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Sony Music Unlimited, More Open Than Ever, Takes the iOS Plunge on Friday

By Eliot Van Buskirk, *Evolver.fm*

When Sony Entertainment Network chief Tim Schaaf told *Evolver.fm* in an exclusive interview last December that Sony was working on an Apple iOS app for its unlimited music subscription, Sony Music Unlimited, we took it as a sign that Sony was committed to reversing its tradition of developing music services mainly for its own hardware.

After all, Sony's in a tricky spot -- unlike, Spotify, Rhapsody, MOG, or Rdio, it's part of a massive conglomerate that includes consumer electronics, gaming machines, computers, and more. So it's no surprise that when Sony launched its music store eons ago, it only worked with Sony hardware.

These are different times. Sony now has no choice but to join Apple, because it certainly hasn't beat it, where smartphones and tablets are concerned. Even as it sells smartphones and tablets that run on Android, Sony

will join the Apple iOS ecosystem on Friday with a version of Sony Music Unlimited that runs on iOS. (Sony Music Entertainment already had an Android app, of course.)

"With the proliferation of connected devices, consumers expect complete access to their digital entertainment and demand a consistent experience regardless of the device," said President of Sony Network Entertainment International Tim Schaaff in a statement.

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CAA'S ROB LIGHT TO TAKE PART IN EXECUTIVE Q&A AT BILLBOARD COUNTRY MUSIC SUMMIT

Rob Light, head of the Music department, a partner, and Managing Director of Creative Artists Agency (CAA), will sit with veteran Billboard live entertainment writer Ray Waddell for an in-depth discussion at the Billboard Country Music Summit at the Cannery Ballroom

June 4-5. The session is called "Country Music From An Aerial View: A Conversation with Rob Light."

CAA is a leading entertainment and sports agency, with offices in Los Angeles, New York, London, Nashville, and Beijing. Under Light's

leadership, CAA's Music department represents many of the world's most popular and talented musical artists and comedians, from established acts performing in arenas and stadiums, to emerging acts breaking out of social media and the club scene.

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STUDY SAYS FILE SHARING HELPS ESTABLISHED ARTISTS SELL MORE ALBUMS

File sharing albums before their release dates reinforces popularity and helps sales, according to a study of BitTorrent traffic by Robert G. Hammond, an assistant professor at North Carolina State University. It's a conclusion that clashes with the music industry's position on file sharing, but there could be some potential.

The study's main finding is an album made available in file-sharing networks a month earlier would sell an additional 60 units. "This increase in sales is small relative to other factors that have been found to affect album sales," Hammond writes.

But not all artists get the same benefit. The positive effect on sales impacts only established, popular artists, not new and relatively unpopular artists. The effect is double for artists who have had an album sell at least 100,000 units and double for artists who have released more than three albums than for newer artists. Hammond keeps these small gains in perspective by acknowledging the far larger effects of promotional efforts such as radio and the benefit of a win or appearance on the annual Grammy Awards.

"File-sharing proponents commonly argue that file sharing democratizes music consumption by 'leveling the playing field' for new/small artists relative to established/popular artists, by allowing artists to have their work heard by a wider audience, lessening the advantage held by established/popular artists in terms of promotional and other support," writes Hammond. "My results suggest that the opposite is happening, which is consistent with evidence on file-sharing behavior."

The study looked only at pre-release albums, not albums after their street dates or individual tracks. Hammond's data source was "the largest network within the BitTorrent protocol" and the largest private (invitation-only) tracker specializing in sound recordings (over 565,000 albums from about 441,000 artists). The study followed 1,095 albums by 1,075 artists from May 2010 to January 2011. The four major label groups released about 37% of the albums in the study. Independent albums distributed by the majors accounted for 22.4% of the albums.

One area of concern with the study is the geographic representation of purchases. The study compares Nielsen SoundScan data to the file-sharing activity of 148,465 people from various countries - including

about 80,000 Americans and 11,000 Canadians. However, sales data by Nielsen SoundScan cover only purchases made within the United States (and some of its territories) and Canada. In other words, the purchasing activity of tens of thousands of file sharers does not appear to be represented. Hammond's conclusions might not have changed if only U.S.-based file sharing was tracked, but it's surprising the paper does not even mention this obvious data mismatch or explain if and how it was overcome.

The study's findings may make the music industry at large uncomfortable -- the official line is still that file sharing hurts sales -- and is sure to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the music industry's efforts to stamp out illegal sharing. News of the study spurred the blog TorrentFreak to declare "BitTorrent piracy can act as promotion." If only it were that easy.

The problem in believing piracy helps sales is deciding where to draw the line between legal and illegal. Even if a person or label embraced file sharing for the sake of an individual artist, the larger industry couldn't possibly embrace it. A legal marketplace is important. Implicit in the study is the fact that both buyers and sellers are required in order for pre-release file sharing to have a

positive impact on album sales. Without iTunes, Amazon and Best Buy, file-sharers would be just file sharers rather than purchasers. If you carry out the "file sharing should be legal" argument to its logical conclusion, today's retailers will be tomorrow's file-sharing services that integrate with their respective cloud storage services. But to maintain a marketplace, copyright law needs to be enforced enough to keep sellers selling and buyers buying.

But labels can use legal options to try to duplicate the positive impact of pre-release file sharing. For example, many artists offer full or partial album streams before street date at their own web sites or through third parties such as NPR. Some bands -- Coldplay is one that comes to mind -- have opted to release songs on YouTube before street date in order to drive pre-order sales. Subscriptions services are sometimes given albums ahead of street date -- this could become far more commonplace if labels see a corresponding improvement in sales. These are fairly recent developments that have not been studied by economists, but they offer promise without putting the music industry in a position of choosing between legal and illegal promotional vehicles.

>>Read the full Business Matters at www.Billboard.biz.

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[In Brief]

>>SONY MUSIC UNLIMITED, CONT. FROM PAGE 1

"We want to let users pick up their favorite device and crank up the Music Unlimited service at any time," added Sony Network Entertainment International vice president and general manager of digital video and music services Michael Aragon, also in a statement. "With the addition of the new iPhone and iPod touch app, users with a Basic or Premium subscription can listen to their favorite songs across a number of the most popular connected devices -- in and out of the home."

The Sony Music Unlimited subscription includes access to over 15 million songs. The plan options are unique, in that the radio-only version is not free (a la Pandora), but on the plus side, contains no ads. That one costs \$4 per month. Sony also offers the industry standard price of \$10/month for the version that lets you play any song on demand.

Most unlimited music subscriptions include more or less the same music. So why would someone choose Sony instead of, say, Spotify? The main selling point remains Sony's other hardware. If you want to subscribe to music and also use a PlayStation gaming console and/or Sony Bravia television, going with

Sony will let you listen to your on-demand music collection across all of your devices -- and as of Friday, that will include the iPhone too.

>>BILLBOARD COUNTRY MUSIC SUMMIT, CONT. FROM PAGE 1

In 2012 CAA is celebrating its 20th year in Music City, dating back to its humble beginnings in the late, great agent Ron Baird's garage. Today, CAA Nashville's team of agents represents a large and diverse range of artists, including Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, Lady Antebellum, Shania Twain, Alan Jackson, Amy Grant, Shooter Jennings, John Mayer, Kings of Leon, Brantley Gilbert, Martina McBride, My Morning Jacket, Trace Adkins, the Mavericks, and Willie Nelson.

Respected throughout the industry for his innovative deal structures and ability to foresee and adapt to changes in the business environment, Light has led CAA's music department to new heights by implementing an integrated services model that leverages CAA's resources within the department and across the agency. Ranked No. 7 on the Billboard 2012 Power 100, Light is also a compelling speaker, and in they Q&A will offer his take on how

country music is outperforming other genres, what the genre could do better, and a "big picture" view of the music business and the evolving role of the agency, touching on marketing, sponsorships, synchs, artist development, festivals, market conditions, ticketing, innovation, new media/social, the opportunities and challenges of today, and how things might look 10 years from now, with specific examples of artists and tours with strategies that help build or sustain the career.

"Rob Light is one of the most visionary executives in the music business and he's always thinking 10 years down the road," says Waddell. "I have been interviewing Rob for some 20 years now and I learn something every time we talk. I believe Summit attendees will benefit greatly from Rob's views with 'Country Music From an Aerial View.'"

The 3rd Annual Billboard Country Music Summit -- featuring in-depth artist Q&As with Luke Bryan and Willie Nelson and two days of country music business programming -- takes place June 4 and 5 in Nashville. Head here to register and get more information, and Billboard.biz readers can get a 15% discount by using promo code BIZ12.

—Billboard Staff

BILLBOARD MUSIC AWARDS WIN NIGHT FOR ABC AMONG KEY DEMOGRAPHIC

Sunday night's Billboard Music Awards won the night for ABC among adults 18 to 49, according to fast affiliate numbers from Nielsen Media Research.

The three-hour telecast was watched by 7.4 million total viewers, with a 2.7 share rating in the 18-to-49 demo, enough to handily beat NBC's finale of "The Celebrity Apprentice" (5.6 million viewers, 1.6 share of 18-to-49-year-olds.)

The Billboard Music Awards were down slightly from 2011, the first telecast since 2006, which averaged 7.9 million total viewers and drew a 2.9 share among 18-to-49-year-olds.

This year's awards drew a high volume of social media chatter, according to data provided by Simply Measured. The most-tweeted moment arrived during Chris Brown's five minute performance of current single "Turn Up The Music," generating 27,713 tweets containing the official hashtag #BBMA. Justin Bieber claimed the second and third most-talked about moments, for his "Social Artist of the Year" award win and performance of "Boyfriend."

—Billboard Staff

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[In Brief]

STARBUCKS TO RELEASE 'CAFÉ CON MÚSICA,' NACIONAL RECORDS LATIN ALT COMPILATION

Starbucks, which rarely carries Latin music in its stores, has partnered with Latin indie label Nacional Records to release an exclusive compilation of Latin alternative music. "Café con Música" (Coffee With Music) will be available only at Starbucks stores nationwide beginning June 19.

The 16-track set -- in both Spanish and English -- features music by a broad roster of Nacional acts, ranging from Colombian fusion veterans Aterciopelados to up and comers Diego García and rapper Ana Tijoux to electronic DJs Nortec Collective.

Having Starbucks put its faith in that music, says Nacional president Tomas Cookman, "I see it as another showing of the Latinization of America [...] We knew right away that they liked the music. It's something they had never done before. And we did it together."

Starbucks has been a tough nut to crack for Latin labels, who say they routinely pitch albums to the company, but have had little luck in securing distribution through the coffee chain. Although it's put out Brazilian music in the past, Starbucks' last Spanish-language album was a compilation by iconic tropical

label Fania Records, released via the coffee chain in 2009.

In this case, the deal came through Howard Gabriel, Senior VP of label management for Red, which distributes Nacional Records.

"I had set up a meeting [with Starbucks] to go over our new releases and potential titles that I call 'starbucks-ing,'" says Gabriel, referring to titles that he thinks will work for Starbucks. "And I said to Tomas, 'I would love to take a Latin compilation to Starbucks. I think the market needs it.'"

Timothy Jones, Starbucks' program manager and the man who oversees the creation of compilations for the company, agreed.

"We've created compilations devoted to Brazilian music and salsa, among many other genres," he told Billboard. "When Nacional Records reached out to us, suggesting we collaborate on a collection devoted to contemporary Latin artists, it felt like a great fit. They provided us with literally a box of their CDs to go through and, working with Tomas Cookman, we came up with exciting selections we think will appeal to Starbucks customers."

Jones and Cookman worked closely together not only in the track selection but also in the graphic design.

Key to closing the deal, says Ga-

brriel, was how Nacional and Red could chip in to market the album via social networking and other means. Also key was the fact that all titles come from Nacional, and therefore clearances were not an issue.

"It's important for all my titles to be successful in Starbucks," says Gabriel, whose recent Starbucks titles include the new Bonnie Raitt album.

Gabriel and Cookman say they will ship between 40,000 to 50,000 copies of Café con Música to Starbucks, a huge number for an indie title of Latin alternative music.

"It's further justification that we're not crazy," says Cookman. "There is a market for this."

—Leila Cobo (@Leilacobo), Miami

RUSTY WALKER, COUNTRY RADIO HALL OF FAME, DEAD AT 59

While the average country music fan might not have been familiar with the name Rusty Walker, there were few figures more beloved in the industry than the veteran programmer and consultant. Walker, who died Monday in Tupelo, MS following a heart attack over the weekend, enjoyed a long and illustrious radio career -- both behind the microphone and helping others program their stations to record successes. He was 59.

A native of Corinth, MS, Walker (whose real name was Sammy Dar-

win) began his career at WWTX in 1968. While he enjoyed an illustrious career on the air -- including a stint at WZZK / Birmingham (where, according to Arbitron, he was the highest-rated FM personality in America in the early 1980s), it was as a consultant that he truly left his mark on the business. He formed Rusty Walker Programming Consultants in 1983, and worked with well over 500 stations in various markets achieve high visibility and ratings. Seven times during his career, Walker was named Billboard's Consultant of the Year.

Though Walker travelled the world over for his work, he never left the Northeast Mississippi that he called home. Though he could have moved his business operations to Music City -- or anywhere else, for that matter, he chose to operate his company from the tiny river hamlet of Iuka, MS.

Walker, a recent inductee into the Country Radio Hall of Fame, is survived by his wife Teresa, daughters Beth and Nikki and an extensive and loving family. Two children preceded him in death, with daughter Kinsley passing away in March. Funeral arrangements have not yet been made public.

—Chuck Dauphin, Nashville

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[In Brief]

ALLIANCE ENTERTAINMENT ACQUIRES AUDIOLIFE

Alliance Entertainment has acquired Audiolife, a direct-to-fan fulfillment company in a move to expand its industry-leading capability in direct-to-consumer distribution. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Alliance Entertainment already provides CD pick/pack and ship fulfillment capabilities to hundreds of online stores, and with this acquisition it is launching an initiative to become the back end for hundreds of thousands of artist engaged in direct to consumer sales.

According to the press release announcing the acquisition, Audiolife, since its inception three years ago, has served over 300,000 plus clients, including clients, Paul McCartney, Beastie Boys, Trent Reznor, Eminem, Leann Rimes and Carol King and James Taylor. In addition, Audiolife also provides fulfillment to companies and product lines like: Topspin, ReverbNation and LM-FAO's Party Rock clothing; as well as boutique artists and non-media merchandisers.

"Audiolife will be an ideal complement to Alliance's expanding business model as we seek to diversify and deepen the range of services and products we offer our customers," Alliance Entertainment president Mike Davis said in a statement.

"Since launching in 2009, Audiolife has made its mark in the exploding e-commerce marketplace thanks to superlative direct-to-consumer technology, and a savvy understanding for what artists need and fans desire."

Audiolife CEO and co founder Brandon Hance said that the "affiliation with Alliance Entertainment will allow Audiolife to significantly increase its resources, logistical capacity and distribution reach - and ultimately re-define direct-to-fan fulfillment and retail distribution for the industry-at-large."

As part of the acquisition plan, Audiolife's founders and management team will continue to operate out of its Los Angeles base while its fulfillment operations will be moved to Alliance's distribution center in Shepherdsville, KY.

"This is a tremendous step towards bringing world-class fulfillment to the direct-to-fan world," said Topspin CEO Ian Rogers. "Now artists using Topspin's customized marketing and commerce platform will continue to get the benefits of a boutique fulfillment solution along with Alliance's operational sophistication and their vast retail distribution network. It's a win-win for our clients, putting artist-created products in front of millions more potential customers worldwide."

-Ed Christman, New York

DWIGHT YOAKAM ANNOUNCED FOR BILLBOARD COUNTRY MUSIC SUMMIT

Grammy-winning country star Dwight Yoakam, an artist who has transcended the country music genre to become a multi-slash innovator, entrepreneur, will be the Superstar Keynote Q&A at the 3rd Annual Billboard Country Summit, set for June 4-5 at the Cannery Ballroom in Nashville in a session titled "Guitars, Cadillacs, and Innovation: A Conversation About the Future with Dwight Yoakam."

Singer/songwriter/actor/writer/director Yoakam redefined country music from his debut album in 1986, the neo-traditional honky tonk epic "Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc." One of the most respected singer-songwriters in any genre, Yoakam has risen from country music pioneer to legendary cross-genre recording artist. He is also one of music's "deep thinkers," and Summit attendees will have a rare opportunity to hear from Yoakam in this must-see session moderated by veteran music writer and Billboard Country Update editor Tom Roland.

Yoakam has sold more than 25 million albums, and has charted more than 30 singles, with 22 going Top 20. He is set to release his first studio album in seven years on War-

ner Bros. Records this fall. Beyond the music genre, Yoakam is a critically-acclaimed actor, with star turns in such successful films as "Sling Blade," "Panic Room," "The Three Burials" of "Melquiades Estrada," and "Four Christmas," and Yoakam co-wrote, starred in, produced and wrote the soundtrack for "South of Heaven, West of Hell."

"Because he lives and works in California, Dwight's perspective on country and its place in the entertainment world is completely different than the view from Nashville," Roland says. "He's a creative force, and it's likely that everyone in the room will be challenged to reconsider something they took for granted."

Co-presented by the Country Music Assn., the Billboard Country Music Summit brings multiple parts of the country business together for a gut check about the changing dynamics in such facets as radio, publishing, technology and artist development. Luke Bryan, Willie Nelson, Shooter Jennings and Thompson Square have been previously announced as participants. Additional panelists will be announced in the coming weeks.

-Ray Waddell, Nashville

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[In Brief]

JAMAICAN ARTIST BUSY SIGNAL, WITH TOP 10 ALBUM ON REGGAE CHARTS, ARRESTED ON EXTRADITION WARRANT

Jamaican sing-jay Busy Signal, 33, was arrested on May 21 by members of the Fugitive Apprehension Team on a provisional extradition warrant at Kingston's Norman Manley International Airport as he disembarked a flight arriving from the UK after having just completed a tour that included dates in Paris and Amsterdam.

According to a report in the Jamaica Observer newspaper, Busy Signal, born Glendale Goshia Gordon, but also known as Reanno Devon Gordon, abandoned his European tour after learning that an extradition warrant was issued for him by the United States Government. Gordon is charged with conspiracy to possess and distribute cocaine in the US; it is alleged that he absconded bail in March 2002.

A quick web search revealed Minnesota District Court Case No. 0:02-cr-00054-JMR-FLN: USA v. Gordon, with a Glendale Gordon being charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute cocaine, three counts of conspiracy to distribute cocaine (level 4) and a third charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine. The 'Level 4' is an indicator of conspiracy to distribute five or more kilograms.

A former resident alien of the US, Gordon purportedly removed his ankle bracelet tracking device and fled to Jamaica prior to sentencing. Jamaican police said Monday that Gordon had been under surveillance for several years.

Gordon is scheduled to appear in Kingston's Half Way Tree Resident Magistrate court on Thursday May 24th. The provisional warrant and court appearance facilitate the extradition process, which, based on the court's assessment of the information presented, can lead to an extradition order. Since his return to Jamaica in 2002, Busy Signal lacked a US Visa although he performed regularly in Europe and throughout the Caribbean. A prominent artist on the dancehall circuit, Busy Signal's authentic street savvy, quick wit, and mesmerizing vocal stream earned him numerous dancehall hits. In 2007 he released the

gritty, autobiographical single "Jail," a grim recollection of his incarceration in the early 00s.

In a previous interview with Billboard.biz in Kingston, Busy Signal reflected on that time in his life. "In my late teens, early 20s I was moving around different states, Connecticut, Florida, Boston, New York and Texas, others, basically hustling. A lot of things come with being in the street, things that let us lose focus as young youths. I got in trouble with the law for different type of stuff and was locked up once on a conspiracy charge, then I got bail. After that I was like I just want to do music. I don't want the mixup, the confusion. Then I came here and I never try to go back to the US ever since. For me it work out good doing music, it give me a different view towards life."

Busy Signal has released four albums. His latest, "Reggae Music Again" (VP Records), has earned widespread critical acclaim as the artist adapts his precisely fashioned rhymes to classic roots reggae rhythms. Since its April 24th release, "Reggae Music Again" has spent five weeks on the Top Reggae Albums Chart, where it sits at No. 9 for the week of May 26, reaching as high as No. 5. The album's first single "Come Over (Missing You)" was a significant hit in Jamaica and reached various international reggae charts.

"You can't fight what's there but regardless of the situation he was in, with the release of "Reggae Music Again," Busy Signal was becoming an iconic artist, who could change the game; he was an ambassador for contemporary roots reggae," said Neil "Diamond" Edwards, Director of A&R at VP Records. "Working with Busy's manager Shane Brown (the primary producer on Reggae Music Again) we had planned to make a video for every song on the album, including the title track which would include footage of this recent European tour," Diamond continued. "Since he couldn't travel to the U.S. the visuals are the best way to get the music out there, and give the album continual attention beyond the initial six-week push."

-Patricia Meschino, Kingston

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Executive Turntable

RECORD COMPANIES: Verve Music Group appoints **Robert Smith** GM. He was senior VP of A&R at Concord Music Group.

RCA Records promotes **Adrian Moreira** to senior VP of promotion. He was senior VP of adult music.

Island Def Jam Music Group names **Lauren Schneider** VP of media and artist relations. She was senior director.

Big H Entertainment appoints **Arlinda Garrett** national director. She was CEO of Coming Attractions Promotions.

PUBLISHING: Ole in Nashville names **Julie Moe** media manager. She was creative manager in Los Angeles.

TOURING: Nederlander Concerts taps **Germaine Lathouwers** as executive assistant to CEO **Alex Hodges**. She was executive assistant for 15 years to **William Morris Endeavor** senior VP/worldwide head of music **Peter Grosslight**.

Palace Sports & Entertainment in Detroit taps **Andy Loughnane** as VP of corporate partnerships. He was the franchise lead for Washington, D.C.-based Corporate Executive Board.

DIGITAL: MSG Media names **David Clark** executive VP of integrated sales. He was GM of Fuse.

TV/FILM: CMT appoints **Jim Raley** director of special events. He was vocal captain at Princess Cruises.

RADIO: Cumulus Media Networks promotes **Tamiko Fletcher** to VP of network operations. She was director of new program development.

—*Edited by Mitchell Peters*

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