Taylor Swift Makes Historic Debut at No. 1 on Billboard 200 With ‘The Tortured Poets Department’

BY KEITH CAULFIELD

As expected, Taylor Swift’s The Tortured Poets Department makes a gigantic debut at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 albums chart (dated May 4), securing the superstar her 14th chart-topping album. She ties Jay-Z for the most No. 1s among soloists in the nearly-70-year history of the chart. Only The Beatles, with 19 No. 1s, have more.

The Tortured Poets Department launches with 2.61 million equivalent album units earned in the U.S. in the week ending April 25, with traditional album sales (purchases of digital download albums, CDs, vinyl LPs and cassettes) comprising 1.914 million of that sum. Of that sales figure, vinyl sales represent a staggering 859,000. The collected 31 songs on the deluxe edition of the album generated 891.34 million on-demand official streams.

Those eye-popping figures mark the largest streaming week for an album ever, the second-largest week for an album (by total equivalent album units earned) since the Billboard 200 began measuring by units in December 2014, the third-largest sales week (by traditional album sales) in the modern era (since Luminate began electronically tracking sales in 1991) and the largest sales week for an album on vinyl in the modern era.

The Billboard 200 chart ranks the most popular albums of the week in the U.S. based on multi-metric consumption as measured in equivalent album units, compiled by Luminate. Units comprise album sales, track equivalent albums (TEA) and streaming equivalent albums (SEA). Each unit equals one album sale, or 10 individual tracks sold from an album, or 3,750 ad-supported or 1,250 paid/subscription on-demand official audio and video streams generated by songs from an album. The new May 4, 2024-dated chart will be posted in full on Billboard’s website on April 30. For all chart news, follow @billboard and @billboardcharts on both X, formerly known as Twitter, and Instagram.

Of The Tortured Poets Department’s first-week unit sum of 2.61 million, album sales comprise 1.914 million (a number bolstered by its availability across more than 20 different iterations of the album), SEA units comprise 683,000 (equaling 891.37 million on-demand official streams of the set’s 31 songs, on its deluxe edi-

(continued)
UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP CELEBRATES OUR 2024 INTERNATIONAL POWER PLAYERS
Taylor Swift Claims Record
Top 14 Spots on
Billboard Hot 100,
Led by ‘Fortnight’
With Post Malone

BY GARY TRUST

Taylor Swift achieves one of the most record-shattering weeks in the history of the Billboard Hot 100 songs chart – surpassing unprecedented heights that she previously set – as she claims the top 14 positions on the survey dated May 4. All 14 songs, led by “Fortnight,” featuring Post Malone, are from her new album, The Tortured Poets Department, which, following the Republic Records set’s April 19 release, blasts in at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart.

Swift was already the only artist ever to dominate the Hot 100’s entire top 10 – thanks to tracks from her last album of all-new material, Midnights, in 2022, led by the collection’s “Anti-Hero.”

Among other new chart feats for Swift, “Fortnight” becomes her 12th Hot 100 No. 1, as she ties for the sixth-most leaders in the chart’s archives; she ups her career count of top 10s from 49 to 59, the most among women; and she charts 32 songs – all 31 from the deluxe version of The Tortured Poets Department plus established smash “Cruel Summer” – on the latest list overall, the most ever in a single week by a woman.

The Hot 100 blends all-genre U.S. streaming (official audio and official video), radio airplay and sales data, the lattermost metric reflecting purchases of physical singles and digital tracks from full-service digital music retailers; digital singles sales from direct-to-consumer (D2C) sites are excluded from chart calculations. All charts (dated May 4, 2024) will update on Billboard.com tomorrow, April 30. For all chart news, you can follow @billboard and @billboardcharts on both X, formerly known as Twitter, and Instagram.

Swift ranks at Nos. 1 through 14 on the Hot 100, rewriting the record week that she logged on the Nov. 5, 2022-dated chart when she became the first artist to boast the entire top 10 in a single week.

Here’s a recap of Swift’s songs in the top 14 spots on the May 4-dated Hot 100:

No. 1, “Fortnight,” feat. Post Malone
No. 2, “Down Bad”
No. 3, “I Can Do It With a Broken Heart”
No. 4, “The Tortured Poets Department”
No. 5, “So Long, London”
No. 6, “My Boy Only Breaks His Favorite..."
Billboard’s eleventh annual Country Power Players issue will profile the people who have driven another solid year for country music in sales, streaming and publishing. This special feature will highlight those who have had the greatest impact in the genre, including recorded music, live entertainment, publishing and more in the past year.

Advertise in Billboard’s Country Power Players issue to congratulate this year’s honorees while reaching key decision-makers who are driving the music business.

BONUS DISTRIBUTION

Billboard Country Power Players Cocktail Party & Awards May 14th at Gilley’s in Dallas

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Mariah Carey (19) and Rihanna (13) have the most on the Hot 100 among women. Overall, only Drake has more leaders than Swift (12). Among women (and second overall only to Drake’s 20), and her record-extending 29th No. 1 on Digital Song Sales. On the Streaming Songs chart, the most among women (and second overall only to Drake’s 20), and her record-extending 29th No. 1. No. 1 is her second leader billed with another artist, following “Bad Blood,” featuring Kendrick Lamar: “Fortnight,” which arrives as the 1,170th No. 1 in the Hot 100’s 65-year history, drew 76.2 million official on-demand streams, and 31.1 million radio airplay audience impressions and sold 19,000 in the U.S. April 19-25.

The single soars in as Swift’s ninth leader on the Streaming Songs chart, the most among women (and second overall only to Drake’s 20), and her record-extending 29th No. 1 on Digital Song Sales. On the Radio Songs chart, it debuts at No. 14 (Swift’s second-highest entrance, after “Anti-Hero” started at No. 13). The premiere of “Fortnight” with 76.2 million streams marks the top total for a song in a single week since YouTube song user-generated content was removed from chart calculations in 2020, surpassing the 76.1 million that Olivia Rodrigo’s “Drivers License” drew in its first frame, as reflected on charts dated Jan. 23, 2021. (With 66.2 million official on-demand streams, “Fortnight” scores the biggest week by that metric since “Drivers License” drew 66.8 million that week.)

With her 12th Hot 100 No. 1, Swift passes Whitney Houston and ties Madonna and The Supremes for the sixth-most leaders in the chart’s history. Among women, only Mariah Carey (19) and Rihanna (13) have more.

Most Billboard Hot 100 No. 1s:

10, Stevie Wonder
9, Janet Jackson
8, The Beatles
7, Michael Jackson
6, Mariah Carey
5, Rihanna
4, Drake
3, The Beatles
2, Taylor Swift
1, Whitney Houston

Keep reading for more on Swift’s latest groundbreaking week on the Hot 100.

Billboard’s 2024 International Power Players Revealed

BY THOM DUFFY

Way back in 2015 — when “Uptown Funk!” was the hottest hit of the year, Sam Smith was named best new artist at the Grammy Awards and Taylor Swift had the year’s top album with the original version of 1989 — the global music industry hit a significant milestone.

Its revenue grew — for the first time in 20 years. That was the beginning of a comeback, and the industry has sustained it since.

In March, when IFPI released its annual Global Music Report with worldwide results for the recorded-music business for 2023, it reported revenue had grown for a ninth consecutive year, reaching $28.6 billion worldwide.

Music streaming, of course, has driven that growth, and the IFPI report contained even more good news, stating that paid subscriptions to music streaming services hit a new high of more than 667 million users.

Among those who have contributed to the music business’ overall growth are Billboard’s 2024 International Power Players — executives nominated by their firms and peers and chosen by our editors from selected industry sectors. All have primary responsibility for markets outside the United States, which account for nearly 60% of the world’s recorded-music sales.

In fact, although the United States and Canada had a collective global recorded-music revenue increase of 7.4% in 2023, that was the lowest regional growth rate measured last year by IFPI. That figure was surpassed by Europe at 8.9%, Australasia at 10.4%, the Middle East and North Africa at 14.4%, Asia at 14.9%, Latin America at 19.4% and Sub-Saharan Africa at 24.7% (South Africa accounts for 77% of revenue in that region).
On June 1st, Billboard will publish its annual 40 Under 40 Issue, celebrating the next generation of leaders in the music industry. This issue will profile 40 power players who are making their mark in music, touring and live entertainment.

These progressive young leaders’ innovation and creativity will continue to create excitement in the music business.

Advertise in this issue to reach the music industry’s most influential and affluent – from the young disrupters to the seasoned veterans – who paved the way.

ON SALE: 6/1
Issue Close: 5/21
Materials Due: 5/23

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Each of those regions is represented among this year's International Power Players.

In a statement accompanying the global results, IFPI CFO/interim joint head John Nolan said, “This growth results from record companies' sustained investment in artists and their careers — more than $7.1 billion annually on A&R and marketing alone [as measured in 2022] — and the impact it has on music ecosystems all over the world.”

Yet the global music business faces no shortage of tests as it aims for a solid decade of growth.

“The sustained growth of the recorded-music market is encouraging,” IFPI chief legal officer/interim joint head Lauri Rechardt says, “but it’s also right for us to acknowledge the challenges the industry faces, including streaming fraud, digital piracy in all its forms and, of course, the threat from the abuse of generative artificial intelligence [AI] if it is not developed responsibly and with respect for artists’ and labels’ rights.

“Music fans greatly value authenticity, and our industry has a strong track record of licensing music and supporting the development of new services that create these experiences for fans,” Rechardt continues. “That said, we still need effective tools and the support of authorities to tackle unauthorized uses and to ensure the music ecosystem remains one that is sustainable for the long term.”

Click [here](#) for the full list.

**UMPG’s Alexandra Lioutikoff Wins First-Ever Billboard International Power Players’ Choice Award**

By Taylor Mims

Billboard Pro members have selected Universal Music Publishing Group (UMPG) president of Latin America and U.S. Latin Alexandra Lioutikoff as the first recipient of the International Power Players’ Choice Award. The peer-voted award honors the global executive who Billboard Pro members believe had the most impact across the business in the past year.

Being the first to accomplish something monumental is nothing new for Lioutikoff. In 2019, she was named the first female president of Latin America and U.S. Latin for a major music publishing company, where she now oversees operations for nearly 20 countries.

Under Lioutikoff, UMPG Latin has been named publisher of the year by both BMI and ASCAP. Individually, she has been honored by the Latin Songwriters Hall of Fame and received the T.J. Martell Foundation’s Estefan Lifetime Achievement Award.

Throughout her tenure at UMPG, Lioutikoff has focused on integrating the Latin roster into the mainstream and global music market and led UMPG to become the leading Latin music publisher with a roster of songwriters, producers and publishers including Bad Bunny, Rosalía, J Balvin, Marisa Monte, Romeo Santos, Feid, Sebastián Yatra, Eladio Carrión, Luisa Sonza and the estate of Jenni Rivera.

“I’m truly grateful for this recognition,” Lioutikoff says. “UMPG is proud to be at the forefront of global music, especially Latin, which has cemented its place in the landscape. We have long understood that all music is world music, regardless of language or geography, and it’s great to see diverse songs, cultures and tastes be embraced everywhere.”

**Hipgnosis Songs Fund Board Backs Blackstone’s $1.6 Billion Acquisition Bid**

By Marc Schneider

Blackstone saw Concord’s most recent offer of $1.25 per share to acquire Hipgnosis Songs Fund and raised it a nickel to $1.30 on Monday, potentially putting a capper on a back-and-forth bidding war for the music rights company’s assets.

In a joint announcement, Blackstone and HSF’s board of directors said they approved of the revised all-cash takeover of all Hipgnosis shares, valuing the company and its portfolio of catalogs by Red Hot Chili Peppers, Neil Young, Shakira and others at roughly $1.572 billion.

By beating Concord’s most recent bid by around 4%, Blackstone will likely win the three-quarters majority of shareholder support it needs to approve the takeover when investors meet for a vote in June.

However, the bidding war was almost fated to end in the investment fund’s favor because of a call option that said Hipgnosis Song Management (HSM), which is Hipgnosis Songs Fund’s investment adviser and which is majority owned by Blackstone, had the right to match any competing offer to takeover the company.

Given Blackstone’s trump card, it is not immediately clear what drove the bidding higher. But Blackstone’s official bid arrives one week after it made what it called a “possible offer” of $1.24 per share, or roughly $1.5 billion, on April 22. HSF’s board of
On June 1st, Billboard will publish its highly anticipated Latin Women in Music list, featuring top women in the Latin music industry who are creating excitement and making their mark across labels, publishing and touring.

Take this opportunity to congratulate the most powerful and talented Latin women in music and wish them continued success.

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Billboard’s Country Power Players’ Choice Award: Vote for Music’s Most Impactful Executive (Finals)

BY TAYLOR MIMS

Billboard’s peer-voted Country Power Players’ Choice Award is back for 2024 and asking music industry members from all sectors to honor the executive they believe had the most impact across the Country music genre in the past year.

Voting is open to all Billboard Pro members, both existing and new, with one vote per member per round.

The final round of voting for the Country Power Players’ Choice Award is now underway and will run through today, April 29.

The Country Power Players’ Choice Award will run alongside Billboard’s annual Country Power Players ranking of the music industry’s most influential executives in the genre, which will be announced in May.

Vote HERE

Billboard launched its first Players’ Choice Award with the Power 100 list in January 2023, followed by the first Country Power Players’ Choice Award that concluded in June and the R&B/Hip-Hop Power Players’ Choice Award in August and the Latin Power Players’ Choice Award in September. In 2024, the peer-voted award expanded to also cover International Power Players and Top Music Lawyers.

This final round of voting concludes TONIGHT (April 29) at 11:59 EST and will determine the winner of the 2024 Country Power Players’ Choice Award.

Are Games Like Roblox and Fortnite the Next Fan Frontier for Artists?

BY ELIAS LEIGHT

At the end of 2023, the gaming platform Roblox announced that it had more than 71.5 million average daily active users. While it still remains best known to teens and their parents, evangelists see gaming hubs like Roblox and Fortnite as the new frontier of social media — another space where musicians will need to establish a presence if they hope to remain commercially relevant with younger listeners.

“Just the way every artist has an Instagram account and a TikTok, eventually everyone’s going to have a Roblox presence,” predicts Nichole Hill, co-founder of the company Sawhorse Production. Hill has worked on Roblox projects for Olivia Rodrigo and Elton John, while Spotify, iHeartMedia and Warner Music Group have all launched Roblox experiences, and Sony Music has an in-house team developing music-focused games or experiences for both Roblox and Fortnite. (The latter boasts of having more than half a billion player accounts.)

In Roblox, players create an avatar and access an ecosystem of millions of games, many of which are developed by creative teenagers rather than massive gaming companies. Roblox lovers, nearly half of whom are female, pay to acquire Robux, a currency which allows them to buy an assortment of items for their avatars, and devote an average of 2.5 hours a day to roaming Roblox’s colorful, blocky virtual byways.

“There are different ways that they spend that time,” says Karibi Dago-Jack, head of music partnerships at Roblox. “Sometimes it’s playing a hardcore first-person shooter game. Sometimes it’s just hanging out with people that have an affinity for a
The Coliseo de Puerto Rico José Miguel Agrelot is the biggest indoor arena in Puerto Rico dedicated to entertainment. It’s usually referred by Puerto Ricans as the Choliseo or Choli.

Located at “La Milla de Oro” in San Juan, the island capital, it’s among the Top 12 Arenas of the World in ticket sales and the Caribbean most famous one.

Coliseo is ranked 8th on the Top 50 Arena Venues of the world and second of the West hemisphere in worldwide ticket sales. It’s an institution in the touring industry and a landmark in Puerto Rico.

We invite you to take this opportunity to congratulate Coliseo de Puerto Rico on its 20th Years Celebration.

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thing they have an affinity for” — like music.

Fortnite, in contrast, came to prominence as a fight-to-the-death survival game — its audience skews older than Roblox’s, and it’s male-dominated — but has been trying to diversify its appeal. Most notably, in March of 2023, Epic Games launched Unreal Engine for Fortnite (UEFN), which means creators can now develop their own worlds and experiences and make them available for the Fortnite audience, giving it some of the user-generated flaire of Roblox.

Initially the music industry’s main way of engaging with Roblox and Fortnite audiences was through virtual concerts from the Lil Nas Xs and Travis Scotts of the world. But concerts, even virtual ones, are massive undertakings, often taking six months or more to develop and fine-tune, according to sources who have worked on them. That means concerts make sense primarily for a small number of big-name artists. In contrast, sources say putting together a Roblox shop may take closer to four to six weeks.

Even beyond budgetary constraints, concerts are one-time experiences in environments that prioritize constant interaction, an old-school approach to a new-school platform. “Artist events can have a lot more longevity,” says Ricardo Briceno, chief business officer of Gamefam, which built Harmony Hills, the virtual space that also serves as the home of Warner Music Group’s Gamefam.

Tony Barnes, founder of Karta, which worked on a popular Roblox experience for TWICE — a “fan hub” where supporters of the K-Pop group can play games, hang out virtually, and buy digital goods for their avatars — advises clients to think of the platform as “a new community channel that needs to be nurtured.” “You need to maintain your engagement,” he says. “It’s an always-on strategy.”

The music industry is now in a period that Hill describes as “a constant test and learn” with Roblox and Fortnite; some projects have generated serious revenue, while others are lucky to break even. “We’re still scratching the surface,” Briceno says.

Yet competition is already fierce. “Roblox is becoming a crowded space,” Hill notes. “Even if you’re a popular name and you show up, you can’t just expect everyone to be so excited and somehow find you. A lot of brands are marketing their experiences on the platform.”

Both Roblox and Fortnite incentivize artists and labels to treat the platforms as revenue generators. Artists can sell items on Roblox which players use to customize their avatars; the creator of the item takes home 30%, the creator of the experience — which could also be the artist — where the item is sold gets 40%, and the platform takes 30%.

Briceno sold ice antlers for Cher, for example, while TWICE has sold more than 3 million emotes, and an Elton John emot was purchased over 1.5 million times, according to a Roblox representative. Gavin Johnson, director of syncs and partnerships at the electronic music label Monstercat, oversaw the sale of a limited edition Ruby pendant necklace for 1,001,001 Robux (around $10,000) — “the highest primary sale ever on the platform.”

Over on Fortnite, if a label creates its own customized game-play environment, known as an “island,” they receive an “engagement payout.” (Roblox offers these too.) “40% of the net revenue from Fortnite’s Item Shop and related real-money purchases” is set aside for this purpose, according to Epic Games’ website, and then disbursed among island creators according to a complex calculation that takes into account the island’s ability to attract new players, re-engage dormant players, and keep both types coming back. (One gaming executive says that while the top UEFN experiences “drive a lot of gameplay and repeat visitors,” there’s a huge gap between the top few and most of the rest; a rep for Epic Games did not respond to a request for comment.)

For now, artists and labels often find it easier to jump into Roblox, in part because the barrier to entry is low — “basically anyone can create anything and sell it,” as Briceno puts it. In contrast, “Fortnite doesn’t allow studios or creators to sell items in-game,” says Michael Herriger, co-founder of Atlas Creative, which built iHeartMedia’s Roblox environment. “Everything that is a Fortnite skin [an outfit to customize a player’s look in the game], for example, comes directly from the Epic Games store.”

Selling items, designing artist-themed experiences — these can help raise awareness of an act and drive what Barnes calls “fan culture,” but may not involve actual music. Artists and labels are still trying to figure out what effective music integrations might look like. “The idea of using Roblox to drive discovery of your song is really cool, and maybe untapped,” Dagogo-Jack says.

When Metallica released 72 Seasons in 2023, the band partnered with five popular Roblox games to pipe its music into their creations. (“It’s a fantastic way to promote these brands, be it Metallica or any other musical artist,” says Kohl Couture, who goes by MiniToon, and created the game Piggy, which was part of the Metallica rollout). Earlier this year, Sony Music unveiled a Fortnite game called Nitewave, where winners of a capture-the-flag-like experience get to control the soundtrack of Sony artists, including songs by Flo Milli and Calvin Harris.

While Briceno “very much believe[s] in a future where there will be music discovery in these platforms,” he’s not sure “the right tools are available in these platforms just yet.” One potential tool is being developed by the company STYNGR: An ad-supported boombox full of pre-cleared songs — at the moment, just tracks from Universal Music Group — that players can equip their avatar with.

In early experiments, when players need to turn on the boombox themselves, 15% do so; if the boombox starts automatically, 90% choose to leave it on. Session lengths increase by as much as 10% while players have the radio blasting musical accompaniment, according to Alex Tarrand, STYNGR’s COO and co-founder, and for a small group of “power users,” session lengths are tripling.

“The reason the engagement goes up is people stay longer in games if they like what they’re listening to,” Tarrand says. “Our thesis is that recorded music makes stuff better.”
With the rich, bluesy vocals of Darius Rucker and gleeful harmonies of guitarist Mark Bryan, bassist Dean Felber and drummer Jim “Soni” Sonefeld, Hootie & the Blowfish have sold over 25 million records worldwide to date after their infectious melodies hit the airwaves in 1994 with hits such as “Hold My Hand,” “Let Her Cry” and “Only Wanna Be With You.” The quartet met at the University of South Carolina where endless gigs at frat houses and local bars built a major local buzz. Their blend of pop, folk, blues, soul and rock made them hard to pigeonhole, but easily accessible to anyone who loved good music.

Atlantic Records, impressed by their regional draw, signed them and released Cracked Rear View in 1994. The album had been out for six months before the band played on the Late Show with David Letterman which sent sales skyrocketing, eventually landing at No. 1 on the Billboard chart the following spring.

Cracked Rear View and the band went on to win two GRAMMY Awards, an MTV Video Music Award, a Billboard Music Award and multiple People’s Choice Awards. Cracked Rear View also earned the band Billboard’s Band of the Year Award in 1996 and the RIAA’s Diamond Award for sales in excess of 10 million units. At 21x Platinum, Cracked Rear View remains among the Top 10 best-selling studio albums in music history.

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Billboard & Telemundo Announce Second Annual Billboard Latin Women in Music

**BY ISABELA RAYGOZA**

*Billboard* and Telemundo have revealed that the exclusive airing of the Billboard Latin Women in Music special is scheduled to return for its second edition on June 9 at 9 p.m. ET via Telemundo.

The two-hour music special, which celebrates “Latin female artists proactively working for positive change, inclusion, and gender parity in the music industry,” as noted in the press release, will once again be hosted by Mexican actress and TV host Jacqueline Bracamontes.

Produced at Telemundo Center in Miami, this event captures the essence of Latin culture through dynamic musical showcases and special acknowledgments from leading Latin female artists. It will also be available for simultaneous streaming on the Telemundo app and Peacock. The recipients of this year’s honors will be revealed at a later time.

Bracamontes holds a prominent position in Latin American television. She has anchored Telemundo’s broadcasts of prestigious events such as Miss Universe, the Billboard Latin Music Awards and the Latin American Music Awards. Additionally, she has helmed programs such as the dance competition *Así se Baila* and starred in the popular primetime series *La Suerte de Loli*.

Furthermore, Bracamontes joined the U.S. Hispanic network as the host of *Viva el Mundial y Más*, a sports and entertainment show that aired during the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia, and co-hosted two seasons of the hit music competition *La Voz (The Voice)*.

At last year’s Latin Women in Music event, honors were granted to those who’ve made significant contributions to Latin music and its industry. The recipients included Shakira as Woman of the Year, Ana Gabriel as Living Legend, Thalía as Global Powerhouse, María Becerra as Visionary, Emilia as Rising Star, Evaluna as Tradition and Future and Goyo as Agent of Change.

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**Deezer Revenue Up 15% on Price Increases, Partnerships**

**BY GLENN PEOPLES**

French music streamer Deezer reaped the benefits of its price increases as its first-quarter revenues grew 15.0% to 132.5 million euros ($143.5 million at the average exchange rate for the period). Average revenue per user (ARPU) also improved for direct subscribers and business-to-business subscribers from partners including Brazilian mobile carrier TIM and French retailer Fnac Darty.

Deezer raised subscription prices in France, its largest market, in January 2022 and other markets later in the year. After Apple, Amazon, YouTube and Spotify all followed with their own increases, Deezer raised its prices again in September 2023.

In the first quarter, ARPU for direct subscribers grew 6.4% to 5.1 euros ($5.50) as the latest price increase was implemented for over 75% of them, while ARPU from partnerships improved 5.5% to 2.9 euros ($3.1). Both ARPU figures have grown considerably in the last two years. Since the first quarter, direct ARPU has grown 13.3% from 4.5 euros ($4.9) and partnership ARPU has improved 20.8% from 2.4 euros ($2.6).

Partnerships produced most of Deezer’s revenue growth in the quarter. While direct revenue from paid subscriptions grew 5.2% to 86 million euros ($93.1 million), partnerships revenue grew 40.3% to 43.3 million euros ($46.9 million); Deezer provides its streaming platform for its partners’ branded products. The company attributed partnerships growth to a recent deal with Mercado Libre in Latin America, RTL in Europe and Sonos. The company also renewed deals with TIM and Fnac Darty in the quarter.

The first quarter improvement “highlights clear momentum and evidence that our strategy is on point,” said interim CEO Stu Bergen in a statement. “By delivering unique experiences to music fans worldwide, Deezer delivers value and innovation to all our stakeholders. We continue to be a catalyst for positive change, challenging the status quo in remuneration and pricing, while maintaining our unwavering support for artists and songwriters.”

France accounted for the majority of Deezer’s revenue (57.4%), though revenue in the country grew just 8.5% to 76.1 million euros ($82.4 million) from the prior-year period. Revenue in the rest of the world jumped 25.2% to 56.4 million euros ($61.1 million) and accounted for 42.6% of revenue, up from 39.1% of revenue in the first quarter of 2023.

Although a relatively minor player on the global music streaming stage, Deezer has been influential in the music industry’s efforts to make streaming a more sustainable endeavor for musicians. In 2023, Universal Music Group partnered with Deezer for an artist-centric royalty scheme that aims to provide better royalties for professional musicians. Independent rights group Merlin followed in March.

Part of providing better remuneration to professional artists is removing non-music tracks (also called functional music) from the platform and Deezer’s earnings release confirmed the company has removed over 26 million tracks (non-artist content, noise and duplicates) since October 2023. The company also “enforces a stricter provider policy to ensure exceptional quality content and elevate the user experience,” according to the release.

Looking ahead, Deezer maintained its previous guidance given in February: Adjusted EBITDA is expected to be better than -15 million euros (-$16.2 million) — about half of the -29 million euros (-$31 million) in 2023 — and revenue growth is expected at
On June 8th, Billboard will publish its annual Indie Label Power Players List. This special feature in advance of A2IM Indie Week (6/10-6/14) and the 14th Annual Libera Awards will profile leading executives at top independent record labels, publishing companies and distribution companies. Positioning themselves as the driving force behind the success of independent music, these executives contribute to the independent music sector and to the world of music at large.

Take this opportunity to advertise and congratulate this year’s 2024 Indie Label Power Players.

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Inside the Dominican Republic’s Growing Musical Scene: Expanding Globally, Fusing Genres and the Premios Heat Awards

BY LEILA COBO

When singer Manuel Turizo released his single “La Bachata” in May 2022, it was a risky move. The Colombian singer was venturing into Dominican territory not only by singing bachata — a very regional Dominican music genre — but by cheekily titling his foray “La Bachata” (The Bachata).

The risk paid off. By August, Turizo’s pop-and tropical-laced take on bachata landed at No. 1 on Billboard’s Tropical Airplay chart, where it ruled for 14 weeks, and it rose to No. 1 on the Latin Airplay chart in October. The track also reached No. 6 on the Billboard Global 200 (becoming the first bachata song to enter the top 10 since the chart’s inception in 2020) and No. 3 on the Global Excl. U.S. chart. It peaked at No. 67 on the all-genre Billboard Hot 100 in October.

“Music is universal,” Turizo told Billboard following the song’s success. “These are the influences Dominican music left in me.”

Turizo is far from the only Latin star influenced by Dominican music. In the past few years, a number of non-Dominican superstars — including Rosalía (with The Weeknd on “La Fama”), Shakira (with Ozuna on “Monotonia”), Karol G (“El Barco”) and, most recently, Chayanne (with 2023 hit “Bailando Bachata”) — has topped the charts by capitalizing on the broad appeal of bachata, known for its signature percussion and plucked guitars.

Bachata’s popularity, along with a rising interest in dembow and the strength of other traditional Dominican genres like merengue, have refocused attention on the music coming from the small Caribbean country that shares its island territory with Haiti but has distinct idiosyncrasies and a booming economy fueled by tourism. Despite its size, the Dominican Republic is second only to Mexico in Latin America in the number of tourists who visit every year, according to statistics site Statista.

When it comes to music, the DR — as it is affectionately known — is teeming with it. As beloved global star Juan Luis Guerra once famously said, “Even the avocados sing.” The DR’s vast roster of international stars includes the more global Guerra, as well as Romeo Santos, Aventura and Prince Royce (who, although all born in the Bronx, identify with their Dominican music and roots). In Latin America, the list includes merengue stars Milly Quezada, Los Hermanos Rosario and Sergio Vargas, who are all active today.

While music from the DR has been less ubiquitous than music from Puerto Rico, for example, in the past five years, the country has significantly upped its musical exports, thanks in part to a new generation of stars including Natti Natasha, El Alfa, Tokischa, J Noa and Amenazzi. Major labels have taken notice, with Natasha, Tokischa and J Noa all now signed to or distributed through Sony Latin. This is in no small part due to the explosion of Dominican dembow — an exciting, vibrant fusion that’s filling arenas thanks to artists like El Alfa, who, in turn, has helped globalize the style by working with genre-bending acts such as Camilo, Fuerza Régida, Rauw Alejandro and Peso Pluma. Tokischa has recorded with Rosalia and traded an onstage kiss with Madonna during the legend’s Celebration tour stop in New York, while Natasha has emerged as the country’s most prominent pop star.

The DR is poised to assume an even bigger role on the global music stage. This year, in addition to its local Premios Soberano, Premios Heat — which has traditionally taken place on the beaches of DR — celebrates its 10th anniversary on July 11 as a Latin American-produced live music awards show that’s viewed regionwide. For the first time, in addition to broadcasting on HTV, the awards will also stream on YouTube.

Industrywise, the newly minted Dominican Music Week returned April 16-18 for a second year of panels and new-artist showcases. “The music industry in the Dominican Republic is clearly growing,” Premios Heat president Diana Montes says. “Although the big companies and streamers have long been in the territory, we see more artists working hand in hand with them, and the growth impact is palpable.”

Billboard spoke with industry leaders about the present and the future of a country that lives and breathes music.

A Fusion Of Rhythms

Although the Dominican Republic has always been rich with a wealth of Latin genres — bachata, merengue, merengue típico — Montes is particularly excited about the surge of dembow, “which has taken over the global charts,” and the new mix of rhythms that has come with it. “There’s an amazing fusion of genres going on,” she says, citing Peso Pluma’s collaboration with dembow pioneer El Alfa and Chimbal’s many collaborations with reggaeton acts.

New talent is proliferating, and, she says, “Tropical music is coming back. That fills me with enthusiasm.”

On the radar: Montes mentions J Noa, a rapper recently signed by Sony Music, as an “incredible” talent, as well as proponents of new tropical music like Chimbal.

Dominicans Take On The World

Never, perhaps, have Dominican music and its artists enjoyed as much global recognition as they do today. “The increasing value placed on Dominican music and its music-makers in the global market is exciting to watch,” attorney Rosa Mayra Tejada says. That recognition, she adds, goes hand in hand with the growth of the market itself and the increased participation of Dominican artists on international hits, as well as composers and producers. “I’m excited
On June 22nd, Billboard will publish its 6th annual Pride issue honoring culturally moving and influential people who have contributed to the community’s history and its current landscape. Year-round Billboard celebrates the LGBTQIA+ community across our editorial channels, including Billboard Pride.

Building on this platform, Billboard will celebrate the entire month of June to celebrate love, acceptance, diversity and what it means to be queer in music. All month long, Billboard will be the go-to destination for music and entertainment Pride content. Leveraging our iconic voices within music and culture, Billboard will curate a mix of engaging video and social content featuring thought-provoking panels, heartfelt performances, and glam tutorials – all fostering a community of consumers and influencers in celebration of LGBTQIA+

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about a musical market that’s growing and where all our creators have more and better opportunities to prepare for this changing market,” Tejeda says.

**A place to learn:** “Dominican Music Week is the best place to acquire or refresh knowledge and interact with music executives,” Tejeda says.

**Music That’s A Cultural Heritage Of Humanity**

The DR birthed two genres of great significance: “merengue and bachata, which have also been declared by the UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,” a designation of cultural heritage including traditions or living expressions inherited from ancestors such as the performing arts, says Valerio de León Severino, president of the country’s general society of authors, composers and editors, Sgacedom. “2024 is shaping up to be a year of growth for Dominican music genres, given the fact that important international artists have placed their eyes on the music and market,” Severino continues. “Likewise, Dominican talent is more aware than ever of the importance of digital platforms to internationalize their music.”

**On the radar:** “Established acts Juan Luis Guerra, Eddy Herrera, Milly Quezada, Sergio Vargas, El Prodigio, Elvis Martínez, Sacarias Ferreiras and El Chaval,” Severino says.

**Educating For Growth**

As CEO of indie music company and distributor Aparataje, Jairo Bautista has focused on educating his artists and creators since 2015. “Topics like royalty splits, publishing rights and neighboring rights are common topics of discussion in recording sessions,” he says. “This has also led to a surge in a new generation of Dominican executives with deep knowledge of the business.” The versatility of Dominican artists and musicians has allowed them to adapt and interact with other genres, “thanks to the rich mix of cultures and genres, including orchestral merengue, typical merengue and, particularly, urban music.” The lattermost is where Bautista sees the most growth, with urban artists selling out shows throughout the country and with labels willing to invest “up to $10 million” in signing advances.

**On the radar:** “Without a doubt, dembow is the main mass-consumption genre right now,” Bautista says. “TikTok has become the main platform to viralize the music. And merengue típico is living a resurgence thanks to new artists who are bringing a fresh take to this legendary Dominican genre.” Artists to watch include Chimbala, Bulova and Don Miguelo.

**Local Expertise That Translates To Global Recognition**

International superstars may have globalized bachata and merengue, but their foundation lies in the expertise and musicianship of local composers and musicians. The DR “has been able to position genres like bachata, merengue and dembow on an international stage, and this means that locally you can find an industry of musicians, producers, composers and arrangers who are experts in those genres,” says Emiliano Vásquez, an A&R manager at Sony Music Latin. “It thrills me to say that tropical genres have increasing presence in international markets and that it’s increasingly common to see Dominican musicians being tapped for their expertise.”

**Hidden talents:** Composers like Brasa have credits on tracks with Bad Bunny, Prince Royce and Diego Torres, while writer-producer Cromo X has credits on a merengue song with Kali Uchis that was made in the DR.

**An ‘Inexhaustible Source Of Talent And Grace’**

Amarilys German, longtime manager for Guerra, describes her country as an “inexhaustible source of talent and grace. Here, even the trees sing and dance.” But German has also seen a tangible change in live music since the end of the pandemic. “The growth in massive shows has been huge,” she says, noting fans’ behavior has changed dramatically. “Prior to the pandemic, you went on sale, and truly, until the last week, you had no idea what was going to happen, and there was no presale.” Now tickets sell from the first day, “which allows managers, artists and promoters to have clarity and work with added precision.”

**On the radar:** J Noa, SNENIE and Damn Goldo.
Premios Heat Awards Founder Diana Montes on How the Event Has Evolved Over 10 Years

BY LEILA COBO

Diana Montes was working in sales and sponsorships at the Latin Recording Academy in 2013 when Turner Media Group contacted her with an ambitious proposal: Could she create a Latin music awards show outside the United States to air on HTV, the Latin music channel then owned by TBS? It was a challenging idea because at the time, all major Latin music awards shows were produced stateside.

“We decided to make a Latin music award for Latins, made in Latin America,” Montes says. She pitched the concept to multiple cities and countries and finally partnered with the Dominican Republic’s burgeoning tourist destination of Cap Cana.

Today, 10 years after its first broadcast by the seashore, the event has grown from a homey show to a major ceremony with a massive online following and a cadre of devoted artists — including Karol G and Feid — who have been feted by Premios Heat throughout their careers.

Montes plans to honor many of them during the anniversary edition of the awards show on July 11, set once again for the beaches of Cap Cana.

How has Premios Heat evolved?

We have only existed for 10 years but have grown in a huge way. When we started, HTV was only seen in Latin America, and there was no great impact in Mexico or the U.S. Now we’ve expanded. Since 2020, 2021, our biggest audiences are in the United States, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, in that order.

What makes this awards show different?

The staging. We’re a beach awards show where the beach is a protagonist. Our slogan is “The only awards show with the Caribbean Sea as the stage.” We’re unique because it’s very complicated to stage an awards show on a beach. And yet, in 10 years, we’ve never had a weather disaster. And obviously, having an awards show on the beach is very different than in an arena. Artists come with a different vibe, and all our concepts are tropical chic.

Did you initially have skeptics?

When I first started, people used to say this wasn’t an awards show but a beach festival that happened to hand out awards. Now they say I created a unique format and we’ve connected with a younger audience.

How are the finalists and winners decided?

Nominations are based on video rotation on HTV, and we also have a committee of radio programmers throughout Latin America who tell us what’s playing in different countries. Once nominations are out, they’re public, and people vote for the winners. Anyone can vote. We also give out two editorial awards: social commitment, to an artist who has effected change through their foundation, and a golden award, which is the big award of the night that we give for career trajectory.

What’s different this year?

It’s a very special year because it’s our 10-year anniversary. We’ve expanded our categories, and this year, we’ll name winners in 29 categories, including a video-game streaming song. We’re also going to give out song of the year for the first time, and we’re launching a salsa category. We’re also excited about our app, Heat.TV. We launched it in 2021, and we have 647,000 unique monthly users. Last year, we had 5.2 million people watch the show in its entirety on the app.

A California Bill Designed to Rein in Ticketmaster Was Rewritten. Now It May End Up Helping It Instead

BY DAVE BROOKS

A controversial California Assembly bill that would have forced Ticketmaster to share its ticketing inventory with resale sites StubHub and SeatGeek has been amended with anti-resale provisions that would allow promoters like Live Nation to ban Stubhub and SeatGeek from selling its concert tickets in California.

The whiplash legislative maneuvering is the result of the music industry’s successful effort to thwart Oakland lawmaker Buffy Wicks’ attempt to address long-standing consumer complaints against Ticketmaster, forcing her to significantly water down the legislation.

The original version of the bill was introduced on April 8, when Wicks held a press conference with the California Consumer Federation and members of several state Chamber of Commerce groups and unveiled a plan, endorsed by StubHub and SeatGeek, to “make the ticket market more competitive.” To accomplish this, the bill proposed...
Facing universal opposition from the live music industry and several members of the committee, Wicks vowed to make changes to the legislation.

On Tuesday (April 24), during a hearing of the Assembly's Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee, Wicks introduced a new, partially completed bill that exempted professional and collegiate sports teams from the new rules. More notably, it included a clause stating that it would be an artist's decision "to determine the terms and conditions related to the sale, pricing, distribution and transfer of tickets to their events."

That new language, which mirrors that of legislation in other states as well as proposed federal legislation, was interpreted to mean that artists would be given the right to block resale sites from selling their tickets, potentially ending the resale of concert tickets in California — a sharp contrast with the original bill.

Wicks said the amendment resulted from a compromise with other legislators and was still being revised and amended. Lobbyists for secondary sites like StubHub and SeatGeek testified that they would pull their support for the bill if the new language remained.

Wicks isn't the only politician tackling ticketing initiatives. Since the high-profile crash of the Taylor Swift Eras Tour ticket sale in November 2022, Ticketmaster has come under fire from members of both parties in Congress and is reportedly the subject of a DOJ investigation on antitrust charges. State lawmakers across the country have largely tried and failed to pass legislation curbing Ticketmaster's power, but few have swung and missed quite like Wicks, who initially chose to align her efforts with the secondary ticketing market.

Today's modern live music industry is a diverse cross-section of competing multinational corporations and independent businesses made up of venue operators, talent agencies, concert promoters, artists and their managers, and primary ticketing companies. The broad group of competing interests doesn't agree on much, except for their universal opposition to the ticket resale business, which many believe caused the Swift ticket sale crash. The bot attack that preceded the temporary disruption of the sale had all the hallmarks of similar attacks utilized by ticket scalping groups.

In its defense, reps for the secondary ticketing business argue that sites like StubHub and SeatGeek provide a safe marketplace to buy and sell tickets that has been embraced by consumers and duplicated by Ticketmaster, which operates its own resale business.

The friction between the music industry and the secondary market involves access to high-demand concerts by artists like Swift and Olivia Rodrigo. Lobbyists for resale sites say Ticketmaster unfairly blocks ticket resellers from accessing high-demand tickets. Ticketmaster officials argue their artist clients want their tickets to be sold directly to fans and not marked up on resale sites.

Following the introduction of Wicks' revamped bill in California, a new round of debate ensued. During the committee discussion of the legislation, Assemblymember Isaac Bryan said that Wicks' logic that a Kayak.com site would push ticket prices down was flawed, noting that with hotels, "There's no secondary market to sell a room for two, three or four" times what was originally paid to book the room.

Assemblymember Lori Wilson added that Wicks should focus her efforts on determining whether Ticketmaster held a competitive or unfair advantage. Committee chair Rebecca Bauer-Kahan said legislators needed to focus on putting consumers first, adding, "We as a committee don't necessarily think the largest problem is the monopoly at the front end but the brokers in the middle who are buying up the tickets and leading to a lot of the problems" in the marketplace.

Despite these reservations, the new, radically different legislation will move forward. After a brief vote, the rewritten bill passed in the Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee and now heads to the Appropriations Committee, where Wicks serves as chair.
Taylor Swift & Post Malone’s ‘Fortnight’ Debuts at No. 1 on Billboard Global Charts

BY GARY TRUST

Taylor Swift’s “Fortnight,” featuring Post Malone, arrives as the biggest song in the world, launching at No. 1 both the Billboard Global 200 and Billboard Global Excl. U.S. charts. The song is from her new album, The Tortured Poets Department, which rockets in at No. 1 on the U.S.-based Billboard 200.

On the Global 200, Swift scores her fifth No. 1, the most for a soloist in the survey’s history. On Global Excl. U.S., she lands her third leader, tying for the most among solo artists. Post Malone tops each tally for the first time.

Meanwhile, Swift boasts the top nine songs on the Global 200, all from her new LP, a first in the chart’s archives. She previously claimed nine of the top 10, including the top five, in November 2022 with songs from Midnights, her last album of all-new material before The Tortured Poets Department.

The Billboard Global 200 and Billboard Global Excl. charts, which began in September 2020, rank songs based on streaming and sales activity culled from more than 200 territories around the world, as compiled by Luminate. The Global 200 is inclusive of worldwide data and the Global Excl. U.S. chart comprises data from territories excluding the United States.

Chart ranks are based on a weighted formula incorporating official-only streams on both subscription and ad-supported tiers of audio and video music services, as well as download sales, the latter of which reflect purchases from full-service digital music retailers from around the world, with sales from direct-to-consumer (D2C) sites excluded from the charts’ calculations.

“Fortnight” debuts atop the Global 200 with 176.8 million streams and 27,000 sold worldwide in its first week of release, April 19-25.

The streaming sum for the song marks the eighth-biggest in a single week since the Global 200 began.

Biggest Worldwide Streaming Weeks in Global 200 History:
- 289.2 million, “Butter,” BTS, June 5, 2021
- 217.1 million, “Seven,” Jung Kook feat. Latto, July 29, 2023
- 217.1 million, “Flowers,” Miley Cyrus, Feb. 4, 2023
- 212.1 million, “Pink Venom,” BLACKPINK, Sept. 3, 2022
- 185.6 million, “Flowers,” Miley Cyrus, Feb. 11, 2023
- 179.1 million, “Flowers,” Miley Cyrus, Jan. 28, 2023
- 170.8 million, “Permission To Dance,” BTS, July 24, 2021
- 169.8 million, “Butter,” BTS, June 12, 2021

Swift scores her fifth Global 200 No. 1, as she breaks out of a tie with Bad Bunny for the most leaders among soloists; overall, only BTS has more, with seven. Here’s a rundown of her No. 1s:
- “Fortnight,” feat. Post Malone, one week at No. 1 to-date, May 4, 2024
- “Is It Over Now? (Taylor’s Version)” [From the Vault], one week, Nov. 11, 2022
- “Cruel Summer,” four weeks, beginning Nov. 4, 2023
- “Anti-Hero,” four weeks, beginning Nov. 5, 2022
- “All Too Well (Taylor’s Version),” one week, Nov. 27, 2021

Meanwhile, here’s a recap of Swift’s nine songs in the top 10, from Nos. 1 through 9, on the May 4-dated Global 200:

No. 1, “Fortnight,” feat. Post Malone
No. 2, “Down Bad”
No. 3, “The Tortured Poets Department”
No. 4, “So Long, London”
No. 5, “I Can Do It With a Broken Heart”
No. 6, “My Boy Only Breaks His Favorite Toys”
No. 7, “But Daddy I Love Him”
No. 8, “Florida!!!,” feat. Florence + The Machine
No. 9, “Who’s Afraid of Little Old Me?”

With nine new Global 200 top 10s, Swift ups her total to 33 since the chart began, second only to Drake’s 35. As featured on “Florida!!!,” Florence + The Machine reaches the top 10 for the first time.

Breaking up Swift’s bid for the entire Global 200’s top 10, Artemas’ “I Like the Way You Kiss Me” drops to No. 10 from its No. 2 high. (Last week’s leader, “Too Sweet,” by Hozier, falls to No. 13.)

On the Global Excl. U.S. chart, “Fortnight” starts at No. 1 with 101.7 million streams and 8,000 sold outside the U.S. Swift previously led the chart with “Anti-Hero,” for two weeks, and “All Too Well (Taylor’s Version),” for one week. With three leaders, she ties Bad Bunny, BLACKPINK, Ariana Grande and Jung Kook for the most among soloists; among all acts, only BTS has banked more (seven).

Swift also enters the Global Excl. U.S. top 10 with “Down Bad” (No. 4), “The Tortured Poets Department” (No. 6), “So Long, London” (No. 7), “I Can Do It With a Broken Heart” (No. 9) and “My Boy Only Breaks His Favorite Toys” (No. 10). With six new top 10s, she swells her count to 20, surpassing Bad Bunny (18) for the most since the chart originated.

Elsewhere in the Global Excl. U.S. top 10, Artemas’ “I Like the Way You Kiss Me” dips to No. 2, after a week at No. 1; FloyyMenor and Cris Mj’s “Gata Only” rises 4-3 for a new high; Benson Boone’s “Beautiful Things” falls 2-5, after eight nonconsecutive weeks on top; and ILLIT’s “Magnetic” descends to No. 8 from its No. 3 best.

The Billboard Global 200 and Billboard Global Excl. U.S. charts (dated May 4, 2024) will update on Billboard.com tomorrow, April 30. For both charts, the top 100 titles are available to all readers on Billboard.com, while the complete 200-title rankings are visible on Billboard Pro, Billboard’s subscription-based service. For all chart news, you can follow @billboard and @billboardcharts on both X, formerly known as Twitter, and Instagram.
Diddy Files Motion to Dismiss Some Claims in a Sexual Assault Lawsuit

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lawyers for Sean “Diddy” Combs pushed back against a woman’s lawsuit that accused him of sexual assault, filing a motion on Friday (April 26) to dismiss some claims that were not under law when the alleged incident occurred.

The motion filed in a New York court claims Combs cannot be sued because certain laws didn’t exist when Joi Dickerson-Deal made the allegations against him in 1991.

The music mogul’s lawyers want certain statues from Dickerson-Deal’s claims such as revenge porn and human trafficking to be dismissed with prejudice.

In a filing last year, she said Combs “intentionally drugged” her then brought her home and sexually assaulted her after a date in Harlem when she was a 19-year-old college student.

Without her knowledge, Combs videotaped the assault and later shared it with several friends in the music industry, the suit alleges. He denied the allegations, accusing her of seeking to exploit the New York law that temporarily extended the statute of limitations.

Dickerson-Deal’s claim came nearly three decades after his alleged misconduct and the New York State Revenge Porn Law was not codified until 2019, Combs’ lawyers said.

His attorneys also pointed out a few others including the New York Services for Victims of Human Trafficking Law, which came into effect in 2007.

The Associated Press does not typically name people who say they have been sexually abused unless they come forward publicly, as Dickerson has done.

Last month, Combs’ properties in Los Angeles and Miami were raided by federal authorities in a sex trafficking investigation. The criminal investigation is a major escalation in the scrutiny of Combs, who has been the defendant in several recent sexual abuse lawsuits.

In a lawsuit Combs settled the day after it was filed in November, his former protege and girlfriend, the R&B singer Cassie, sued him alleging years of sexual abuse, including rape. The lawsuit said he forced her to have sex with male prostitutes while he filmed them.

In February, a music producer filed a lawsuit alleging Combs coerced him to solicit prostitutes and pressured him to have sex with them.

Another of Combs’ accusers was a woman who said he raped her two decades ago when she was 17.

Combs and his attorneys have denied all of the allegations in the lawsuits.

Cher, Donna Summer & More Earn Streaming Bumps Thanks to ‘RuPaul’s Drag Race’ Lip Syncs

BY STEPHEN DAW

With season 16 of RuPaul’s Drag Race officially over, fans finally know who won the crown. But which recording artist managed to win in terms of streaming bumps?

Throughout the latest season of the franchise, songs featured in lip syncs have earned a 28.1% increase on average in total on-demand streams, including UGC (user-generated content), according to Luminate.

The song that earned the biggest bump of the season was Cher’s “Dark Lady,” which featured as the Lip Sync For Your Life song for episode four (aired Friday, Jan. 26). On the day the episode aired, “Dark Lady” earned 9,180 streams; the following day (Jan. 26), on-demand streams for the song spiked to 38,183, marking a 315.9% increase in on-demand streams for Cher.

Janet Jackson’s “What About” also earned a triple-digit percentage increase in streams thanks to Drag Race. After being featured as one of the lip-sync songs in April 12’s “LaLa-paruza” episode, the song shot from 1,056 streams to 3,946 streams, netting Jackson a 273.7% increase.

Meanwhile, two Donna Summer songs nabbed similarly impressive streaming bumps thanks to a pair of lip-sync showdowns on this season of Drag Race. “This Time I Know It’s for Real,” Summer’s song used in a lip sync on April 12, secured a 180.9% increase in on-demand streams the day after the episode aired. “Dim All the Lights,” used in the episode 11 lip sync on March 15, also earned a 96.4% increase in on-demand streams the day following the episode.

The finale episode of season 16 (aired Friday, April 19) saw the franchise crown Nymphia Wind as America’s Next Drag Superstar following a heart-racing lip sync to Kylie Minogue’s “Padam Padam,” (which earned a 56.5% bump in streams the day after being featured on the show). The queen made history with her crowning, becoming the first-ever East Asian winner of the American franchise.

Speaking to Billboard shortly after her victory, Wind said it felt “crazy to be able to live this out for my community and my country,” adding that “it really means a lot to me to be able to live this.”
Billboard Philippines Reveals Hip-Hop Class of 2024 With O Side Mafia, Felip, Illest Morena, Hev Abi & More

BY BILLBOARD PHILIPPINES

Hip-hop has always been one of the biggest and most vibrant genres in the Philippines. For decades, the Filipino hip-hop scene has been home to some of the country’s most riveting and innovative acts, unafraid to challenge norms and determined to tell their stories their own way.

These days, hip-hop continues to evolve and expand faster than any other genre in Filipino music history. From rising to the top of music charts and gaining instantaneous virality to molding youth culture, it’s time to bring Filipino hip-hop from the streets to the rest of the world.

This April, Billboard Philippines unveiled their first-ever Hip-Hop issue, featuring eight cover stars that have been changing and reinventing local hip-hop in their own distinct ways. Made up of O Side Mafia, Hev Abi, Tus Brothers, Zae, Felip, Illest Morena, Playertwo and Hellmerry, this is Billboard Philippines’ Hip-Hop Class of 2024.

Throughout this month, the Hip-Hop Class of 2024 recently took center stage as they delve deep into the struggles and successes of Filipino hip-hop.

In Billboard Philippines Volumes, the eight artists walk audiences through their start in the hip-hop scene and look ahead with their aspirations for the genre and themselves, as they look to take over the global stage.

As Al Tus puts it: “Hindi mo mapipigilan. Mariring talaga tayo ng buong mundo.” [You can’t stop it. Everyone in the world is going to hear us.]

As a culmination of Billboard Philippines’ Hip-Hop issue, O Side Mafia, Hev Abi, Tus Brothers, Zae, Felip, Illest Morena, Playertwo and Hellmerry star in a special episode of Billboard Philippines Studios, during which they showcase the true power of Filipino hip-hop.

O Side Mafia — which includes Costa Cashman, Gee Exclsv and Madman Stan — opened the episode with their chart-topping single “GET LOW.” Following them are Al Tus and RudyRude, who make up the hard-core trap duo Tus Brothers, performing “RUN,” and then, Felip — also known as Ken of SB19 — with his commanding voice shined with his performance of “ROCKSTA.” Nearing the first half of the episode, the fierce Zae takes to the stage with “Edi Wag.”

Hellmerry then takes the floor with his booming performance of “Thai Freestyle,” followed by Ivo Impresso, Luke April and Wave P of Playertwo turning up the party with “Shower Music.” Closing out the show is versatile Illest Morena with “Faded (Raw)” and viral hip-hop star Hev Abi with “Alam Mo Ba Girl.”

Industry Veteran Richard Stumpf Launches Hawkeye Music Publishing

BY KRISTIN ROBINSON

Longtime entrepreneur and executive Richard Stumpf has announced the launch of Hawkeye Music Publishing, a new firm that both signs active songwriters and acts as the dot connector between teams looking to sell music catalogs with their strategic partner Round Hill Music.

Previously to his new firm Hawkeye, Stumpf found success as an executive at Imagem Music and Cherry Lane Music. More recently, he was the founder and CEO of the indie publisher of Atlas Music Publishing which guided Van Halen, Brandi Carlile, Counting Crows, Dan the Automator, Sean Garrett, Ashley Gorley, and the Al Jackson Jr. catalog (“Let’s Stay Together”) as clients. Eventually, the firm caught the attention of HYBE’s Ithaca Holdings and sold to the Korean music giant at the start of 2019. As part of the sale, Stumpf agreed to stay on as CEO until January 2021, which he did. (The rest of the original Atlas team also departed in 2021).

Since then, Stumpf has taken an advisory role, helping a number of tech companies looking to break into the music business, including Right Box and MerchCat, and lent his expertise to catalog buyers or administrators like Pythagoras Music Fund, Gold-State Music and Round Hill Music.

“What was clear to me working alongside tech and catalog companies was that there is an enormous and growing appetite for copyrights - both from a consumer and ownership perspective,” says Stumpf. “I wanted to put myself in a position where I could bring relationship driven catalog business to a home where I knew the music would be treated with the utmost respect and at the same time have a partner who could assist in administering Hawkeye, which would be dedicated to active writers. I found that strategic partner in Round Hill Music. Josh [Gruss, founder of Round Hill] and his team exemplify what it means to be a proactive partner who puts the music and writers first.”

Hawkeye Music Publishing has not signed its first active songwriter yet, but it has already assembled a team of advisors across the music industry to, as Stumpf puts it, “provide expertise across several sectors of a constantly evolving and overlapping music space.” This list includes Ann Mincielli (Grammy-winning engineer, co-founder of She Is the Music), Gruss (founder/CEO of Round Hill), Sean Garrett (producer/songwriter), Barry Ehrmann (founder/video producer Enliven Entertainment), Brandon Young (head of music affairs, Activision Blizzard), Chris “Coach” Rodriguez (assis-
Mario Olvera, Regional Mexican Music Promoter, Murdered at 42
BY TERE AGUILERA

Mario Olvera Acevedo, an event promoter specializing in Regional Mexican music, has died at the hands of unknown assailants in a direct attack that occurred in the early morning hours on Saturday (April 27).

According to a statement issued by the Secretaría de Seguridad Ciudadana (Secretariat of Public Safety) of the Government of San Pedro Cholula, Puebla, Mexico, police officers responded to the scene after receiving a report of gunshots.

Paramedics from the Municipal Civil Protection confirmed that Olvera, age 42, no longer had vital signs when he was found. They proceeded to cordon off the area while awaiting forensic experts from the State Attorney General’s Office.

Initial investigations indicate that it was a “presumed direct attack.” According to the press release from Seguridad Ciudadana, after “a motorist hit the rear of the truck of the deceased to force him to get out and shoot him, at that moment a third person on a motorcycle arrived and both subjects fled in the direction of Periférico Ecológico, where they finally abandoned the vehicle.” The authorities are still looking for the perpetrators.

The death of Olvera shocked the world of Regional Mexican music. For more than two decades, Olvera was a promoter of events in the states of Tlaxcala and Puebla with his company, Ranch Music Sinaloa, and countless artists and managers had working relationships and friendships with him.

Over the weekend, misinformation circulating in several media outlets about Olvera’s relationship with big stars of the genre suggested he acted as their representative and was a direct part of their teams, neither of which is true.

Last Wednesday (April 23), Olvera attended a meeting in Guadalajara, Mexico, of the ADEEM (Association of Entertainment Entrepreneurs in Mexico), of which he was once a member of the board of directors.

Multiple artists took to social media to express their condolences, including Los Tucanes de Tijuana, El Flaco Elizalde and El Yaki. The latter artist said he was close to Olvera and considered him an older brother, though the two were not biologically related.

“This is how I say goodbye to you my brother! Because I know you would have liked me to share it... and I do it from my heart,” wrote El Yaki on Instagram below a photo of the two together. “You taught me some really bitchin’ things and opened my eyes to something that today little by little I’m still building [...] Fly high compadre.”

In Puebla, Olvera was also known for his activities in the restaurant business. At the time of his death, he owned three establishments: Humo Gris, Ostería Humo and Puerto Marisco.

On Monday (April 29), Olvera’s body will be buried at the Valle de Los Angeles Funeral Home in Puebla.
in the prior year. On Wednesday (April 24), LiveOne announced that PodcastOne expects revenue of $11.7 million in the fiscal fourth quarter 2024, up 32% year over year. LiveOne spun off PodcastOne in 2023 and retained an 81% stake.

Two of the weeks’ best-performing stocks also reached their highest levels in years. Reservoir Media improved 13.8% to $9.10, its highest closing price since the stock closed at $9.20 on May 4, 2022. Chinese music streamer Tencent Music Entertainment gained 13.5% to $12.88, its best closing price since it closed at $13.02 on July 13, 2021.

Hipgnosis Songs Fund (HSF) gained 12.9% to 1.038 pounds ($1.30) as Concord and Blackstone vie for control of the company’s share equity and 65,000-song portfolio. Notably, Friday’s closing price was 5 cents, or 4%, above Concord’s high bid of $1.25 per share, suggesting that some investors expect the bidding process to continue. As the HSF board weighs its options amidst a strategic review and building strife with its investment advisor, Hipgnosis Song Management, a sale seems inevitable. “I think investors have been through such a roller coaster most of them just want their money back,” Round Hill Music CEO Josh Gruss told Billboard this week.

Spotify’s stock closed Friday up 5.0% to $289.59 after an up-and-down week. Shares rose 11.5% on Tuesday — and posted an intraday gain of 19.2% — following the release of the company’s first-quarter earnings report but gave back nearly all the gains over the next two days by falling 6.8% and 2.3% on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively.

Tuesday’s (April 23) intraday high of $319.30 was Spotify’s highest share price in over three years. The last time Spotify traded above $319.30 was Mar. 8, 2021, when shares reached $323.04. The stock dropped below $100, to $96.67, on Apr. 27, 2022, and fell as far as $69.29 on Nov. 4, 2022. Since that low point a year and a half ago, as Spotify has cut its workforce and focused on improving margins, its share price has risen 218%.

Indexes around the world posted gains this week. In the United States, the Nasdaq was up 4.2% to 15,927.90 and the S&P 500 improved 2.7% to 5,099.96. Both indexes were helped by Alphabet, which rose 10% to $173.69 on Friday after releasing first-quarter earnings and announcing a $70 billion buyback program. In the United Kingdom, the FTSE 100 rose 3.1% to 8,139.83. South Korea’s KOSPI composite index gained 2.5% to 2,656.33. China’s Shanghai Composite Index rose 0.8% to 3,088.64.

Five Lessons On Superfans From IMS Ibiza 2024: ‘Something as Simple as a WhatsApp Group Can Be Amazing’

BY KATIE BAIN

Superfans have become an incredibly important part of the music industry. In the past, it was all about the music. But now, it’s about how to cut through the noise and engage with artists and their content in a way that’s engaging and meaningful.

As previously reported by Billboard, in January Warner Music Group CEO Rob- ert Kyncl called for “stok[ing] the blue flames of superfans” and additional “direct artist-superfan products and experiences”, while Universal Music Group CEO Lucian Grainge highlighted the value of “superfan experiences and products”; and Spotify hinted at future “superfan clubs” in a blog post.

Defined by Luminate as listeners who “engage with artists and their content in five-plus different ways” superfans were a topic of conversation at IMS Ibiza 2024, which last week brought hundreds of electronic music industry figures to the island for three days of panels and parties.

On Friday (April 26), programming included a conversation on superfans presented by industry knowledge platform Music Ally. The talk featured Evie Thomas of Atlantic Records and Warner Music Group UK, Jack Bridges of SoundCloud, Myradh Cormican of U.K. management company Frame Artists and was moderated by Mar- len Hüllbrock of Music Ally.

The conversation cited statistics from Music Ally which found that superfans spend 80% more on music each month than the average listener and that 2% of an artist’s monthly listeners on Spotify account for more than half of that artist’s monthly merchandise purchases.

Additionally, superfans are 54% more likely to be the first among their friends to discover new music and new artists, and superfans are 59% more likely to say they want to connect with an artist on a personal level. Around 15-20% of all music listeners consider themselves superfans.

These are five other takeaways from the talk.

1) Even 100 Superfans Can Successfully Launch a Campaign — If You Can Find Them

Fanbases are spread across myriad platforms, which makes it challenging for artists to understand who their fans are. This is particularly true because given that data is segmented and also often controlled by third parties, meaning that artists have no direct access to fans and must rely on different tools and platforms to figure out who their superfans are.

Music Ally’s Hüllbrock noted that it’s “incredibly important” for artists and labels to figure out how to directly speak to their own fans, “because they’re battling the algorithm if they’re just posting on their own channels.” One solution here is cutting through the content clutter by taking artist/fan conversations to more more closed and direct spaces like WhatsApp and Discord.

“It’s about how to cut through the noise in an authentic way but also a relative way so even if an artist has 10,000 fans, they’re reaching a 1,000 or even 100 to successfully launch a campaign,” added Bridges. Thomas noted that it’s key for teams to test to see what different platforms are working and where engagement is happening for each particular artist, “as it’s not one size fits all; every artist is different; every community is different.”
2) Soundcloud Has Long Been a Home For Superfans

“I think there’s also been an underestimation of how much the superfans mattered before they were being properly identified,” said Bridges, citing the 2022 hit “Afraid To Feel” by U.K. duo LF System. That song “went to No. 1 but lived on Soundcloud for nearly a year before it got picked up and signed,” he added. “When that got signed and as part of the release strategy, it came off of Soundcloud, and straightaway the artists were inundated with messages every day asking where the record had gone.”

Bridges cites this as a moment “where the labels, the artists, the artist managers really realized how important it was to not mess with certain things or go to market without certain platforms.”

He says that over the last 18 months, as the industry has sharply focused on superfans, there’s been a change in strategy that’s seen “a lot more artists and labels go to Soundcloud early... and build records from nothing and by artists messaging their fans directly, because we have the tools to do that.”

3) Strategy Is Not One Size Fits All

“You have to look at how much time you have to invest, the reward you have made for your fanbase and where your fans really messaging you and commenting and which platforms are you seeing that on,” said Thomas, adding that ones those factors are sorted, the process can be very bespoke. “Maybe for a bigger artist with bigger budget,” she continued, “you can do something like Discord where you can bring in agencies and there’s a lot of paid features.” Meanwhile for artists that want a simpler solution, “something as simple as a WhatsApp group can be amazing.”

Cormican of Frame Artists cited Scottish DJ Arielle Free as a success story in terms of using WhatsApp to connect with superfans. “It’s been an easy lift thing to do, we’ve just given it space to develop,” she said, noting that the conversation in the group is often about topics beyond music and that many fans from the group meet IRL to attend Free’s shows.

The panelists also agreed that an artist’s language and tone should be tailored based on what platform they’re using and what fan group they’re talking to. On WhatsApp, the artist will likely be more open and relaxed, whereas Instagram caption will be shorter and sharper. Overall, the key is creating different spaces for different fan types.

4) Filtering Superfans By Territory Is Effective

When data is used to separate superfans by location, artists can easily reward these people with special experiences — meet and greets, guest lists, etc. — when they come to town.

Thomas cited Atlantic Records artist Fred again.'s March tour of Australia, for which the team cross-referenced people that were in the artist’s Australian fan community and anyone who had their birthday on the day of one of the Australia shows. The team then DM’d these fans from the Fred again... account saying that they’d been put on the guest list +2 for their birthday.

“That’s such a unique experience,” said Thomas, “I think it really heightens the user experience of that fan.” In terms of longterm benefits, she compared it to receiving a surprise upgrade by an airline: “You’re going to want to fly with that airline again.”

5) Bring Superfans Into The Narrative

When coordinating Chase & Status’ 2023 Boiler Room set, their management at Frame Artists told organizers they wanted a small guest list dedicated to superfans “because,” said Cormican, “we wanted to have their energy in the room.”

This guestlist offer was distributed via the U.K. duo’s Discord channel. When the recording of this set was made live, there were a few people in the crowd who knew every lyric, danced the entire time and never once looked at their phones: the superfans who’d gotten in on the Discord guestlist.

The team from Frame Artists then messaged one of these fans, Don Lemons, and had him take part in a merchandise campaign. (And offered him “free guest list for life, obviously,” said Cormican.) When Chase & Status performed at the 2024 Brit Awards, fans from the artists’ Discord were invited to be part of the performance, as the team “wanted real ravers onstage.” This group got to take part in show rehearsals and the live show, and a video clip of this performance is now Chase & Status’ highest performing piece of content ever, with 100 million views. The video includes Dom Lemons “who,” said Cormican, “is now a legend in our scene.”

Britney Spears Settles Legal Dispute With Father Over Conservatorship

BY CHRIS EGGERTSEN

Britney Spears has settled an outstanding legal dispute with her father that arose following the termination of the pop star’s 13-year conservatorship in 2021, Billboard has confirmed. Terms of the settlement were not disclosed.

“It has been our honor and privilege to represent, protect, and defend Britney Spears,” said Spears’ attorney, Mathew Rosengart, in a statement sent to Billboard. “Although the conservatorship was terminated in November, 2021, her wish for freedom is now truly complete. As she desired, her freedom now includes that she will no longer need to attend or be involved with court or entangled with legal proceedings in this matter.”

In his own statement, Jamie’s attorney, Alex Weingarten, said, “At the insistence of counsel for Ms. Spears, the settlement is confidential and I cannot discuss it. Jamie has nothing to hide and would be happy to disclose everything about every aspect of the conservatorship so that the public knows the actual truth. Jamie loves his daughter very much and has always done everything he can to protect her.”

A legal scuffle ensued in the wake of the conservatorship’s dissolution in November 2021, when Rosengart vowed to investigate alleged misconduct by Spears’ father, Jamie Spears, during the years he served as his daughter’s conservator — including claims
that he took millions from her estate, tried to control her with drugs and denied her the freedom to remove a birth control device.

Conflict also arose over Jamie’s request in December 2021 that Britney’s estate continue paying his legal fees, arguing that the conservatorship’s termination did not end his ongoing “fiduciary obligations” and that he could face “personal bankruptcy and ruin” if his request was turned down. Rosengart responded by calling the request “not only legally meritless, but an abomination.”

Britney was placed in a conservatorship controlled by her father in 2008 following a string of public breakdowns. The legal arrangement came under scrutiny beginning in 2019, when a pair of documentaries and a movement dubbed #FreeBritney launched by the superstar’s fans went viral, ultimately leading Britney to speak out on her own behalf in public court testimony.

You can read Rosengart’s full statement below.

*It has been our honor and privilege to represent, protect, and defend Britney Spears. Although the conservatorship was terminated in November, 2021, her wish for freedom is now truly complete. As she desired, her freedom now includes that she will no longer need to attend or be involved with court or entangled with legal proceedings in this matter.*

*Britney Spears won when the court suspended her father, and Britney Spears won when her fundamental rights and civil liberties were restored.*

*Since obtaining her freedom in late 2021, Britney Spears has achieved remarkable success on several fronts, including her August, 2022 collaboration with Sir Elton John on the smash hit Hold Me Closer (which debuted at number one on the Billboard Hot Dance/Electronic Songs chart and became her 24th top-ten single), followed by her landmark book deal with Simon & Schuster for her memoir The Woman in Me, an immediate NY Times #1 bestseller, which received universal, breathtaking praise and would not have been possible during the conservatorship.*

*We repeat our gratification for being in a position to help restore the civil rights and liberties of Britney Spears and the honor and privilege it has been to serve and protect Ms. Spears and obtain her goals in resolving various legal matters pursuant to her thoughtful and wise instruction and requests, which once again are to her credit.*

**UPDATE:** This story was updated at 1:41 p.m. on 4/29/24 with a statement from Jamie Spears’ attorney. [Read Rosengart’s full statement.](https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/behind-the-scenes/22222175/jamie-spears-conservatorship-statement)

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### IN BRIEF

**Pearl Jam’s ‘Dark Matter’ Debuts in Top Five on Billboard 200 Chart**

**BY KEITH CAULFIELD**

**Pearl Jam** debuts at No. 5 on the **Billboard 200** chart (dated May 4) with its latest studio album, *Dark Matter*, marking the 13th top 10-charting effort for the band. The set launches with a little over 59,000 equivalent album units earned in the U.S. in the week ending April 25, according to Luminate.

Also in the top 10 of the new Billboard 200, as earlier reported, **Taylor Swift**’s *The Tortured Poets Department* makes a milestone debut atop the list, with 2.61 million equivalent album units earned in its first week.

The Billboard 200 chart ranks the most popular albums of the week in the U.S. based on multi-metric consumption as measured in equivalent album units, compiled by Luminate. Units comprise album sales, track equivalent albums (TEA) and streaming equivalent albums (SEA). Each unit equals one album sale, or 10 individual tracks sold from an album, or 3,750 ad-supported or 1,250 paid/subscription on-demand official audio and video streams generated by songs from an album. The new May 4, 2024-dated chart will be posted in full on Billboard’s website on April 30. For all chart news, follow @billboard and @billboardcharts on both X, formerly known as Twitter, and Instagram.

Of *Dark Matter’s* first-week sum of 59,000 units, album sales comprise 52,000, SEA units comprise 7,000 (equating 9.33 million on-demand official streams of the set’s 11 songs) and TEA units comprise a negligible sum. Notably, of its 52,000 sales sum, vinyl sales comprise a little over 24,000, enhanced by its availability across 12 different color vinyl variants.

The new album was led by the set’s title track, which hit No. 1 on the Mainstream Rock Airplay chart in March (the group’s fourth No. 1 and first since 1998) and has reached the top 10 on Alternative Airplay (the act’s 20th top 10 hit).

At No. 2 on the new Billboard 200, **Future** and **Metro Boomin**’s former leader *We Don’t Trust You* rises one spot with 69,000 equivalent album units earned (down 17%). **Beyoncé**’s chart-topping *Cowboy Carter* slips 2-3 with 66,000 (down 33%), and **Morgan Wallen**’s former No. 1 *One Thing at a Time* is a non-mover at No. 4 with 64,000 (down 11%).

Future and Metro Boomin’s *We Still Don’t Trust You* falls 1-6 with 54,000 equivalent album units earned (down 57%). **Noah Kahan**’s *Stick Season* slips 5-7 with 45,000 units (down 11%) and **Benson Boone**’s *Fireworks & Rollerblades* glides 7-8 with 40,000 units (down 8%). Rounding out the top 10 is a pair of former No. 1s: **SZA**’s *SOS* dips 8-9 with 39,000 units (down 2%) and **Swift’s Lover** climbs 11-10 with 37,000 (down 6%).

**How Los Angeles’ Fiesta Broadway Executed Its Revival After a 4-Year Hiatus**

**BY GRISELDA FLORES**

Not all events that were canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic got a comeback story. Fiesta Broadway, back after a four-year hiatus in Los Angeles, gets to have one. Around for more than 25 years, Fiesta
Broadway became a marquee Cinco de Mayo event that took place every year in downtown LA, reuniting thousands of Angelenos for a day of food, music and activities for kids. That all came to an abrupt stop when the pandemic shut down all live events in 2020. “You can tell that Los Angeles has felt empty, a lack of celebration of unity,” says Luis Medina, president and executive producer of Uno Productions (one of the companies producing the event), who adds that past editions have gathered around 100,000.

Now under the management of All Access Talent and Uno Productions, Fiesta Broadway’s organizers doubled down on kick-starting the free event by bringing the original producers of the festival onboard.

“There is no one who could’ve helped us more than the people who created the festival,” says Medina, noting that joining forces with the previous producers was a key strategy in the revival of Fiesta Broadway. Plus, the support of Los Angeles City Council member for District 14, Kevin de León. Once city officials green-lit its return, they had six months to plan and execute.

“Our phones were flooded with many artists and organizations, including media and sponsors, who wanted to participate in our return,” Medina adds. “What makes Fiesta Broadway the beloved event that it is recognized for, is that it is made for the people. To bring the community together, to see artists that would be a bit cost-difficult to see in concert, to bring food from different cultures and remind people that home is in Los Angeles.”

This year, Alex Lora from rock band El TRI, will be the Grand Marshal 2024, a recognition to legacy artists who’ve contribution to the Hispanic community in the United States. This edition, which will take over four blocks of Broadway St. on Sunday (April 28), will also feature performances by Mexican actor and singer Pablo Montero, Graciela Beltran and Leonardo Torres, accompanied by the Mariachi Juvenil Nuevo Grullense. Other confirmed acts include Juanito El Millonzuki, Rocio “La Dama de la Cumbia,” and many more.

Whether Fiesta Broadway is back for good or not, that’s too soon to tell. “[This year] is a moreover learning experience on how we can remain up-to-date with the new era and keep the festival popular among the younger generation as well,” says Medina.

At 2025 Grammys, Will Taylor Swift Land Her Seventh Album of the Year Nod?

BY PAUL GREIN

Now that Taylor Swift’s The Tortured Poets Department has entered the Billboard 200 at No. 1 and smashed sales records, thoughts turn to its next big test – how it will fare with Grammy voters.

If it is nominated for album of the year, Swift will become the first woman to receive seven album of the year nods, breaking out of a tie with Barbra Streisand, who received six nods from 1964-87. (All years in this story refer to the year of the Grammy ceremony.)

Swift would be the sixth artist to land seven or more album of the year nominations – and just the second artist to reach that mark strictly with solo albums.

Paul McCartney is the leader with nine album of the year nods – five with The Beatles, one (Band on the Run) with Paul McCartney & Wings and three as a solo artist.

Frank Sinatra and George Harrison are next in line with eight album of the year nods. Sinatra scored with seven solo albums and one collab, Francis Albert Sinatra & Antonio Carlos Jobim. Harrison scored with five Beatles albums; a solo album (All Things Must Pass); an all-star live album, The Concert for Bangladesh, which was credited to George Harrison & Friends; and a Traveling Wilburys album (Volume One) on which he teamed with Bob Dylan, Roy Orbison, Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne.

Paul Simon follows with seven album of the year nods -- two with Simon & Garfunkel (Bookends and Bridge Over Troubled Water) and five on his own. Swift, if nominated, would pull into a tie with Simon for third place.

Swift’s last three studio albums, not counting her Taylor’s Versions re-recordings, were nominated for album of the year, though one of them just barely made it. The Recording Academy confirmed the accuracy of a New York Times report that Evermore placed ninth or 10th in the voting and was nominated only because, at the eleventh hour, the Academy expanded the field of nominees in each of the Big Four categories from eight to 10 that year (2022). After keeping the number of nominees at 10 the following year, the Academy returned to eight nominees in each of those categories for the telecast in February and will presumably hold it at that number for next year’s telecast, so Tortured Poets will have to do better than Evermore to be nominated. (Fittingly, that was a rather “tortured” explanation.)

If Tortured Poets is nominated, Swift will become the first artist to receive album of the year nominations with four consecutive official solo studio LPs since Kendrick Lamar (Swift’s colleague on “Bad Blood,” a No. 1 hit on the Billboard Hot 100) scored with good kid, m.A.A.d city, To Pimp a Butterfly, DAMN. and Mr. Morale and the Big Steppers. The last artist before Lamar to achieve this feat was Billy Joel, who scored with 52nd Street, Glass Houses, The Nylon Curtain and An Innocent Man.

It’s of course way too early to know with any certainty if Swift will be nominated. Compared to Swift’s recent releases, the new album has drawn somewhat mixed reviews. The album has a 76 rating on Metacritic.com, the review aggregation site. That’s a bit below the marks registered by her four previous studio albums (excluding Taylor’s Version albums). Lover had a 79, folklore an 88, and evermore and Midnights, both an 85. (An expanded version of the new album, dubbed The Anthology, has a lower rating, 69.)

Billboard’s Jason Lipshutz took stock of Swift’s album in a thoughtful review headlined, “Taylor Swift’s ‘The Tortured Poets
Could Swift possibly win her record-extending fifth award in the category? I have learned to never say never, especially when it concerns Swift at the Grammys. But more than a few Grammy watchers would howl if Swift won a fifth album of the year award before Beyoncé won her first in the category.

It would probably be better for Swift if she lost the big one and was seen leading the cheers for Beyoncé. If that does happen – and at this moment, it seems the likeliest scenario – this would be the third time in Grammy history that there has been a reversal of fortune in the top category, where there was a different outcome in a rematch.

At the first Grammy Awards in May 1959, Henry Mancini won album of the year for The Music From Peter Gunn, his jazzy score to the TV detective series of the same name. It beat a pair of Frank Sinatra albums, Frank Sinatra Sings for Only the Lonely and Come Fly With Me. (Did the double nominations cause Sinatra to “split his votes”? We’ll never know for sure, but the rules have since been changed so that an artist can be nominated with only one album as the lead artist in any one year.)

Mancini and Sinatra competed again at the second Grammy Awards in November 1959 (yes, there were two ceremonies that year) with the opposite result. Sinatra’s Come Dance With Me! beat More Music From Peter Gunn, a sequel to Mancini’s album.

Sinatra and The Beatles competed for album of the year three years in a row, 1966-68. Sinatra’s highly regarded thematic album September of My Years (which contained the classic “It Was a Very Good Year”) won the award in 1966, beating The Beatles’ Help! soundtrack. Sinatra’s A Man and His Music, a two-disc career retrospective, won the award in 1967, beating The Beatles’ Revolver. (That victory by Ol’ Blue Eyes is harder to defend, since his album was a career recap, and Revolver was another step forward by a group that was growing by leaps and bounds.) In 1968, The Beatles’ landmark album Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band beat Francis Albert Sinatra & Antonio Carlos Jobim, the singer’s widely admired collab with the architect of the bossa nova sound.

Swift co-produced her new album with Jack Antonoff, Aaron Dessner and Patrik Berger. Antonoff has been nominated for producer of the year, non-classical the last five years running – and has won the last three years in a row.

If Antonoff is nominated again this year, he’ll be the first producer or production team to be nominated six years in a row since Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, who were nominated each year from 2001-2006. Moreover, if he is nominated again, Antonoff will become one of just five producers or production teams to land six or more producer of the year nods (whether consecutive or nod). He will join Jam & Lewis (11 total nods), Quincy Jones (eight), David Foster (eight) and Babyface (six).

If Antonoff wins in that category again early next year, he’ll become the first producer to ever win four years in a row. Babyface is the only producer to win four times – in 1993 (with L.A. Reid) and then on his own from 1996-98.

Taylor Swift Nabs U.K. Chart Double as ‘Fortnight’ Starts at No. 1

BY LARS BRANDLE

It’s a Taylor Swift double on the U.K. chart, as The Tortured Poets Department (EMI) opens at No. 1 and the U.S. pop star locks-up three of the top four on the national singles survey, including top spot.

“Fortnight” featuring Post Malone debuts at No. 1 on the latest Official Chart, published Friday, April 26, ahead of Hozier’s “Too Sweet” (Island), down 1-2, and the TTPD title track, new at No. 3.

With that impeccable start, Swift snags her third career U.K. chart double, after ruling both charts simultaneously in 2022 with Midnights and its lead single “Anti-Hero,” and last year with 1989 (Taylor’s Version) and “Is It Over Now? (Taylor’s Version)”.\n
Department’ Is Messy, Unguarded and Undeniably Triumphant: Critic’s Take." Here are the first four paragraphs from Lipshutz’s review, which posted on April 19, the day the album was released.

“One of the constants of Taylor Swift’s storied career has been the chances she’s taken at the precise moment when taking a chance wasn’t necessary. She was a country superstar who didn’t need to go pop; she was less than a year removed from a major pop album and didn’t need to take an indie-folk detour; she was in the middle of a blockbuster run of new albums and didn’t need to re-record her old ones.

“Time and again, Swift has identified artistic opportunities that other stars would have blanched at (or at the very least, set aside for a different time, so as to not muck up any professional momentum), and she has leapt into them fearlessly, always coming out on top.

“So right now — in the middle of a mega-selling stadium tour, after a record-breaking fourth album of the year Grammy win, in a high-profile new romance and at the commercial zenith of an already all-time career — is, naturally, the time Swift has chosen to release a knowingly messy, wildly unguarded breakup album.

“She didn’t have to do this! But then again, making an album like The Tortured Poets Department is exactly what separates Swift from her more careful peers. Challenging herself to shape-shift, to accomplish something new at the moment anyone else would rest on their laurels, is what makes her so fascinating.”

Other albums that are seen as front-runners for album of the year nominations include Beyoncé’s Cowboy Carter, Ariana Grande’s Eternal Sunshine and Bad Bunny’s Nadie Sabe Lo Que Va a Pasar Manana. Upcoming albums that are seen as likely prospects include Dua Lipa’s Radical Optimism (due May 3) and Billie Eilish’s Hurt Me Hard & Soft (due May 17). The eligibility period ends Sept. 15.

If both Beyoncé and Swift are nominated, this will be the second time the two superstars have face off in this category. In 2010, Swift’s Fearless beat Bey’s I Am...Sasha Fierce.
The leader on the midweek chart, “Fortnight” becomes Swift’s fourth U.K. No. 1 single after “Look What You Made Me Do” (from 2017), “Anti-Hero” (2022) and “Is It Over Now?” (Taylor’s Version) (2023), and Malone’s second — and first in seven years — after 2017’s “Rockstar” with 21 Savage. Also, TTPD track “Down Bad” (No. 4) enters the top 10 on debut, lifting TayTay’s career tally of top tier hits to 28 (no more than three songs from any one album can be eligible for the U.K. singles chart).

Meanwhile, U.S. singer and actor Sabrina Carpenter is running hot with “Espresso” (Island), up 6-5 for her career peak U.K. chart position.

Further down the tally, Drake’s Kendrick Lamar diss track “Push Ups” (OVO/Republic Records) debuts at No. 14, giving the Canadian superstar hip-hop artist his 93rd U.K. top 10.

There’s another U.S. country artist making an impression on the U.K. top 40, this time singer-songwriter Shaboozey with “A Bar Song (Tipsy)” (via American Dogwood/Empire), up 41-16. Shaboozey's profile has enjoyed a boost in the U.K. after being featured on Beyoncé's chart-topping LP Cowboy Carter. Dashas's “Austin” (Warner Records) is still riding in the U.K. top 10, down 7-10.

Finally, Headie One’s “Cry No More” (Columbia), a collaboration with Stormzy and Tay Keith, bows at No. 33, for Headie’s 16th, Stormzy’s 31st and Tay Keith’s second U.K. top 40 appearance.

Taylor Swift’s ‘The Tortured Poets Department’ Smashes Records En Route to U.K. No. 1

BY LARS BRANDLE

Nothing and no one could stop Taylor Swift’s irrepressible march to No. 1 in the U.K. as The Tortured Poets Department (via EMI) embarks on a record-setting romp.

The clear leader at the halfway mark, Tortured Poets roars to No. 1 on the Official Chart, published Friday, April 26, for her 12th U.K. leader.

As previously reported, the new collection posts a career-best start for Swift, shifting 270,000 across the full chart week, outpacing her previous personal best of 204,000, when Midnights topped the chart in 2022.

That’s the biggest opening week for any album in seven years — since Ed Sheeran’s 2017 hit + (Divide), which locked up 670,000 first-week U.K. chart units. And it’s a greater first-week volume than Adele’s 2021 album 30, which accumulated 261,000 in its opening run, the Official Charts Company reports.

With a dozen leaders, Swift draws level with Madonna as the female artist with the most No. 1 albums in Official Albums Chart history. Only four acts in chart history have racked up more: The Beatles (16), The Rolling Stones (14), Robbie Williams (14) and Elvis Presley (13). Bruce Springsteen also has 12.


No other artist has notched up 12 leaders in such a short space of time, doing so in just 11 years and 6 months. That beats the Beatles, which chalked up as many No. 1s in 14 years and 1 month, between Please Please Me (May 1963) and The Beatles At Hollywood Bowl in June 1977.

Also, Swift extends her record as the only artist to claim 12 No. 1 albums in the 21st century, all of which came consecutively.

In non-TayTay news, Pearl Jam snags a best U.K. chart performance in 11 years with Dark Matter (Monkeywrench Records/Republic Records), new at No. 2, while British reggae act UB40’s 21st studio album UB45 (Sono Recording Group) bows at No. 5.

Taylor Swift & Post Malone’s ‘Fortnight’ Makes Record-Tying Start on Adult Pop Airplay Chart

BY GARY TRUST

Taylor Swift’s “Fortnight,” featuring Post Malone, blasts onto Billboard’s Adult Pop Airplay chart, dated May 4, at No. 9. The launch ties for the highest in the list’s 27-year history — matching the No. 9 arrival of Swift’s own “Shake It Off” in 2014.

The new track, the lead single from Swift’s album The Tortured Poets Department, becomes Swift’s record-extending 31st Adult Pop Airplay top 10, pushing her further ahead of Maroon 5, second with 27 top 10s. Post Malone notches his fifth top 10 on the chart.

“Fortnight” concurrently flies onto the Pop Airplay chart at No. 13, tying “Bad Blood,” in 2015, for Swift’s, and the tally’s, second-highest starting spot, after “Shake It Off” and Mariah Carey’s “Dreamlover,” in 1993, both soared in at No. 12.
On Adult Contemporary, “Fortnight” begins at No. 16, also marking Swift’s second-best bow, tied with “We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together” in 2012; her “Anti-Hero” arrived at No. 14 in 2022.

(The rankings reflect songs’ plays on reporting adult top 40, mainstream top 40 and adult contemporary radio stations, respectively. Airplay is monitored by Mediabase, with data provided to Billboard by Luminate.)

“Fortnight” received concentrated play upon its April 19 release on The Tortured Poets Department. Notably, iHeartMedia-owned Pop Airplay panelists WHTZ (Z100) New York and KIIS Los Angeles devoted their entire 12 a.m. and 9 p.m. hours that day to songs from the set.

Meanwhile, two other cuts from The Tortured Poets Department debut on Adult Pop Airplay: “My Boy Only Breaks His Favorite Toys,” at No. 36, and “I Can Do It With a Broken Heart,” at No. 37. Audacy-owned WWMX Baltimore (28 plays April 19-25) and Hubbard Broadcasting’s WTMX Chicago (27) led Adult Pop Airplay reporters in first-week support for the former, which also enters Pop Airplay No. 40.

As previously reported, The Tortured Poets Department released on Republic Records, has, after its first six days of release, broken the single-week streaming record in the U.S. for an album, according to initial reports to Luminate, as the 31 songs across its deluxe edition generated 799 million on-demand official streams in the U.S. April 19-24.

Plus, The Tortured Poets Department earned 2.5 million equivalent album units in the U.S. in its first six days. Of that sum, traditional album sales comprise 1.8 million.

The album’s final first-week numbers (equivalent album units, total traditional album sales and streaming figures) are expected to be announced by Billboard this Sunday, April 28, along with its assumed large debut on the multi-metric Billboard 200 albums chart. The top 10 of the Billboard Hot 100 songs chart is expected to be revealed Monday, April 29.

All Billboard charts dated May 4 will update Tuesday, April 30, on Billboard.com.

The Weeknd Pledges $2 Million to Provide 18 Million Loaves of Bread to Families in Gaza

By Gil Kaufman

The Weeknd has pledged another $2 million from his XO Humanitarian Fund to the World Food Programme’s humanitarian response efforts in war-torn Gaza.

According to a statement released on Monday (April 29), the money from the artist who now goes by his real name, Abel Tesfaye, will be used to provide more than 1,500 metric tons of fortified wheat flour, which can be used to make more than 18 million loaves of bread to feed more than 157,000 Palestinians for a month.

Tesfaye, a United Nations World Food Programme Goodwill Ambassador, previously donated $2.5 million — the equivalent of four million emergency meals — to the WFP’s Gaza response in December 2023. That initial pledge provided 820 metric tons of food parcels to more than 173,000 Palestinians for two weeks, according to a statement. The singer is also asking his fans to donate to WFP’s efforts in Gaza, where experts say that more than one million displaced Palestinians face dire food shortages six months into Israel’s punishing response to Hamas’ deadly attack in which the terrorist group murdered more than 1,200 Israelis and kidnapped more than 250 men, women, children and elderly citizens.

“We are very grateful for Abel’s continued support as WFP works to respond to the urgent hunger crisis in Gaza,” Barron Segar, WFP USA president/CEO said in a statement. “Hunger is a human-made problem, and as such, it is solvable. We have enough food in this world to feed everyone; all we need is the funding and safe access to make it happen. Thanks to Abel’s designation, families and children will receive the food they so desperately need.”

To date, Tesfaye, his partners and fans have raised more than $6.5 million for the Fund, with the singer directing $4.5 million toward Gaza relief.

The UN reported last week that after nearly seven months of Israeli bombardment WFP’s Geneva office director said, “People cannot meet even the most basic, food needs. They have exhausted all coping strategies, like eating animal fodder, begging, selling off their belongings to buy food. They are most of the time destitute and clearly some of them are dying of hunger.” Experts said that the dire situation in Gaza is verging on a famine, with an estimated 30% of children under two now described as acutely malnourished or wasted and 70% of the population in the north facing “catastrophic” hunger.

Lainey Wilson, Jelly Roll, Chris Stapleton & More Set to Perform at 2024 ACM Awards

By Paul Grein

Lainey Wilson, Jelly Roll and Chris Stapleton are among the first performers announced for the 2024 Academy of Country Music Awards, which will be held at Ford Center at The Star in Frisco, Texas, on May 16.

The show will also feature performances by Jason Aldean, Kane Brown, Cody Johnson, Miranda Lambert and Thomas Rhett, as well as Reba McEntire, who was announced as host last week. McEntire will perform new music. Additional performers will be announced in the coming weeks.

The show will stream live globally on Prime Video at 8 p.m. ET / 5 p.m. PT.
ACM stresses that a Prime membership will not be required to watch live. They note: “Everyone is invited to the Party of the Year.”

Stapleton and Wilson both received five ACM nominations this year. Jelly Roll is a beat behind with four.

This is McEntire’s 17th time hosting or co-hosting the ACMs. She first co-hosted the show in 1986 with actor/singer John Schneider and the late Mac Davis. McEntire is closing in on the all-time record for most times hosting or co-hosting a major awards show. That record has long been held by Bob Hope, who hosted or co-hosted the Academy Awards 19 times between 1940-78.

The 2023 ACM Awards, hosted by Dolly Parton and Garth Brooks, garnered more than 77 million viewers on Prime Video plus additional viewership across Amazon Music, the Amazon Music channel on Twitch, and Amazon Live, making it one of the year’s most-watched awards shows.

This marks the ACM Awards’ third year streaming on Prime Video; its second in a row coming from Ford Center at The Star. The venue opened in 2016 and serves as the practice facility for the Dallas Cowboys, as well as the home for many major sporting events throughout the year. Last year’s ACM Awards were the first awards show to take place there.

The 59th ACM Awards are produced by Dick Clark Productions (DCP). Raj Kapoor is executive producer and showrunner, with Patrick Menton as co-executive producer. Damon Whiteside serves as executive producer for the ACM, and Barry Adelman serves as executive producer for DCP. John Saade serves as consulting producer for Amazon MGM Studios.

Kapoor was one of three executive producers of the Grammy Awards on Feb. 4, along with Ben Winston and Jesse Collins. He also served as executive producer and showrunner of the Oscars on March 10. Menton was a co-executive producer of the Grammys.

A limited number of tickets to the 59th ACM Awards are available for purchase on SeatGeek.

Fans can also tune into the official ACM Red Carpet on Prime Video, the Amazon Music Channel on Twitch, and Amazon Live, starting at 7 p.m. ET / 4 p.m. PT. The full rebroadcast will be available directly following the stream on Prime Video and available the next day for free on Amazon Freevee and the Amazon Music app.

Fans can also stream the Official ACM Awards playlist available now on Amazon Music.

DCP is owned by Penske Media Eldridge, a Penske Media Corporation (PMC) subsidiary and joint venture between PMC and Eldridge. PMC is the parent company of Billboard.

### Box Office:

**Zendaya’s ‘Challengers’ Hits Target With $15M Opening For No. 1 Finish**

**BY PAMELA MCCLINTOCK**

Zendaya’s romance-tennis drama Challengers easily won the weekend **box office** match with a $15 million opening from 3,477 theaters, in line with expectations and marking the second-best start for an original R-rated drama since the pandemic behind Don’t Worry Darling.

It was a bold move for MGM Amazon Studios to open Luca Guadagnino’s sexy adult drama nationwide, versus giving it a platform release, considering it’s more of an arthouse movie than a commercial play. The studio did so in part to raise awareness among those who might choose to wait to watch the movie on Amazon’s streaming service, Prime — including Zendaya fans who aren’t yet subscribers. High-profile titles also keep existing subs satisfied, or at least that’s the hope.

And by midweek, Challengers will easily become Luca Guadagnino’s highest-grossing film domestically after passing up Call Me By Your Name, which grossed roughly $18 million.

The film also impressed overseas, grossing $9 million from 52 markets for a global score of $25 million (it earned $1 million last weekend in Australia and New Zealand). Not surprisingly, it is doing well in Europe and Australia. The U.K. led all markets this weekend with $1.8 million to place No. 1 and come in on par with Oscar contender Poor Things and well ahead of Ben Affleck’s sports drama Air. Warner Bros. International is handling the film offshore for MGM.

Audiences aren’t embracing the R-rated film quite to the degree that reviewers did, giving it a B+ CinemaScore. Female moviegoers made up 58 percent the Friday’s audience, while a whopping 76 percent of ticket buyers were between ages 18 and 34. Challengers is performing best on the two coasts and benefiting from playing to an ethnically diverse audience. White moviegoers made up 43 percent of Friday ticket buyers, followed by Latino moviegoers (27 percent), Black moviegoers (17 percent), Asian moviegoers (9 percent) and Native American/others (4 percent).

Challengers, co-starring Mike Faist and Josh O’Connor, features Zendaya as a tennis player torn between two loves.

A substantial chunk of the opening weekend gross, or 37 percent, came from Imax and other premium-format screens.

Challengers was supposed to open last year in time for awards season, but those plans were scuttled because of the SAG-AFTRA strike and the ban on talent doing press. Zendaya, in particular, has a huge social reach needed for the film. Exhibitors have praised Amazon for embracing the theatrical model instead of sending a movie such as Challengers straight to streaming.

Coming in No. 2 at the domestic box office is Lionsgate and Kingdom Story Company’s Unsung Hero, which landed ahead of expectations after earning a coveted A+ CinemaScore. The faith-based film opened to an estimated $7.8 million (tracking had suggested $5 million to $6 million).

Unsung Hero is skewing heavily female (91 percent) and is performing best in the middle of the country. It also skewed notably older, with 55 percent of the audience over the age of 55.
Based on a true story, the $6 million film follows David Smallbone as he moves his family from Australia to the U.S. searching for a brighter future after his successful music company collapses. Along the way, he and his wife begin to realize the musical talent of their seven children; three of whom would become two successful acts — KING + COUNTRY and Rebecca St. James.

*Godzilla vs Kong* and *Dune: Part Two* — both from Warner Bros. and Legendary — celebrated major milestones this weekend in crossing $500 million and $700 million, respectively, at the global box office. They are the two biggest films of the year to date at the worldwide box office.

Coming in No. 3 domestically, *Godzilla vs Kong* earned $7.2 million to finish Sunday with a domestic tally of $519.3 million globally, including $181.7 million in North America and $337.7 million overseas. For its part, the *Dune* sequel finished Sunday with a domestic cume of $279.7 million domestically and $424.5 million overseas for $704.5 million worldwide.

DreamWorks Animation and Universal also had reason to cheer as *Kung Fu Panda 4* crossed the $500 million mark globally, including $185 million domestically, where it is the No. 2 film of the year, and $318.5 million overseas. And the *Kung Fu Panda* series has now passed *Madagascar* to become the second biggest DreamWorks Animation franchise behind *Shrek*, with a combined $2.3 billion in ticket sales.

Also making news was 20th Century and Disney’s rerelease of Ridley Scott’s 1979 feature *Alien*, which placed No. 11 domestically with $1.6 million and drew glowing exit scores. The rerelease is a promotion for the upcoming *Alien: Romulus*, which opens in August, and includes a nine-minute interview between Scott and *Romulus* director Fede Álvarez that includes footage from new *Romulus*.

Back in the top five, A24’s *Civil War* held in well with $7 million to come in No. 4, boasting a domestic total of $56.2 million through Sunday.

Universal’s horror pic *Abigail* rounded out the top five with $5 million in its second weekend for a 10-day domestic total of $18.5 million.

With domestic revenue running behind last year by more than 20 percent, Hollywood and theater operators are looking forward to next weekend when the summer box office kicks off *The Fall Guy*, starring Ryan Gosling. The pic opened early in 38 overseas markets this weekend, earning $8.7 million. Among the handful of major territories where it rolled out, Australia, where the film is set, led with a strong $2.9 million.

This article originally appeared on *The Hollywood Reporter*.  

*IN BRIEF*