers and asked what they liked and didn't like about the service - and the thing we heard most was: 'We'd love even more music and we'd be willing to pay a premium for it.' That helped us think about launching a standalone service.

In terms of anything above \$9.99 level, we'll wait and see for what our customers tell us what they want to do.

Where does Amazon stand on artist exclusives - when acts commit to a single streaming service for a period of time?

The industry definitely seems to be moving away from exclusives, less than a year on from when there was all the activity around this.

We're definitely in favor of the concept of premium windows [as recently guaranteed on Spotify via its fresh licensing deal with UMG]. The Garth Brooks deal for us was a unique opportunity; he runs his own label, and he was looking for an exclusive partner - a much deeper partnership than just distributing his music.

We have a very big country

music audience so it was a very natural fit, and we've been very happy with that deal. There aren't many Garth Brooks [type artists] out there, in stature or in situation, so if one of those presented itself would we do it again? It would depend on the situation.

The industry has great concerns over free streaming music - particularly on YouTube. Does Amazon have a view on what you would like to happen to the streaming market?

I do think paid streaming has gotten to a size and level of consumer awareness and acceptance now that it didn't have a few years ago.

And with that level of awareness and acceptance, it's appropriate for the industry to be re-evaluating the dichotomy between free and paid.

The goal should now be to accelerate the growth of paid streaming so that the industry as a whole grows - and that means more money for songwriters and recording artists.

Personally I think it's a good thing that the music industry is taking a serious look at [free vs. paid]. It feels like there's forward momentum on that front right now.

What are your plans with Amazon Music Originals? You've previously created some low-level acoustic and Christmas-themed releases on your own 'label'...

What's happened in video with Netflix and Amazon Video is unique to the video industry and that's the way those services have evolved. I wouldn't draw a tight parallel with music.

Our approach with [Music] Originals has been about two things: providing stuff to our customers we think they would uniquely like, at the same time as giving a voice to



Garth Brooks

developing artists.

We have put a lot of marketing behind those projects, which give exposure to artists at a level that they otherwise would frankly not get. Hopefully some of the listeners we [provide] will become lifelong fans.

But, as I say, I'd be very careful about extrapolating from the [Amazon Originals] video example into music.

It's a fair question, but they're not the same thing: we're not building a record label here like they've built a TV studio down in Amazon Video.

Describe the potential of voice recognition to change the face of the music business from your point of view...

I think it can have a profound impact on the music industry. Most importantly, it can bring consumers closer to music in a way they haven't experienced in a long time.

One of the really interesting things about Echo is that it's communal. Most people have them in their kitchen, their living room or another family room.

And that's kind of cool, right? Because in the [first] digital age, music became very personal. It moved out of the home and stayed on your phone.

We think we're entering a new phase of the streaming music business.

Phase one was all about the smartphone. All growth was about having music in your pocket at all times. And that's been an amazing thing.

But there's a much bigger world out there than just smartphones. We think we've already entered phase two of listening, which takes place in the home.

Consumers have shown that voice is the preferred interface for interacting with music in the home - and we believe that will also happen in the car.

Music streaming's been locked on the smartphone for a long time. What if it now becomes unlocked - out into the world? How big can that get? Voice is key to unlocking that potential.

This interview was originally published in April 2017

Centtrip
MUSIC

“Centtrip
Music delivers
what the
music industry
needs.”

Tim Clark, Chairman, ie:music



Award-winning Centtrip Mastercard®

Centtrip Music is the easy way to manage tour budgets from one account. Use our multi-currency prepaid Mastercard cards for complete control over your touring party funds and to track expenditure in real time. Live market rates and fixed fees ensure complete transparency on every transaction, saving you time and money. Change how you look at music industry finance.

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