Lady Gaga In Talks to Play Super Bowl Halftime Show: Sources

BY SHIRLEY HALPERIN

Lady Gaga is inching closer to one of the biggest gigs on the planet: performing at the Super Bowl halftime show in 2017.

Sources tell Billboard that Gaga is in talks for the 51st annual football showdown, scheduled for Feb. 5, 2017 at NRG Stadium in Houston. One of the main reasons for why the NFL is said to be hot on the singer was her performance of the National Anthem at the 2016 Super Bowl. That year, Coldplay — with guests Beyonce and Bruno Mars — shared the halftime stage to mixed reviews.

“We have had conversations with several fantastic artists about the Pepsi Super Bowl Halftime Show. However, at this point we do not have a final decision,” an NFL rep told Billboard when asked about Gaga. “We’re happy there is so much excitement about the show.”

Gaga is coming off of several high-profile appearances in recent years, including a 2015 performance at the Academy Awards which was followed by an Oscar nomination the next year for “‘Til It Happens to You” for best original song (written for the documentary The Hunting Ground). Gaga also won a Golden Globe in 2016 for best actress in a miniseries or television film for her role on the FX series American Horror Story: Hotel.

She released a new song, “Perfect Illusion,” on Sept. 9 — the first single from her forthcoming album, which was executive produced by Mark Ronson and features collaborations with Florence Welch of Florence + The Machine, Beck and Father John Misty. While no release date has been announced, Gaga told Elvis Duran on Sept. 12 that the album is expected “really soon.”

Billboard has reached out to reps for Gaga for comment.

(continued)
Over 1 million STAGES albums sold!

Congratulations on sold out shows around the globe!

See Josh in his Broadway debut this fall
[In Brief]

**Pandora Announces Licensing Deals — With Everyone But Warner Music**

*BY ANDREW FLANAGAN*

Pandora has released a relatively bizarre press release this morning, announcing that it has struck licensing deals with three of the four major recording industry entities — Universal Music, Sony Music and indie label trade body Merlin — as well as Sony-owned distributor The Orchard and “over 30 other independent labels and distributors.”

Regardless, the release may seem to be aimed at putting pressure on Warner Music Group, the one major label yet to strike a deal with the company. But a source tells Billboard that Pandora is very close to a deal with Warner Music — closing it up today wouldn’t be a surprise — and that Westergren is eager to beat Amazon to the launch of its own, imminent “full-featured” streaming service.

The deals come ahead of, and are necessary for, its launch of a new streaming service built from the remains of the defunct Rdio. Tim Westergren, Pandora’s CEO, is clearly tired of sitting on his hands.

When asked why the release was issued despite lacking Warner Music’s signature, a Pandora rep says “we felt we had more than enough good news” and that Warner was fully aware that the release was being issued.

A press release similar to the one released this morning was, a source tells Billboard, drafted over the weekend and circulating as of yesterday (Sept. 12).

Westergren is confident in his company’s new product, as he repeatedly the Citi Global Technologies Conference on Sept. 7. “It takes innovation on user experience, which I think Pandora is going to bring.” But the “first order of business is owning the U.S.,” he said, in conversation with Citigroup analyst Mark Kelley.

Previously, the would have been due to this country’s somewhat unique statutory licensing system, which allows music to be “webcast” by paying a standard rate instead of getting approval from labels and publishers. However, Pandora has struck direct deals with most major recording stakeholders in the past year, obviating the need for statutory licenses... and opening the door to international expansion.

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**Songwriting Group Sues Department of Justice Over Licensing Mandate**

*BY ANDY GENSLER*

The Songwriters of North America (SONA), a grassroots advocacy organization of 200 working songwriters and composers, along with three individually named songwriters, have filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Justice over its music licensing statutes.

The suit is the result of the DoJ’s recent decision to not amend the consent decrees, which dictate the processes for song licensing, telling the two largest U.S. performing rights organizations, ASCAP and BMI, to allow for “full-work” licensing of songwriters’ works, meaning a song with multiple songwriters can be licensed in full by any one of them.

SONA contends that the majority of commercially successful songs are co-writes by authors affiliated with different performance rights organizations, and
Nathaniel Rateliff
& the Night Sweats.
A band to believe in.

He’s the man with the band and a plan.
A sound that shook the roof off of late-night TV.
He’s got a soulful voice, full of heartache and longing.
SiriusXM launched “S.O.B.,” and it became a foot-stompin’ classic.
An album in the Top 200 since it debuted over a year ago.
He’s got Gold and Platinum records in multiple countries.
They’re the band playing sold-out shows around the globe.
“Wasting Time” is up next, and it’s a hum-along heartbreaker.

This is Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats,
and they’re on Stax Records.
requiring full-work, or 100-percent, licensing from one PRO will negatively affect songwriters’ ability to license their songs in the marketplace. The lawsuit stated that the 100-percent ruling is “an illegitimate assertion of agency power in gross violation of plaintiffs’ due process rights, copyright interests, and freedom of contract, and needs to be set aside.”

“Songwriters and composers have been standing on the sidelines for way too long on an issue that directly affects their livelihoods,” says attorney Dina LaPolt who, along with Jay Cooper, Esq., advises SONA. “It’s time for them to take matters into their own hands.”

The three individual litigant songwriters are SONA executive director Michelle Lewis (who has written for Cher, Little Mix and is a full-time composer for Disney, and affiliated with ASCAP), Pam Sheyne (a writer for Christina Aguilera, Jessica Simpson, Seal, Backstreet Boys and currently without a U.S. PRO) and Tom Kelly (Madonna, Whitney Houston, Cyndi Lauper, Phil Collins, The Pretenders and affiliated with Global Music Rights).

The lawsuit specifically cites Sheyne’s plight who, because of the 100-percent mandate, has had difficulty changing PROs:

Plaintiffs are being, and will continue to be, significantly harmed by the 100-percent Mandate. The experience of plaintiff Sheyne is illustrative. Sheyne was a long-time member of BMI until recently, when she determined it would be in her interest to leave BMI and join SESAC— in part because SESAC is not itself subject to the 100-percent Mandate. By any standard, Sheyne is a highly successful songwriter, and, on information and belief, SESAC faces significant risk in providing Sheyne with what would otherwise be a typical advance against her future royalties for the performance of her works. So not only is Sheyne without a PRO to license her performance rights at the moment, she has also been deprived of a critical income stream.

In sum, the 100-percent Mandate harms plaintiffs by, among other things:

- Diminishing the value of their copyrighted musical works;
- Abrogating the rights of songwriters and composers under copyright law to divide and separately administer the copyright interests in the works they create;
- Eliminating songwriters’ and composers’ ability to choose the PRO that will administer their public performance rights;
- Undermining the legal and practical ability of songwriters and composers to exploit their works in the marketplace;
- Negating songwriters’ and composers’ ability to be notified of, and to receive accountings and collect payment for, the use of their works;
- Interfering with and negating songwriters’ and composers’ existing and future contractual and business relationships marketplace;
- Impeding songwriters’ and composers’ ability to collaborate with other creators of music to create new works;
- Subjecting songwriters and composers to unlawful, arbitrary, and capricious government action; and
- Undermining songwriters’ and composers’ ability to make a living at their profession.

Representing the songwriters are Gerard Fox and Steven Wallach of Gerard Fox Law P.C.. Fox, who are based in Los Angeles and represented the Isley Brothers when they successfully sued Michael Bolton for copyright infringement for their song “Love Is a Wonderful Thing.”

“When the DoJ ruling came down,” Fox says, “I knew I had to jump in to help songwriters rectify this wrongful and egregious mandate.”

The litigants have also brought on Jacqueline C. Charlesworth, former general counsel and associate register of copyrights for the United States Copyright Office as expert advisor.

In early August, both BMI and ASCAP announced their intentions to fight the DoJ’s ruling and employed a bilateral strategy where by BMI will take legal action by filing a memorandum with its rate court to challenge the DoJ’s interpretation; and ASCAP would take the lead in pursuing legislative support for fractional licensing.

Wade Robson Asks Court to Add Negligence Claims to Graphic Michael Jackson Abuse Lawsuit

BY ASHLEY CULLINS

In a graphic new complaint, choreographer Wade Robson seeks to pursue additional negligence claims against two companies formerly controlled by Michael Jackson that he says fostered nearly a decade of sexual abuse.

In 2013, Robson sued MJJ Productions, the late musician’s entertainment company, and MJJ Ventures, which employed Robson and Jackson during the time of the alleged abuse. Two months ago, the choreographer brought on attorney Vince Finaldi, who filed the motion to amend after reviewing the case file. Its claims are disturbing.

“MJJ PRODUCTIONS and MJJ VENTURES were held out to the public to be businesses dedicated to creating and distributing multimedia entertainment by MICHAEL JACKSON, however, in fact, they actually served dual purposes,” writes Finaldi in the complaint filed Friday.

“The thinly-veiled, covert second purpose of these businesses was to operate as a child sexual abuse operation, specifically designed to locate, attract, lure and seduce child sexual abuse victims.”

Robson claims Jackson and his inner
circle within the two companies “designed, developed and operated what is likely the most sophisticated public child sexual abuse procurement and facilitation organization the world has known.”

The choreographer says he first met the late pop star when he was five years old, after winning a “dance-a-like” competition run by MJJ Productions in Australia, where Robson was born. Two years later, his family took a trip to California because Robson’s dance company was performing at Disneyland. Robson’s mother contacted Jackson’s assistant Norma Staikos to set up a meeting, according to the complaint, which describes Staikos as “a ‘madam’ or ‘procurer.’ “The family was invited to stay at Neverland Ranch, where Robson slept in Jackson’s bed while his family stayed in nearby guest quarters.

It was that weekend, Robson claims, that Jackson first sexually abused him. He was seven years old.

The graphically detailed complaint describes encounters ranging from French kissing to penetrative sex. Robson claims the abuse continued until he was 14, but became less frequent when he “began showing signs of puberty” and Jackson was “no longer as interested in him sexually.”

In the following years, Robson would be called to testify in a civil suit brought by Jordan Chandler and in Jackson’s criminal trial. Leading up to his testimony, he says the singer called him nearly every day to coach him and “‘brain washed’ him into being a ‘good soldier.’ “He testified that no abuse had occurred.

Robson says he loved Jackson like a father and did not believe he was sexually abused until he entered psychotherapy following a nervous breakdown in 2012. He hasn’t worked since.

Now, six months prior to the scheduled trial, Finaldi wants to amend the complaint to “rectify various flaws... simplify the complaint, and plead various causes of action/allegations that were omitted from the operate complaint.”

Finaldi seeks to add several negligence claims to the suit, arguing the MJJ companies “breached their duty to take reasonable protective measures to protect minor children in their charge.”

He’s also seeking to withdraw the causes of action of childhood sexual abuse, sexual battery, assault and battery and negligent infliction of emotional distress, as well as allegations regarding the estate.

Attorneys for MJJ have not yet responded to a request for comment.

Trial is currently scheduled for March 13.

Pacha Group on Sale for $562 Million: Report

BY KAT BEIN

Iconic international nightclub brand Pacha is reportedly up for sale after 49 years of service.

According to a report by Spanish publication Cronica Global, Pacha founder Ricardo Urgell is fed up with the Mutates family’s domination of Ibiza nightlife and can’t see a way to reconcile his company’s ideals with the VIP-centric atmosphere it champions.

Have Ibiza’s Glory Days as a Dance Music Mecca Come to an End?

“It’s simple: Ricardo Urgell—founder—cannot stomach the Mutates family,” sources close to Pacha Group are quoted as saying. “Pacha does not believe in this new idea of a rich Ibiza as pushed forwards by Abel Matutes J. The founder cannot go on any more, and his children do not want to bear witness to the future. For this reason they are looking for an investor.”

The Mutates, once called “the Kennedys of Ibiza,” are the minds behind Ushuaia nightclub’s more commercial approach and recently announced the takeover of fellow Ibiza nightclub Space when its lease is up at the end of the year. Legendary techno DJ Carl Cox has held down a residency at Space for 20 years, but will not continue to work with the new owners.

Where Is the Next Ibiza? 5 Contenders — From Mykonos to Croatia

BY CHRIS PAYNE

Even if you thought twice, it’s alright — Desert Trip, the previously-sold out classic rock megafest at California’s Coachella Valley, has just released more tickets.

On Tuesday morning (Sept. 13) the three-day fest announced “a limited number” of reserved seats and general admission passes will soon be made available. These additional seats and passes account for each of Desert Trip’s twin weekends: Oct. 7-9 and Oct. 14-16.

These go on sale starting at 1 p.m. PT on Saturday via the fest’s official website.

Each Friday of Desert Trip features the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan and His...
Band; each Saturday night features Paul McCartney and Neil Young + Promise of the Real; and each Sunday has Roger Waters and the Who.

The first round of Desert Trip tickets sold out in just three hours, and the Goldenvoice production’s financial prospects look pretty... golden. The two-weekend fest is estimated to gross $150 million, which would be the highest box-office gross in concert history.

**Nashville Notes:**

**Kacey Musgraves, Chris Young Prep Holiday Albums; Townsquare Hires SVP Live Events**

*BY TOM ROLAND*

Christmas may not be top of mind yet for most consumers, but it’s key to several acts who have projects working their way into the retail pipeline. Chris Young pegged his first holiday album, It Must Be Christmas, for an Oct. 14 release. Kacey Musgraves’ A Very Kacey Christmas is due Oct. 28 with guests Willie Nelson, Leon Bridges and the Quebe Sisters. And Brett Eldredge has a duet with Meghan Trainor lined up for Very Kacey Christmas is due Oct. 28 with a Cracker Barrel-only release that has her doing holiday standards with piano player Corey Crowder (Chris Young). Ennis handles all the vocal and instrumental parts on his first track for the label, “Woke Up in Nashville.”

**Rounds the Row**

Reviver Entertainment Group hired Will Robinson as 1608 Northeast/Midwest regional promotion manager. He was an I.R.S. Nashville director of promotion before the label folded.

Sony Music Nashville signed singer-songwriter Seth Ennis and assigned him to its Arista roster, working with producer Corey Crowder (Chris Young). Ennis handles all the vocal and instrumental parts on his first track for the label, “Woke Up in Nashville.”

Songwriter Ross Copperman (“Noise,” “American Country Love Song”) signed a publishing deal with Tim Wipperman’s Rezonant Music.

Shane McAnally’s SmackSongs added singer-songwriter Kylie Morgan to its roster.

Songwriter-producer Phil O’Donnell (“Doin’ What She Likes,” “Already Callin’ You Mine”) inked a co-publishing deal with ole.

Late music publisher Bill Lowery will be recognized with the Frances Williams Preston Mentor Award during the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame induction event on Oct. 9. The Atlanta-based Lowery Music Group was a launching pad for such writers as Joe South, Bill Anderson, Mac Davis and Ray Stevens.

The University of Oklahoma recognized Big Machine Label Group vp publicity and corporate communications Jake Basden with its Regent’s Young Alumni Award.

Belmont University songwriting major Anna Vaus received the inaugural Women Creators scholarship, founded by Miranda Lambert and the Academy of Country Music. The award will provide more than $40,000 in education funds for Vaus.

The Nashville Film Festival is accepting submissions through Jan. 6 for its first song competition. The grand prize includes a consultation with music supervisors associated with the festival.

ACM Lifting Lives is accepting applications for philanthropic grants through Sept. 30.

Billboard country charts manager Jim Asker is attempting to raise $25,000 for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society by running 26.2 miles in the Berlin Marathon on Sept. 25. The event marks his 10th full marathon since recovering from stage IV non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma.

**RADIO MOVERS & SHAKERS**

Greg Thomas takes over as PD of WLWI-FM Montgomery, Ala., on Sept. 19, arriving from Townsquare/Tuscaloosa, Ala., where he was operations manager of a cluster that includes country WFFN. Thomas’ operations manager at Cumulus/Montgomery is Rick Hendrick, who added that role to his duties, which already include PD at classic rock WXFX.

Tony Denton joined Alpha Media/Greenville-New Bern-Jacksonville, N.C., as market manager, overseeing seven signals, including country outlets WQZL, WRNS-AM and WRNS-FM. Denton most recently was vice president at Curtis Media/
Goldsboro–Kinston, N.C.
WDRQ Detroit promoted Dave Fuller to afternoon drive from a part-time/swing position.

Townsquare hired Scott Epstein as senior vp live events/head of sponsorship sales. The company produces more than 500 live events annually, including Country Jam and the Taste of Country Music Festival. He had been chief business development officer at Van Wagner Sports & Entertainment.

WMOT Murfreesboro, Tenn., transitioned to an Americana-based format. The station also airs the established Music City Roots on Wednesday nights. PD/music director Jessie Scott also oversees the YouTube channel Music Fog. The on-air staff includes Bill Edwards, Keith Bilbrey, Whit Hubner, Craig Havigurst and songwriter Odie Blackmon (“Nothing On but the Radio”).

Scripps/Wichita, Kan., appointed Todd Johnson as sales manager, effective Sept. 12, InsideRadio.com reported. The five-station cluster includes country KFDI and classic country KFTI. Johnson most recently was sales manager at KWCH-TV Wichita.

Mondo.NYC Co-Founder Bobby Haber on What Sets His New Festival Apart

BY DAN RYS

Tomorrow (Sept. 14) marks the official launch of the inaugural Mondo.NYC, a five-day music industry conference and indie artist showcase that will blanket lower Manhattan and Brooklyn with concerts, panels and events through Sunday night (Sept. 18). And most attendees can be forgiven if it feels a little familiar; Mondo is the brain child of Bobby Haber and Joanne Abbot Green, the founders of CMJ and its annual Music Marathon, respectively, who ran the similarly-minded event in New York City for 34 years before departing the company in mid-2014. It will even be headquartered at NYU, CMJ’s long-term base of operations before moving to the Dream Hotel for its 35th edition last year.

But Mondo, Haber insists in a conversation with Billboard ahead of its debut, will be different than CMJ has been in the past, or other industry conferences such as SXSW or the New Music Seminar, for instance. “It’s more in the area of convergence, of where technology and innovation meet music,” Haber says. “There are a lot of events that focus on a lot of the broad aspects of startup technology, and I think where we come in is, when you look at pop culture, communications, media, obviously social communications, for the most part where they overlap is in music and media.”

Regardless, Haber and Green have pulled together a wide-ranging offering of panels and speakers, including a keynote Q&A with Glassnote Entertainment founder Daniel Glass interviewed by NPR’s Bob Boilen; a presentation on music streaming from the director of NYU’s music business program Larry Miller; various live sessions and “Under the Hood” deep dives on companies like Vevo and TuneCore; and panel discussions on publishing, touring, copyright, brands, streaming, apps and plenty more from across the industry. Combined with the fact that the reality of the CMJ Music Marathon in 2016 is up in the air — despite his long history with the brand, Haber declined to speak about CMJ’s current status or future — Mondo is attempting to position itself as the next generation of industry showcase. Whether it can fill that role remains to be seen.

So, on the eve of Mondo’s first foray into the festival world, Bobby Haber speaks to Billboard about his vision for his latest endeavor.

Why did you want to create Mondo in the first place?

Bobby Haber: For myself and my partner Joanne Abbot Green, it’s really the event we’ve always wanted to do. One which truly focuses on New York as the world capital of music, which we’re very bullish on; one which integrated music, technology, content and media under one roof; one which really attracted a global audience of artists, and music business executives and really, broadly, music genre-wise. It’s the event that we always wanted to build, and it’s also something that’s really exciting to build as a startup. I’ve been at this for a good chunk of years, and I’ve really been channeling everything I’ve learned over those years from the ground up. The nicest thing is building a new staff, of course. Joanne has been the master of production for all these years; I’m more involved in strategy; our founding partner Gary Fortune has really invented global marketing music as a cultural export, and our team is really excellent. So just from a business and personal, professional perspective, it was what we always wanted to do.

What will set Mondo apart from other industry conventions?

From my perspective, an event like Mondo does not exist. At least in the United States, and certainly in New York, where we’ve got C-Suite executives from record companies, from major streaming companies, from publishing companies and PROs, to sitting U.S. Congressmen, but together with indie artists and managers and app developers and really, again, under one roof, and especially when that roof is NYU, which is to me one of the most important institutions of learning, not just here in New York, but really NYU identifies what a global institution is in 2016. So I think there are a lot of aspects of Mondo that don’t exist in the nation, and don’t exist in New York.

What are those aspects more specifically?

It’s more in the area of convergence, of where technology and innovation meet music. There are a lot of events that focus on a lot of the broad aspects of startup technology, and I think where we come in is, when you look at pop culture, communications, media, obviously social
communications, for the most part where they overlap is in music and media.

What were some of the challenges you faced pulling this together?

You know, it really is interesting. Some people would argue we almost took too long to set the foundation up. But we really felt that before we came out of the box we wanted to be able to identify partners like the RIAA, like the Music Business Association, like A2IM, IDG.TV. And I think getting those elements together, getting the right staff together and making sure we had the right team, we didn’t actually announce Mondo until June 2. And at that point we were 90 days out. If I had to do it over again I probably would have started a year earlier, but we probably started Mondo about July 2015, and even with that amount of time, frankly it wasn’t enough.

Why didn’t you wait a year?

You know, I think I’m an impatient guy a little bit. But I don’t have to tell you what kind of chaos our wonderful industry is in, and it feels to me like a bit of a watershed moment right now. And that’s not to suggest that in 2017 everything that’s fluid is going to be solidified, but I can’t tell you how many people have come out of the woodwork — not just people I worked with and known for years, but people I hadn’t spoken with in years — have said, “This is an important event to have right now.” Look, we’re not naïve enough to think that we’re going to find answers to things, but what we’re trying to do is get the right people under one roof and at least begin to talk to one another and look at some pathways where some questions are potentially answered.

There have been a few stories recently that criticized how obscure the artists on your lineup are. Was that a particular focus?

You know, honestly, I never thought I’d be accused of being too indie. [Laughs] But I’ve seen some of that, and it was very much by design. We’ve got a couple bigger names there, but for the most part we wanted to go out and reach... and we have partnered with Music Glue, which is a great British portal to look at some international acts. And what I was amazed at is that when you look at our Spotify playlist, it’s just great music. So yes, it was by design to go a little bit beyond the buzz bands. But the hope is that we can find one or two or three of these acts where a year from now people can say, “They started at Mondo.”

At the time of the announcement, some publications — Billboard included — drew the connection between Mondo and CMJ. How do you feel like they’re separate?

From our perspective, it was really not trying to look at any one event. There are a lot of events that have been around for years, but we didn’t look at any one event and say that we wanted to be different, we want to be the same. We just literally went to the blank white board and drew an event from scratch. So inevitably, we’re here in New York and cover a large part of music, so to that extent there could be parallels. But I think when it’s all said and done, this is an event that will be unlike any event that’s been held in New York for quite some time.

And we’ve also tried to do things like try to keep the price of the badges down, come up with one-day rates, come up with student rates, to really make sure that whomever comes is going to get great value. But we really tried to look at making sure that anybody who has anything to do with it really walks away saying that not only they got a great value, but that it was something new and different. That really was our charge from the beginning: do something that hasn’t been done, do it well, but more importantly to do it better next year and on and on.

Having produced something like CMJ for 30 years, what had you learned that you’ve been able to apply to starting something like this from the ground up?

That’s a great question. I know this sounds rote, but you bring with you your entire body of work and your history and your relationships. You really need to think out of the box. You really need to be flexible. We’re in a business where the aesthetic is really important, so we’re looking at not the biggest or brand name or most-well-known buzz act — or, for that matter, the panelist or moderator — but really try to identify somebody who is going to be the next big thing or who is a veteran who really has something to say. It sounds kind of hokey, but from our end, it’s back to the white board. Obviously, we’ve had a couple of decades of experience; learn from that, but don’t allow that to control you. Think out of the box. Change your partners as much as you can. And don’t be afraid to take chances.

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**Spotify Targeting Millennials With Election Video Series on Student Debt, Guns and Other Hot Buttons**

By Billboard Staff

Spotify and the millennial-aimed web publisher Mic have launched Clarify, a new election season video series aimed at reaching young people, with the express purpose of inspiring them to vote this November. Hosted by author and former Daily Show producer Baratunde Thurston and co-produced by Headcount.org, the weekly series will mix one-on-one conversations with well-known artists, plus roundtables, infographics and other interactive storytelling devices to “inspire civic engagement,” commented Kerry Steib, Spotify’s director of social impact. “We hope to create a meaningful and entertaining way for music fans to explore the issues and provide information that inspires them to turn out for the polls in November,” she said.

The first episode features Diplo and focuses on one of the top issues for young people: student debt. “Everyone I know has debt,” said Diplo, who grew up in Florida and went into debt while attending Temple University in Philadelphia. “I’m like a small percentage, lucky story where I just happened to make money with my
profession. Thank God, I don’t know what I’d be doing... back in Florida. Back in the swamps. Everyone I know is still paying it off. It’s so daunting... and you’re not guaranteed a job out of college either.”

According to Spotify, future episodes will feature Thurston speaking with Tom Morello’s Prophets of Rage about the economy, Chicago rapper Vic Mensa about civil rights and Brooklyn rapper Talib Kweli about gun control. Throughout many installments, Mic journalists will pop in to add further context and balance to the issues, which were identified by Spotify users through surveys conducted by Hart Research Associates and Echelon Insights.

At the end of every episode, viewers will be encouraged to visit headcount.org/spotify to register to vote.

“Clarify is a breakthrough combination of dynamic conversation and news that will elevate national conversation in this campaign and encourage action come November,” said Cory Haik, chief strategy officer, Mic. “For so many young people the issues Spotify and Mic are addressing in this series are personal. Through Spotify’s interactive platform and influence amongst artists, paired with Mic’s strong voice on matters of social culture, we hope to strengthen points of view on equality and the power of thoughtful action.”

To house the Clarify video series, Spotify has added an Election 2016 section in the Browse area. Episodes are available to U.S.-based premium and free Spotify users on both mobile and desktop.

Sony Promises VR Music Video, Other Entertainment Content

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sony Corp.’s video game division is readying not just games but also music, movies and other kinds of entertainment for its Virtual Reality headgear, set to go on sale next month.

Sony Interactive Entertainment Japan Asia President Atsushi Morita appeared at a Tokyo event Tuesday, ahead of the Tokyo Game Show annual exhibition opening later this week. The latest in video games, including VR, will be on display at the show at Makuhari Messe in the Tokyo suburb of Chiba.

One of the VR experiences promised is a music video that’s a collaboration between the “Biohazard” horror game, called “Resident Evil” in the U.S., from Japanese game maker Capcom, and L’Arc-en-Ciel, a Japanese rock band, that takes advantage of VR technology’s illusion of 3-D and 360-degree surround imagery.

VR can make games more immersive, enhancing the effects of horror, razzle-dazzle and erotic titillation.

The Japanese electronics and entertainment company’s PlayStation VR headgear device, going on sale next month for about $400, less than rival VR headsets. Oculus Rift’s goes for about $600, and HTC Vive’s for $800.

Another VR shown at Tokyo-based Sony’s event was the “Anywhere VR,” which delivers to headset wearers a relaxing scene, such as a beach or a star-studded sky, even in their living rooms, while they take care of smartphone chores in VR.

Morita said the PlayStation VR will also be used to show live-theater performances, tours of historical sites and karaoke video. “As a child, I learned so much from games,” he said.

Morita defended his industry against the common criticism that it distracts children from education and real-life development.

He said he learned about societal rules and human drama from games, manga and music. That spirit of creativity must be passed down to future generations, he said.

Billboard Touring Conference: Scooter Braun, Dina LaPolt, Tim Leiweke and Matt Jones Join ‘10 Questions’ Series

BY BILLBOARD STAFF

Billboard today announces the return of its popular Q&A sessions “10 Questions With...” at the 13th annual Billboard Touring Conference & Awards, the premier event dedicated to the live music industry set for November 9-10 at the SLS Hotel in Beverly Hills.

Participants this year are high-profile manager Scooter Braun, founder, SB Projects; entertainment attorney Dina LaPolt, owner, LaPolt Law, P.C.; respected sports and entertainment executive Tim Leiweke, founder and CEO, Oak View Group (OVG); and live discovery/ticketing development trailblazer Matt Jones, CEO, Songkick.

The four industry heavyweights will join Ray Waddell, Billboard’s executive director of content and programming for Touring and Live Entertainment, on stage throughout the conference for wide-ranging discussions about major trends and topics pertinent to the live music industry as part of the “10 Questions...” series.
With...” Q&A series.

The executives participating are amongst the most successful and respected leaders in their field. Braun has a roster of the top pop culture icons under his management, record label and publishing companies including Justin Bieber, Kanye West, Usher, Karlie Kloss, Tori Kelly, Carly Rae Jepsen, The Black Eyed Peas, Martin Garrix and others. LaPolt specializes in representing music creators and currently represents artists including Steven Tyler, deadmau5, Fifth Harmony, and Black Veil Brides in addition to serving as an attorney advisor to the GRAMMY Creators Alliance and Songwriters of North America (SONA). She has twice been named to Billboard’s “Music’s Most Powerful Attorneys.”

Leiweke has been deeply involved in the evolution of the NHL, NBA and MLS and partnered with music industry titan Irving Azoff to launch OVG, a company that helps shape sports and entertainment experiences globally. Jones serves as CEO of Songkick, the world’s leading artist-ticketing and concert discovery platform that connects hundreds of the world’s greatest artists with millions of music fans around the globe through enhanced discovery, and has received international attention for its innovative technology used to reduce the number of tickets sold to scalpers.

The intimate sessions will provide unparalleled access to the industry knowledge amassed by the four exec’s decades of experience working in the music industry.

“Candid interviews with influential industry stakeholders have always been a staple of the Billboard Touring Conference, and when we expanded on that aspect of our programming by launching the ‘10 Questions With...’ sessions three years ago, the response was overwhelmingly positive,” says Waddell. “Of course, Q&As are only as compelling as their subjects, and this year I couldn’t be more pleased with our four executives, all of whom are playing leading roles in shaping this dynamic live music industry. The biggest challenge will be keeping it to 10 questions!”

The 2015 Billboard Touring Conference & Awards sold out with a record number of attendees and featured a special Q&A with Brad Paisley, a three-time Grammy winning singer, songwriter, guitarist and entertainer.

For registration information visit BillboardTouringConference.com. Pre-Registration rates are now available. ○

Mary Nunez & Cebele Marquez Appointed to New Posts at Sony Music US Latin

BY LEILA COBO

As part of its expanding efforts into new business, Sony Music US Latin has appointed two women — Mary Nuñez and Cebele Marquez — to key positions in its Growth & Innovation team.

Nuñez, a 10-year veteran of Sony Music who’s had an integral role in growing the label’s licensing and synchronization department, has been promoted to senior director of music licensing and creative services.

In her new post, Nuñez will continue to oversee all global music licensing initiatives for Sony Music US Latin’s catalog of master recordings and will also drive U.S. licensing efforts of content owned by Sony’s other Latin-Iberia territories. Nuñez will be the company’s liaison to the advertising, film and TV communities for all synchronization efforts.

Nuñez has done pioneering work in licensing and synchronization for Sony. Among many other projects, she was instrumental in securing Romeo Santos’ deal with Dr. Pepper as part of its “One of One” advertising campaign. Prior to Sony, Nuñez was at BMG Music Publishing, working with the music libraries for Killertracks, Network Music and Frist Com Music.

Prior to that, she developed sales and marketing strategies for international hotel chains like Starwoods and Hilton International.

On her end, Cebele Marquez joins Sony as senior director of business development, overseeing the execution of revenue generation through new business opportunities. Marquez, who has a long track record of creating innovative alliances and brand partnerships, will spearhead multichannel brand integrations, activations, endorsements, product placements, branded content and strategic partnerships.

Marquez comes to Sony from Revolution Marketing, where she was director of business development and strategic partnerships. Prior to that, she spent over a decade at Billboard as executive director for business development and sponsorship.

Nuñez and Marquez will both report directly to Jose Cedeño, who was brought in this year to the new post of SVP Growth & Innovation, US Latin. ○

German Law Classifies Berghain Techno as ‘High Art:’ Report

BY KAT BEIN

A party that never ends, that elevates and invigorates, that sometimes degenerates into nudity and total abandon of inhibitions is absolutely and legally a form of “high art.” So says German law after a court battle that saw the German tax agency try Berghain for higher taxes, but mysterious hedonism and techno prevail.

According to a report by Fact Mag, it all started when the tax authorities thought, hey, there’s something fishy about Berghain’s tax designation. Shouldn’t a place dedicated to weekend-long parties
that revolve around DJ sets be classified as “entertainment” over “culture,” and therefore held to a tax bracket of 19 percent versus its current 7 percent?

Berghain owners and employees argued that indeed, the hidden happenings of the iconic club were entirely cultural. They argued in court that if Berghain was simply “entertainment,” so too was classical music, or at least, that techno and classical should be seen as equals. A court found in favor of camp Berghain, and there you have it. That stuff you aren’t allowed in to see if now even more important that you thought it was.

It’s a win for dance music culture after a series of worldwide struggle. Chicago’s small venues currently find themselves in similar circumstances, and London’s legendary Fabric nightclub is forced to appeal a court ruling that had it permanently closed following two drug overdoses.

**Kelsea Ballerini Is the First Woman to Top Hot Country Songs & Country Airplay Charts at the Same Time**

**BY JIM ASKER**

On her 23rd birthday (Sept. 12), Kelsea Ballerini unwraps the present of a new No. 1 hit, as “Peter Pan” (released on the Black River label) reaches the top of Billboard’s Hot Country Songs and Country Airplay charts (dated Sept. 24) simultaneously. The track is the third single from her debut full-length album, The First Time.

Ballerini becomes the first solo female to top both surveys in the same week, since Hot Country Songs became an airplay, sales and streaming hybrid chart, splitting from the solely radio-based Country Airplay chart, on Oct. 20, 2012. (The charts, along with all Billboard rankings, will update on Billboard’s platforms Sept. 13.)

“To finally release my favorite song off my album was already enough for me. But to know that we just made history with it is bigger than I could have ever dreamed,” Ballerini beamed to Billboard after hearing the news of her dual coronation.

“Honestly, being the first woman to do this just inspires me to work hard and to make the best music I can.”

On Hot Country Songs, “Peter Pan” rises 2-1 to become Ballerini’s first No. 1. The track dethrones Florida Georgia Line’s “H.O.L.Y.,” which had ruled the chart for 18 weeks (1-2). “Peter Pan” is boosted by its 56 percent gain to 27,000 sold in the tracking week, according to Nielsen Music, as it jumps 8-3 on Country Digital Songs, helped by a 69-cent sale tag in the iTunes Store. The song has sold 432,000 downloads to date. On Country Streaming Songs, the single pushes 4-3 (2.9 million U.S. streams, up 1 percent).

Co-written by Ballerini with Forest Glen Whitehead and Jesse Lee, “Peter Pan” concurrently ascends 2-1 in its 26th week on Country Airplay, up by 3 percent to 49.2 million audience impressions. The song’s trip to the top of Country Airplay is likewise impressive, as Ballerini has now led the list with the first three singles from The First Time. “Love Me Like You Mean It” topped the July 4, 2015, chart and “Dibs” dominated the survey dated March 5, 2016.

A notable No. 1 in its own right, “Love Me” became the first debut single by a solo female (officially promoted to country radio) to pace Country Airplay since Carrie Underwood’s “Jesus, Take the Wheel” in 2006.

In banking her third Country Airplay leader from The First Time, Ballerini is the first woman to earn that many No. 1s from a debut LP since Underwood tallied three in 2006-07 from her debut album Some Hearts: “Jesus,” “Before He Cheats” and “Wasted.” (The set’s third single, “Don’t Forget to Remember Me,” peaked at No. 2.)

As for a female artist’s first three charted singles all crowning Country Airplay, it’s been almost 25 years since the feat was accomplished before Ballerini: Wynonna Judd launched her solo career with three consecutive No. 1s from her 1992 self-titled debut: “She Is His Only Need,” “I Saw the Light” and “No One Else on Earth.” By then, of course, Judd was already a country force, having banked 14 Hot Country Songs No. 1s as half of The Judds (with her mother, Naomi).

“There were no [star] names attached to this album when we made it,” Ballerini says of The First Time, produced by Whitehead and Jason Massey; Ballerini co-wrote all 12 tracks, including six with Whitehead. “My friends and I were living in our own naïve and creative world, and I think that’s the reason it has been so special, because it’s just been ours.”

The First Time debuted at its No. 4 peak on Top Country Albums (June 6, 2015) and zooms 15-7 on the Sept. 24 list (6,000 sold, up 69 percent, aided by a $5.99 Apple Music price tag through Sept. 8, the last day of the latest chart’s tracking week), marking its first week in the top tier since its debut frame. It has sold 187,000 to date.

Ballerini’s music has clearly resonated with radio listeners. “I think Kelsea has the ‘it’ factor, both in person and in her music, making you want more,” says consultant Joel Raab.

“For Kelsea, the music has been there since day one,” echoes Cumulus Media director of Nash Programming John Shomby. “She’s an electric performer, she relates extremely well to her audience and she is totally down-to-earth with no pretense.”
Jason Aldean Set to Debut at No. 1 on Billboard 200 Chart With ‘They Don’t Know’

BY KEITH CAULFIELD

Country star Jason Aldean is on course for his third straight No. 1 on the Billboard 200 albums chart. Industry forecasters suggest his new effort, *They Don’t Know*, could earn around 135,000 equivalent album units in the week ending Sept. 15. (Perhaps 130,000 of that might be in traditional album sales.) The set was released on Sept. 9 through Broken Bow Records.

The Billboard 200 chart ranks the most popular albums of the week based on multi-metric consumption, which includes traditional album sales, track equivalent albums (TEA) and streaming equivalent albums (SEA). The top 10 of the new Oct. 1-dated Billboard 200 chart — where Alden may debut at No. 1 — is scheduled to be revealed on Billboard’s websites on Sunday, Sept. 18.

Aldean previously led the list with Old Boots, New Dirt (2014; 278,000 copies sold in its first week, according to Nielsen Music) and Night Train (2012; 409,000 sold first week). He also logged top 10s with My Kinda Party (No. 2 in 2010), Wide Open (No. 4 in 2009) and Relentless (No. 4 in 2007). His self-titled debut album peaked at No. 37 in 2005.

If Aldean enters at No. 1 with his new set, it will mark the first country album to lead the tally since Chris Stapleton’s Traveller ruled for two weeks last November — on the Nov. 21-28, 2015-dated charts.

Also aiming for the top 10 on the new Billboard 200 are Bastille’s Wild World and The Head and the Heart’s Signs of Light. Both sets might launch with nearly 40,000 units. The Beatles could also hit to the top 10 with its new Live at the Hollywood Bowl album, which might start with around 35,000 units.