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Mad Max: Fury Road

DAZZLING MOVIE IS A
CAN'T MISS THRILL



DAVID LETTERMAN

STAR-STUDDED SHOWS FOR FINAL WEEK



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Elizabeth Banks Takes The Reins On 'Pitch Perfect 2'

Everyone warned Elizabeth Banks against filming the outdoor concert finale for “Pitch Perfect 2.” It was June in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It was scorching hot, it was hurricane season, and they would have to build a full, functioning stage and recruit a small town of extras to make it believable.

But Banks knew what she wanted.

“I kept saying, ‘I don’t care, it’s going to look cool, we’ve got to do it,’” said the actress, producer, and now, feature director.

It took nearly a month to build the Glastonbury Festival-inspired stage. As for the extras, the production sent out an open invitation casting call to fans of “Pitch Perfect.”

Over 3,000 people showed up.





The massive undertaking required four all-night shoots, multiple cameras, elaborate performances and a tolerance for mysterious bug bites. Banks even took responsibility for the crowd's waning energy.

"At one point, she went out on stage and started whipping them into a frenzy," said Banks' husband and producing partner, Max Handelman. But the crowd really lost it when she brought a few Bellas out, too.

"It was her connecting the fans with the girls and letting everyone know that this was a big deal," said Handelman.

It's no secret that "Pitch Perfect" has fans to spare. Universal Pictures' modest 2012 comedy about a college A Capella group (the Bellas) racked up \$113 million worldwide and an additional \$103 million in home video sales.

As plans for a sequel started to take shape, though, the first film's director, Jason Moore, signed on to the Tina Fey-Amy Poehler comedy "Sisters," and suddenly "Pitch Perfect 2" needed a director.

Banks, known for roles in "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" and "The Hunger Games," had been thinking about directing for some time. She directed plays at the University of Pennsylvania, and had been taking on small projects over the past few years to learn as much as she could. Plus, as a producer and actor on the first film, Banks already knew the a cappella world and had the trust of returning cast like Anna Kendrick and Rebel Wilson.

"Right as I was raising my hand to do it, the studio said, 'Why don't you do it?'" she said.

The Bellas, this time, are trying to claw their way back to the top after a high-profile embarrassment.





"I certainly did not plan for my feature directorial debut to be a giant musical," she laughed. But she dove in and endeavored to make everything - costumes, performances and stakes - bigger. There's even a cameo by "Pitch Perfect" superfans the Green Bay Packers.

"I feel that I have more to offer this business and that I was being underused," Banks said of directing and producing. "I knew it would probably change my life. I also knew that I had to say yes. Women just don't get offered these opportunities."

For the over four-months-long shoot, Banks relocated to Baton Rouge with her husband and two sons and "lived like a monk." She put in her 12-hours on set, spent as much time with her children as possible, and slept.





"I'm a wonderful multitasker...as are most moms that I know. That helps," she said.

She also drew on the teachings of directors she's worked with - how Judd Apatow gets improv coverage, how Francis Lawrence films dancers (include the hips) and how to stay calm on set. On "Catch Me If You Can," Steven Spielberg was "so relaxed."

"What you realize is that he has the best in the business on every department working for him. What's he worried about?" she said, and made it her goal to do the same.

"She puts in the work. She's extremely prepared. She takes it extremely seriously," marveled Handelman. "There was not a single person asking 'what does this first time director know? What does this actress know?' She had 100 percent control of a crew that was like 90 percent men."

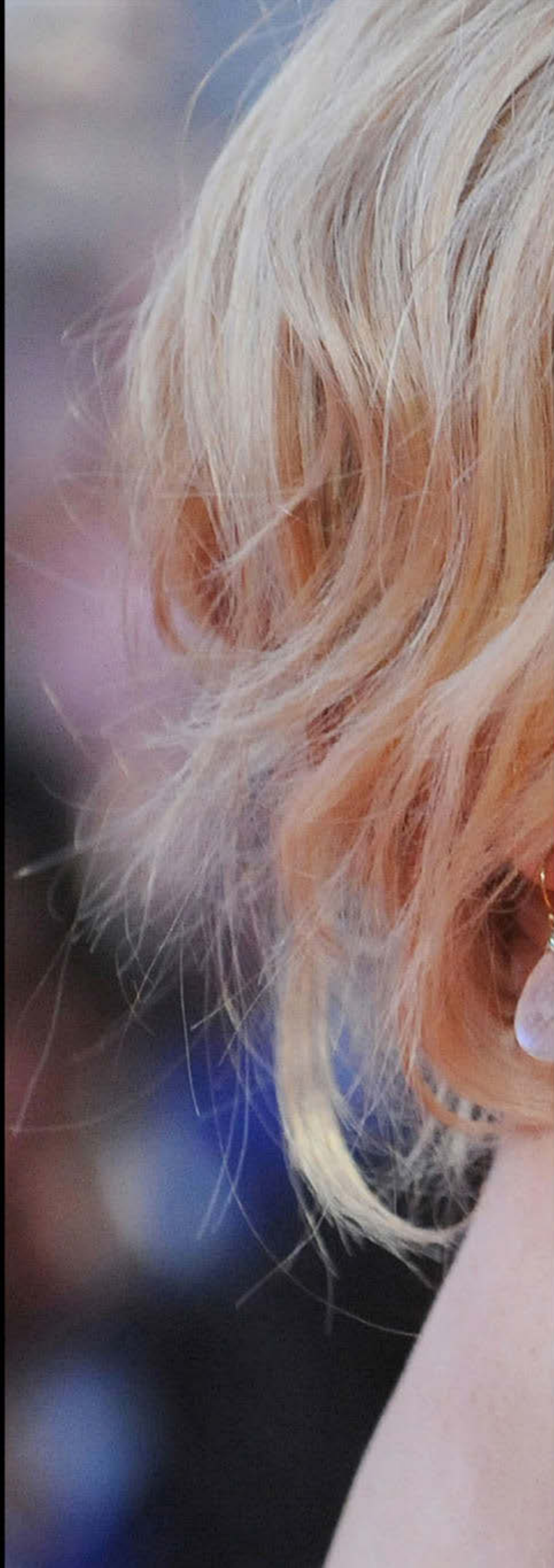
Although Banks acknowledges that she likely exceeded everyone's expectations, she's also quick to put it in perspective.

"I wasn't performing brain surgery. No one's lives were in my hands...particularly. I'm not dodging bullets in Afghanistan. We're just making a fun movie. It should be fun. If it's not fun, you're making it harder than it needs to be," she said.

Acting remains a priority for Banks, who laughed that as of the film's May 15 release, she doesn't have another job lined up. Discussions about a third "Pitch Perfect," for Banks, will come later.

She's also eager to direct again, even though the ideal conditions of "Pitch Perfect 2" would be hard to replicate.

"I wouldn't be surprised if she's a bit contrarian in her next choice," said co-producer Paul Brooks. "She likes raising her own bar."








Princess Mathilde's Pink Diamond Sells For \$15.9 Million





An 8.72-carat pink diamond ring believed part of a collection once owned by Princess Mathilde Bonaparte sold at auction Tuesday for \$15.9 million, according to Sotheby's Geneva.

The auction house said "The Historic Pink Diamond" only recently resurfaced after sitting in a bank vault since the 1940s. A buyer was not disclosed by Sotheby's.

The vibrant cushion-cut diamond is considered extremely rare. It was sold as part of the auction house's Magnificent Jewels and Noble Jewels sale.

The princess was the niece of Napoleon I and a relative of King George II and the tsar of Russia. She amassed a collection of pearls, diamonds and other jewelry considered second only to the collection of Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoleon III, Sotheby's said.

Mathilde died in 1904. The pink diamond was believed among her jewels auctioned in Paris in June 1904 and later acquired by William Andrews Clark Sr., a U.S. senator, industrialist and entrepreneur who died in 1925.

After his death, the stone passed to a daughter, Hugette Marcelle Clark, who died in 2011.

The diamond is also considered prized for its cut, a classic, non-modified version of the cushion, Sotheby's said.

The auction house considers the market for colored diamonds and other precious gemstones strong and pink diamonds among the rarest. In October, Sotheby's sold another pink diamond for \$17.8 million.





Nbc has 14 New Shows on Next Year's Schedule

NBC is turning to some proven players for next year's schedule, resurrecting its "Heroes" franchise, bringing back Craig T. Nelson as "Coach" and turning to veteran producer Dick Wolf for a medical drama based in Chicago.

The network is also trying the interesting experiment of airing the sitcom "Undateable" live each week. It's NBC's only returning comedy. Favorites "The Voice" and "The Blacklist" will be back in the same time slots.

NBC on Sunday became the first of the major broadcast networks to release their schedule for next season. NBC and Fox present their schedule to advertisers on Monday.

WHAT'S NEW

Fourteen new series, including six comedies, seven dramas and one variety show. Given the year-round nature of TV schedules now, only six will begin with the traditional September start to a new season.





WHAT'S GONE

The comedies "Marry Me," "About a Boy," "One Big Happy," "A to Z" and "Bad Judge" are all cancelled. So are "State of Affairs," "Constantine" and "Allegiance."

LIVE

The cast and producers of "Undateable" aired a live episode earlier this month, and next season will attempt the high-wire act of doing it each week. Networks love live shows, since they are generally DVR-proof. NBC will also present a live production of "The Wiz" next fall and airs pro football games each Sunday night. For a sitcom like "Undateable," the appeal will be in seeing if a cast can pull it off without flubs.

"Live programming is one more way to make a show undeniable," said Robert Greenblatt, NBC Entertainment chairman.

PROVEN PLAYERS

Television offers no guarantees, but familiar actors and ideas are the closest thing. That's why Nelson, whose series "Parenthood" ended this past season, returns to the role he played for nine seasons on "Coach." In the new version, Hayden Fox is retired but gets back into the action to help his son.

"Heroes" was one of NBC's few successes during the 2000s, so it is coming back as "Heroes Reborn," with a similar supernatural premise and new cast, although some original "Heroes" players will occasionally appear. The original show's creator, Tim Kring, is back. Few producers have been more dependable for NBC than Wolf, maker of the "Law & Order" franchise. His "Chicago Med" series, a relative to "Chicago P.D.," was given the go-ahead although, like "Coach," it will appear sometime in the midseason.





COMEDY DROUGHT

NBC's record developing comedies in recent years has been abysmal, with the network of "Friends," "Seinfeld," "Cheers" and "The Office" straining for laughs. Only two comedies made it onto the fall schedule, both on Friday nights, general considered a network graveyard. "Undateable" will be seen on a night when most of its target audience hopes to be out on dates.

VARIETY SHOW

Variety shows are a moribund TV genre, but NBC will try to bring it back with the versatile Neil Patrick Harris. He'll star in a Tuesday night show this fall that will feature stunts, skits and musical numbers, based on the British show "Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway."

STAR POWER

Besides Nelson and Harris, NBC's new series feature boldfaced names like Jennifer Lopez ("Shades of Blue"), Rob Lowe ("You, Me and the End of the World"), Wesley Snipes ("The Player"), Eva Longoria ("Hot & Bothered"), Oliver Platt and S. Epatha Merkerson ("Chicago Med") and America Ferrara ("Superstore").

EVENTS

NBC also promised a TV movie based on Dolly Parton's life and a miniseries, "The Reaper," about an African-American sniper credited with 33 kills in a 10-day deployment in Afghanistan.





'Avengers' Sequel Tops Charts, Crushes 'Hot Pursuit'

The "Age of Ultron" is not over. The Avengers sequel topped the domestic box office for the second weekend in a row with an estimated \$77.2 million according to Rentrak estimates Sunday.

The film has earned a staggering \$312.9 million in just 10 days in theaters, tying with "The Dark Knight" to become the second-fastest film to do so.

While a wild success by any measure, the film is still lagging behind the record-setting precedent of 2012's "The Avengers," which made \$103.1 million in its second weekend in theatres and had a domestic total of \$373 million at the same point in the cycle.

"Avengers: Age of Ultron" also added \$68.3 million internationally, bringing its worldwide total to \$875.3 million. The Disney and Marvel sequel opens in China on May 12 with midnight screenings. The midnight sellouts have even prompted Chinese IMAX screens to add 3 a.m. showings to their schedule.





“Hot Pursuit,” meanwhile, failed to make a significant mark in its debut weekend, earning a less-than-impressive \$13.3 million. The Reese Witherspoon and Sofia Vergara buddy comedy, which cost a reported \$35 million to produce, was projected to earn at least \$18 million out of the gates.

“Critics were very tough on ‘Hot Pursuit,’” said Rentrak’s Senior Media Analyst Paul Dergarabedian. Considering the power of female audiences at the box office, and the frequency of female-driven films to over-perform, the lagging enthusiasm around “Hot Pursuit” is puzzling.

“It was a formula for whatever reason didn’t resonate with the critics, and I think that had an impact on its box office,” Dergarabedian said.

Warner Bros. EVP of Distribution Jeff Goldstein noted that the film attracted an older and primarily female audience, which is one that doesn’t necessarily rush out on opening weekend to check out a film. Audiences were 62 percent female and 82 percent over the age of 25.

The Mother’s Day holiday might help catapult the “Hot Pursuit” to a stronger Sunday, Goldstein said.

The weekend between “Ultron’s” opening and next week’s debut of “Mad Max: Fury Road” and “Pitch Perfect 2” on paper seemed like the ideal spot to place a mid-budget comedy. But it’s also possible that other titles further into their runs might have divided attentions, including the third-place film, “The Age of Adaline,” and “Ex Machina,” which snagged the sixth spot as it continues to expand.

“It’s a very competitive marketplace out there,” Dergarabedian said. “There are a lot of cool options out there right now for entertainment in theaters.”

Still, “Hot Pursuit” could surprise yet, especially when it reaches the small screen.

“Furious 7” and “Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2” rounded out the top five with \$5.3 million and \$5.2 million, respectively.

Ultimately, it’s still an “Avengers” world, at least until “Mad Max: Fury Road” and “Pitch Perfect 2” open next weekend.

“‘Ultron’ is just so big. It’s such a behemoth. It’s hard for a newcomer to get attention,” Dergarabedian said.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Rentrak. Where available, the latest international numbers for Friday through Sunday are also included. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. “Avengers: Age of Ultron,” \$77.2 million (\$68.3 million international).

2. “Hot Pursuit,” \$13.3 million (\$1.4 million international).

3. “The Age of Adaline,” \$5.6 million (\$2.6 million international).

4. “Furious 7,” \$5.3 million (\$19.6 million international).

5. “Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2,” \$5.2 million (\$3 million international).

6. “Ex Machina,” \$3.5 million.

7. “Home,” \$3 million (\$6 million international).





8."Woman In Gold," \$1.7 million.

9."Cinderella," \$1.6 million (\$4 million international).

10."Unfriended," \$1.4 million (\$3.2 million international).

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at international theaters (excluding the U.S. and Canada), according to Rentrak:

1. "Avengers: Age of Ultron," \$68.3 million.

2. "Furious 7," \$19.6 million.

3. "Chappie," \$9.8 million.

4. "Pitch Perfect 2," \$8.8 million.

5. "Home," \$6 million.

6. "Silent Separation," \$5.5 million.

7. "Helios," \$4.8 million.

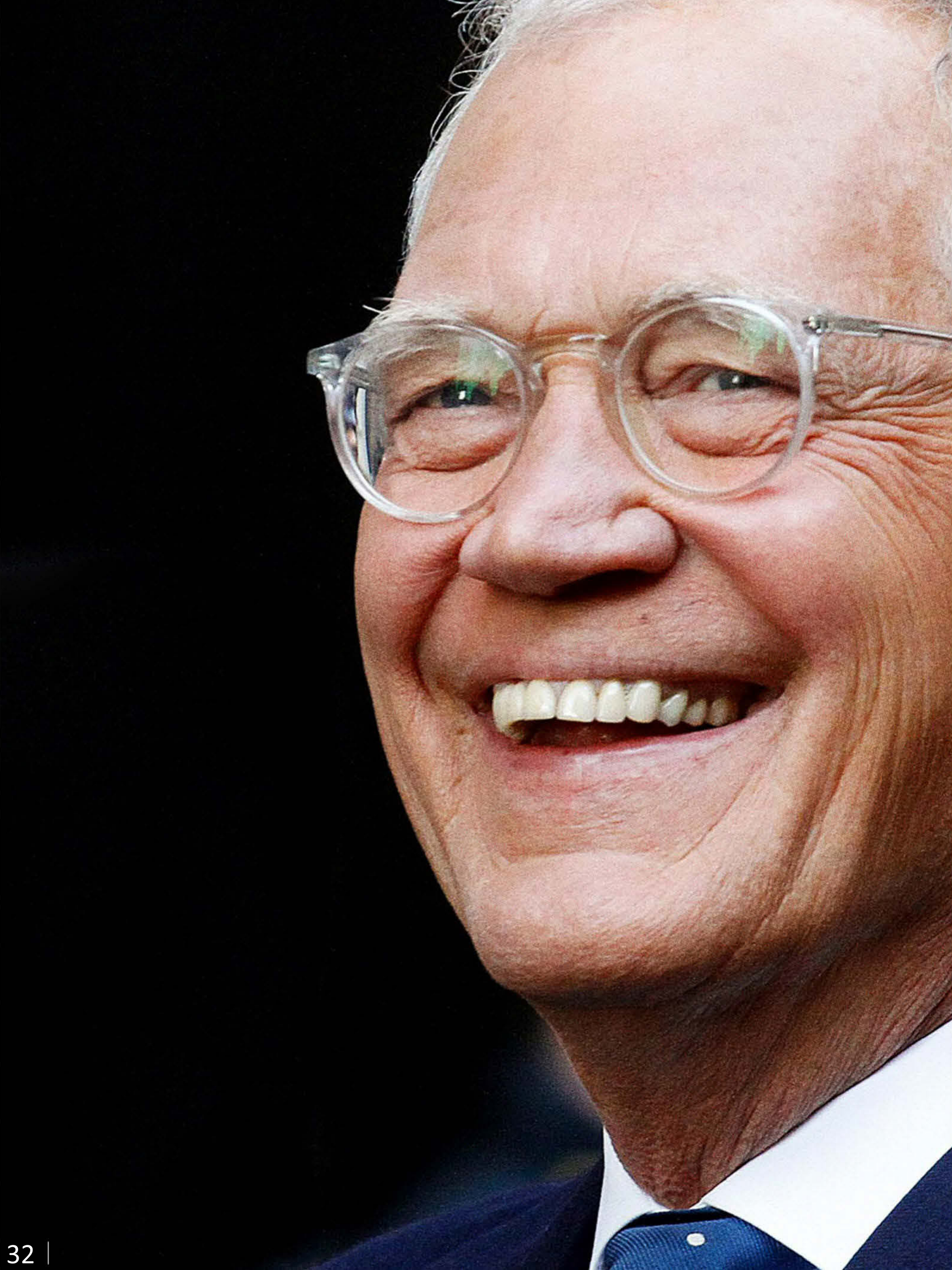
8. "The Left Ear," \$4.3 million.

9. "Cinderella," \$4 million.

10. "Unfriended," \$3.2 million.









DAVID LETTERMAN PREPARES FOR FINAL SHOWS

Bringing down the curtain on
a remarkable career

RETIREMENT BECKONS FOR LEGENDARY LATE NIGHT HOST

Whatever your tastes in late night entertainment, it's extremely difficult not to have immense respect for one David Michael Letterman. The 68-year old Indianapolis native has well and truly shaken up the late night chat show game since the debut in February 1982 of Late Night with David Letterman on NBC, and now, Late Show with David Letterman - which he first presented in 1993 on CBS - is itself drawing to a close to coincide with the host's retirement.

Letterman's career is one that has been festooned with praise, awards and popular adulation. In 1996, he figured in TV Guide's list of the 50 Greatest TV Stars of All Time, and in 2013, he became the longest-serving late night talk show host that TV has ever seen, surpassing the similarly fabled Johnny Carson, his friend and mentor.

But all good things must come to an end, and so it must for Letterman, who announced last year that he would retire from the Late Show chair that he has occupied with such distinction for a generation. The star of The Colbert Report on Comedy Central, the comedian and writer Stephen Colbert, will take his place.







A GALAXY OF STARS TO BRING THE CURTAIN DOWN

But before then, there are some final episodes for Letterman to record - which he is set to do with his customary high style. The final Late Show fronted by Letterman will broadcast on May 20, and when it was announced that the **last full week would feature such celebrities as Oprah Winfrey, Howard Stern, Julia Roberts and no less than the former President, Bill Clinton**, viewers were given even more reason to tune in.

Clinton has made nine appearances on the Late Show previously, and he will be in good company for what can only be described as a truly star-studded swansong week for Letterman. At the time of typing, Stern and comic Don Rickles had already made Monday's show one to remember, while Adam Sandler was set to join Clinton on Tuesday and Wednesday promised a lineup of Roberts, with Ryan Adams as the musical guest.

The fun was only set to continue through the final full week of the Letterman-era Late Show, with Thursday seeing appearances by George Clooney and musician Tom Waits, and Winfrey turning up on Friday as Norm MacDonald contributed some standup comedy. On Wednesday, Letterman was even scheduled to interview Paul Shaffer, his longtime bandleader and sidekick.

We don't yet have details of who will be occupying the interviewee seat for the show's final three days, but we're expecting some seriously impressive names to try to top what this week has served up.





AMAZING MEMORIES STILL BEING MADE

There have already been some pretty memorable guest appearances in the run-up to the show's final conclusion with Letterman at the helm. Stern made sure of that on Monday **with an attempted kiss of the celebrated host, despite the latter's cries of dismay** - although it was clear that the encounter was a good-natured one, in keeping with old friends saying goodbye.

That moment followed an exchange in which Stern revealed that Letterman had not invited him out for dinner, despite having done so for Rickles, the show's other guest. Revealing this to the audience, Stern stood before the host's desk, declaring: "Do you think I was invited? I wasn't invited. Terrible!"

In another moment that is sure to linger long in the memory, the radio host asked Letterman whether his former time-slot rival, Jay Leno, had accepted his open invitation to appear on the show, prompting Letterman to ask his producer: "I don't know - is that happening?" An apparent off-camera indication by the producer that it wasn't may have disappointed some fans.

Although we didn't get to learn much more from the producer due to Stern talking over his clarification attempt, Letterman did offer a possible explanation for a Leno no-show. Stating that the initial invite had not been anything to do with him, he suggested: "You know, Jay asked me to be on when he was finishing his show, and I said, 'That's a lovely





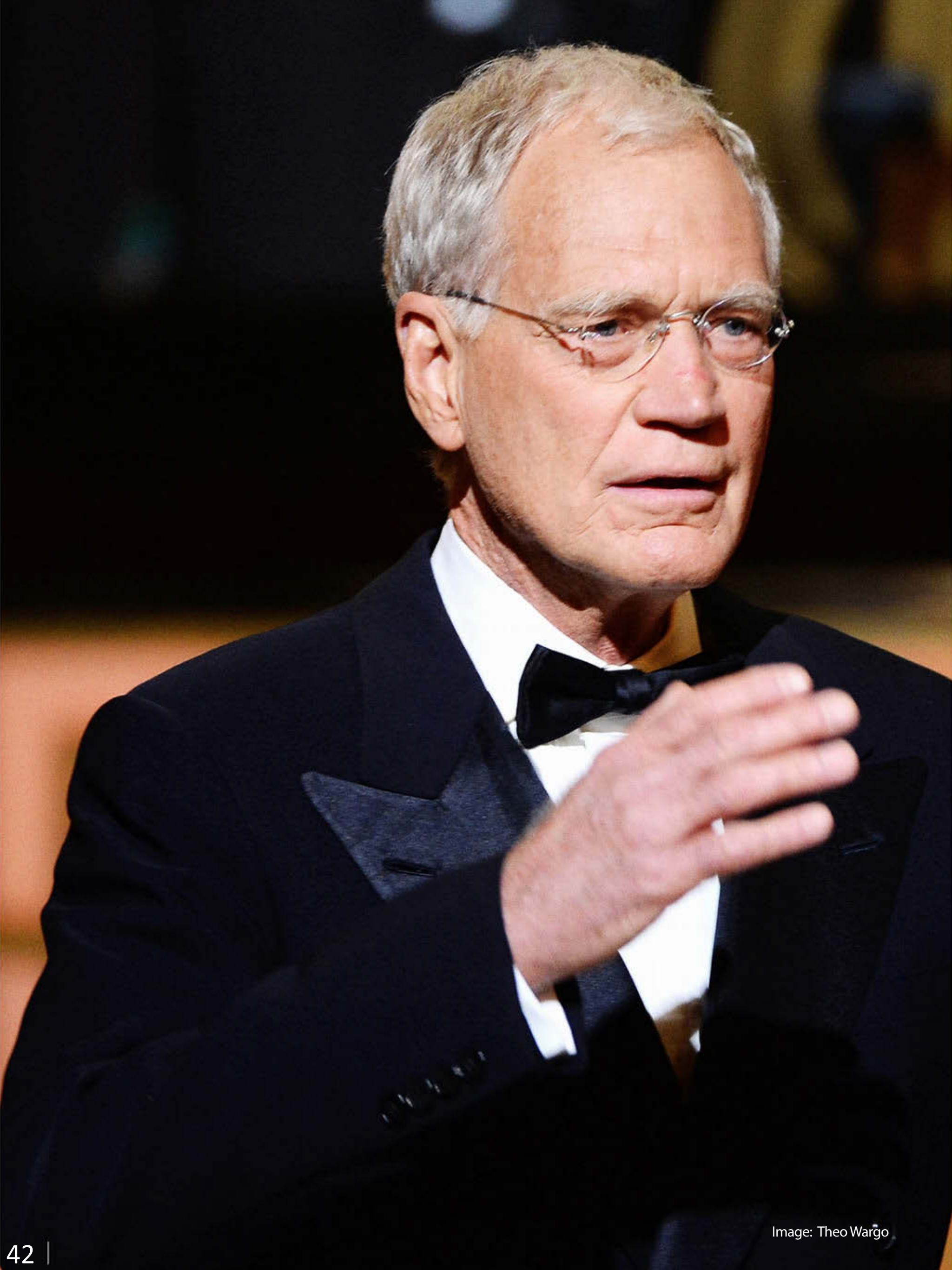


Image: Theo Wargo



offer, but I think it really should be more about just Jay on his final week of shows', so I declined. **And I think he may feel the same way about this situation."**

WHAT MADE LETTERMAN SUCH A TRAILBLAZER

No one enjoys a late night hosting career of such record-breaking length as Letterman's unless they have something special about them - so what is it that has made him such a dynamite attraction for TV watchers down the decades? His acerbic wit certainly plays a big role, and it was displayed to full effect after the aforementioned conversation when he said to Stern, "So that's when we called you."

Others point to how far ahead of his time Letterman proved to be - to such an extent that his shtick isn't even too outdated now, in a 21st century world of late night shows that is in firm thrall to viral videos. **Typically self-depreciatingly, Letterman doesn't necessarily see it that way, having remarked:** "If you look around at the other people [hosting late night] and look at me, it's almost like a pair of shoes you haven't worn in a hundred years."

He continued, in an interview with Rolling Stone: "I still enjoy what I'm doing, but I think what I'm doing is not what you want at 11:30 anymore." A sense of being behind-the-times is perhaps understandable, given the very different late night landscape into which he bounded as something of a renegade in the late '70s, getting his big break as a comedian on The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson.

Some have also contended that the movement of chat shows away from sit-down interviews or written jokes towards viral videos, as pioneered by younger late night kings Jimmy Fallon and Jimmy Kimmel, does make now a good time for Letterman to call it a day, not least in the light of longtime contemporary Leno's own departure.

Sure enough, Letterman has joked that "I hear about things going viral, and I think, 'How do you do that?' I think I'm the blockage in the plumbing." But if anything, the retiring host may have actually laid the ground for today's offbeat approaches to late night, with Bill Carter - the author of *The Late Shift* and *The War for Late Night*, insisting in an interview with CBC: "Letterman did a lot of this stuff.

"Jimmy Fallon loves to do games with the guests... well, Letterman did stuff like that. He had them do elevator races in 30 Rock hallways. He interviewed guests in barber chairs instead of regular chairs. He was outplayed because he stopped playing."

LATE SHOW - AND LETTERMAN - LOOK TO THE FUTURE

While a still-sharp Letterman plots his next move - **with some reports suggesting a move into radio** - Late Show will enter its own new era under Colbert, who will need to inject fresh energy into a show now rivaled by not only Fallon and Kimmel, but also the likes of NBC's Late Night with Seth Myers and The Late Late Show with James Corden. Some have questioned whether late night comedy even has a future on TV at all.













Letterman will certainly have some mightily memorable Late Show moments to reflect on in his retirement - from an awkward 10-minute chat with an unshaven Joaquin Phoenix announcing that he would retire from acting to start a rap career, to Drew Barrymore jumping on his desk and unexpectedly flashing him when she discovered that it was his birthday. **There was also a notorious 1994 chat with a relentlessly swearing Madonna** and a no-show by 2008 presidential hopeful John McCain, who was discovered to have been less than honest with his excuse.

As for who Letterman will be regaling with stories about those years of Late Show ups and downs? Well, it might just be a **similarly soon-to-retire Barack Obama, who in his own final appearance on the show earlier this month, jokingly suggested:** "I was thinking you and me could play some dominoes together."

If Letterman is anywhere near as good a dominoes player as he has been a late night talk show host for the last few decades, that could be one of the most thrilling games of dominoes ever played with an ex-President. Whatever moves Letterman makes in his life from now on, we wish him only the very best. ■

by Benjamin Kerry & Gavin Lenaghan





'Jon Stewart of Egypt' Eyes Next Project After Harvard Stint

Bassem Youssef, the man dubbed the "Jon Stewart of Egypt," is eyeing new projects after teaching students at Harvard University's prestigious Kennedy School of Government how satire can disrupt the social and political order.

It's a topic the 41-year-old heart surgeon-turned-satirist knows well. Youssef rocketed to fame after the 2011 Arab Spring revolution as host of a wildly popular Egyptian political satire show.

"El Bernameg" - Arabic for "The Program" - was canceled in June 2014 amid mounting pressure by the military-led government to crack down on dissenting voices. Youssef and his family, concerned for their safety, left the country months later.

At a recent appearance at a downtown Boston law firm, Youssef said he hasn't ruled out an eventual return to television. He's had plenty of offers, he says, but none caught his interest.

"The offers would be like, 'Forget politics. Why don't you do a game show?'" Youssef says. "That we couldn't do. We can't risk sacrificing the brand."

He admits to holding out some hope for a U.S. gig.





“Maybe I’ll stay in the States. Maybe I’ll have an offer,” Youssef says. “But I don’t know what the American public would feel about an Arab with thick accent talking about American politics.”

While his tone was mostly casual and breezy, he firmly pushed back when an audience member suggested he had given up on his country.

“It’s very easy to say I’m quitting, but if you put yourself in my shoes, I would like to see how you react,” Youssef said. “Every time I would speak in public, they would arrest someone at home. Continuing to speak was being selfish.”

During his show’s three-year run, Youssef was frequently at odds with authorities. Following the 2011 revolution, he was briefly arrested after being accused of insulting then-President Mohammed Morsi.

After a military regime ousted Morsi, Youssef says, he was even accused of being recruited to spy for foreign powers. As the pressure mounted, his show was suspended and then canceled.

For now, Youssef says, he is focused on giving young Arab talents the same shot he had at stardom.

His latest venture is “Tube Star Network,” a Dubai-based project that helps aspiring Arab talents develop their own Internet programs. Hopefully, he says, some will make the same leap to broadcast television as he did.

“There’s a huge vacuum in the Middle East for original content,” Youssef said. “This vacuum, right now, is being filled with extremists, with military propaganda, or filled with apathy.”

Youssef, who is also encouraging donations toward an independent documentary about his show, is a prime example of what timing and the right message can do.

As he told the Boston audience, he was well on his way toward his lifelong dream to be a heart surgeon in America when a wave of revolutions



toppled authoritarian regimes across the Arab World in 2011.

Dissatisfied by mainstream news coverage at the time, Youssef and his team started uploading short videos skewering Egyptian media, politics and culture in the vein of “The Daily Show.”

The YouTube clips developed a following and eventually were picked up by an Egyptian television network, where it became one of the nation’s most popular shows ever.

Youssef also gained international fame, being named one of Time Magazine’s 100 most influential people in 2013 and developing a kinship with the real Jon Stewart.

“The Daily Show” host appeared on Youssef’s show and Youssef, in turn, has done guest spots as a “senior Middle East correspondent” for the Comedy Central show, from which Stewart is stepping down in August.

Reflecting on the Arab Spring, Youssef believes the uprisings set in motion developments that will eventually bring lasting change to the region.

“If it’s defeated, I don’t think I will be defeated for very long,” Youssef told the Boston audience. “It was stupid for us to think we’d have a revolution in 18 days. It will take time. Revolution isn’t an event. It’s a process.”

Then, as now, he believes young people, who comprise significant majorities in many Arab countries, hold the key.

“They are asking questions that were not asked before. They are challenging religious authorities, political authorities and military authorities,” Youssef says. “It has started. The ways that the establishment used to keep those young people down for many decades are not working anymore.”



Spotify





BEATS MUSIC
RE-LAUNCH ON THE WAY

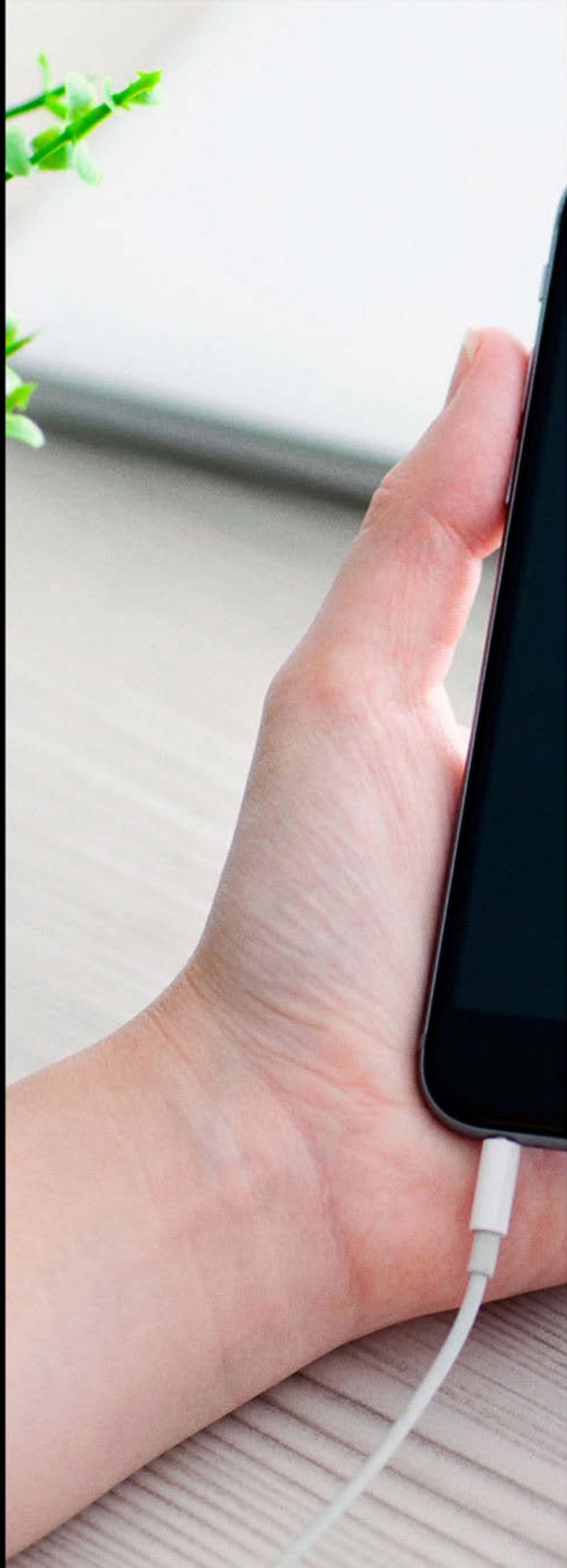
APPLE AND SPOTIFY GRAPPLE OVER THE FUTURE OF MUSIC

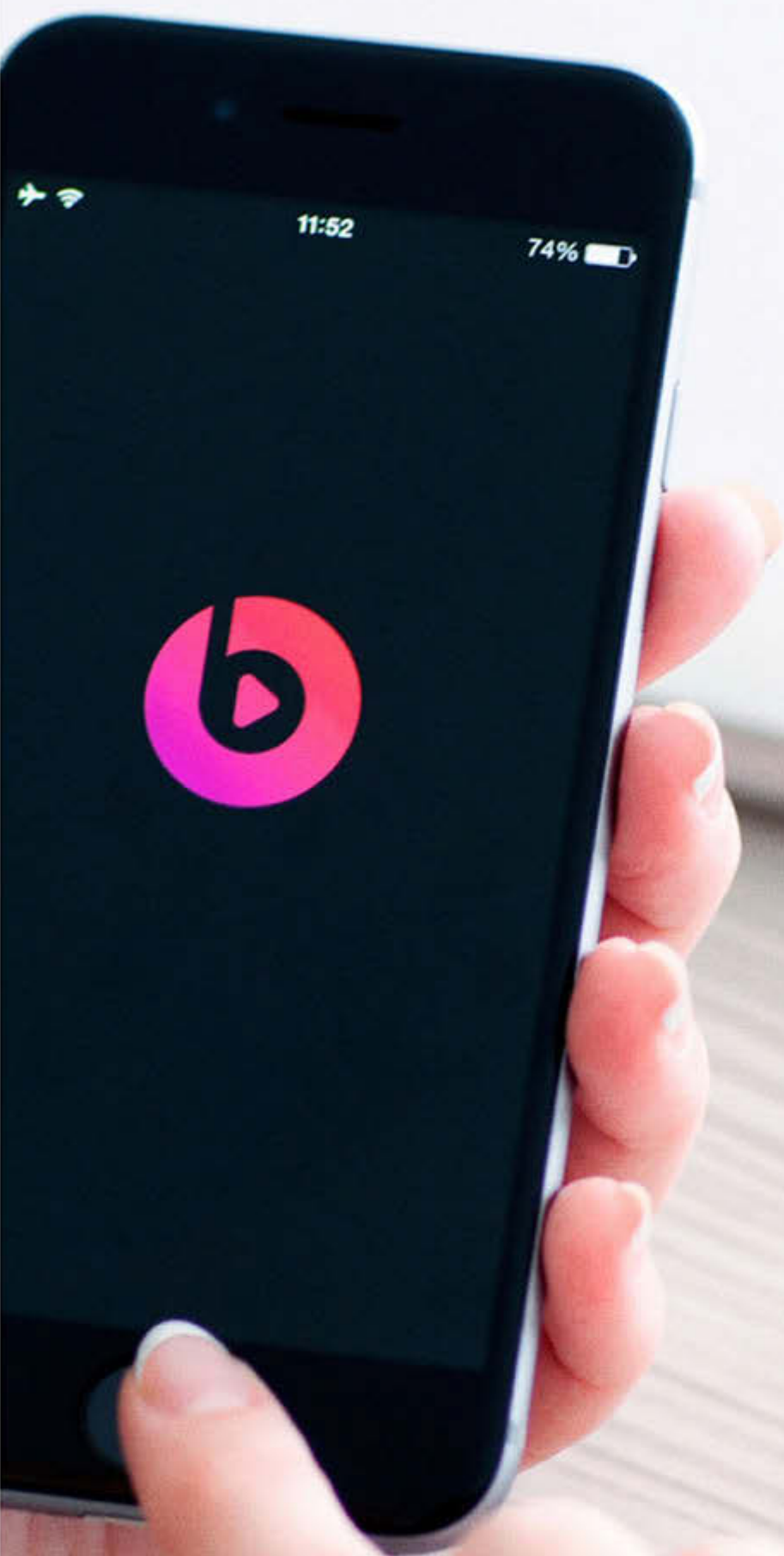
COMING MONTHS MAY SEE THE NEXT BIG MARKET MODEL

How do you consume music? Do you buy the latest CD albums of your favorite artists, or even collect dusty old vinyl records... or do you, like so many people, listen to most of it for free online? If you're in the latter category, you're far from alone. But you're also firmly in the crosshairs of an industry that is getting ever so slightly tired of not being paid for its efforts, as recent scuffles between Apple and Spotify are demonstrating.

We imagine that you won't be surprised to learn that the two Internet music giants are far from the best of friends. It was Apple, after all, that turned the music world on its head with the launch of the first iPod in 2001, followed by the emergence of the iTunes Music Store in 2003. In recent years, though, streaming services like Spotify have risen, winning considerable popularity among music fans who are more than happy to sit through some advertising to listen to tunes without paying a cent.

Like iTunes, Spotify does at least make some money for the music industry that the long-time biggest scourge of all, illegal downloading, doesn't - there are some 15 million people reaching into their own wallets for Spotify's paid service. However, **the music industry's big players contend that this proportion - out of 60 million users overall - just isn't enough to pay the bills of those who actually create and distribute music.**





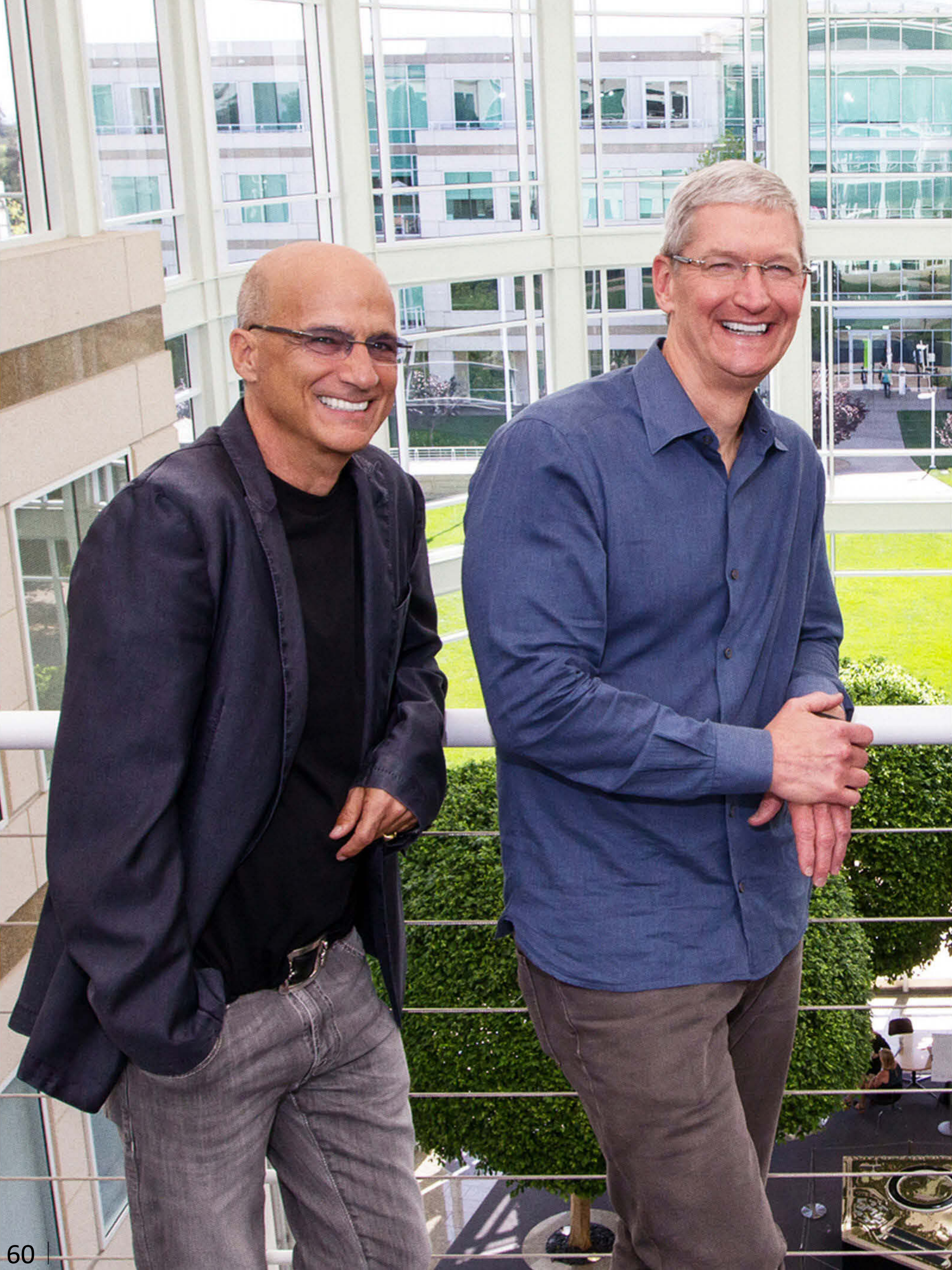
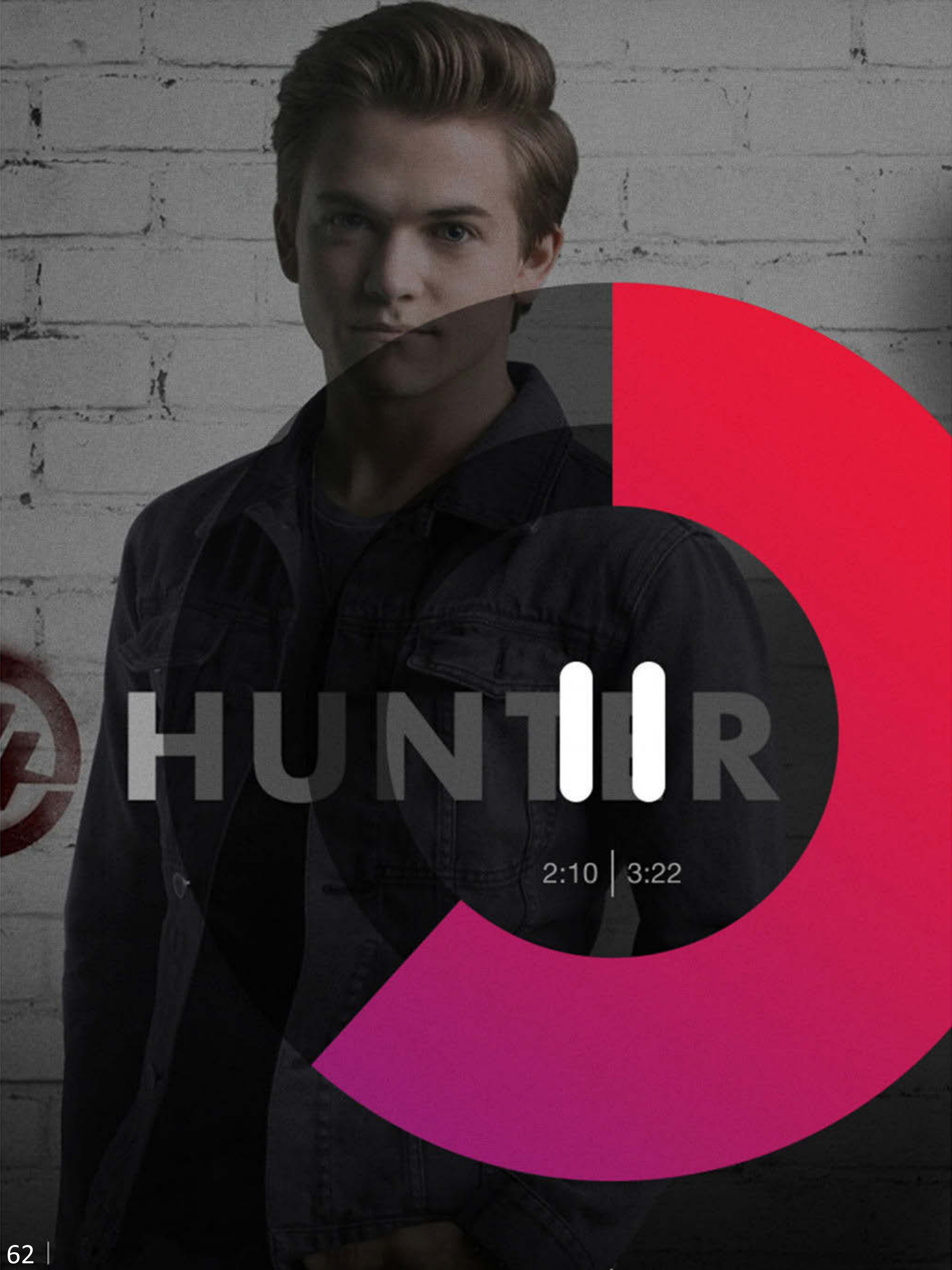




Image: Paul Sakuma



HUNTER

2:10 | 3:22



APPLE AIMS FIRE AT SPOTIFY

Just in the last week or so, we've had some eye-catching flashpoints of conflict in the media concerning these two iconic names in 21st century music consumption. While iTunes might not be quite the heavyweight that it once was, Apple still wields very considerable power, with reports suggesting that it is even trying to persuade the major labels to stop accepting the free streaming of their music on Spotify.

This isn't being done out of mere spite, even if one industry source quoted by The Verge did say that "All the way up to Tim Cook, these guys are cutthroat". Instead, it all seems to be part of the plan by the boys at Cupertino to make the world more amenable to its own upcoming music streaming service, a re-launched version of Beats Music, of which it took ownership when it bought its headphone-making parent company for \$3 billion last June.

It doesn't take a genius to work out that Apple's new service stands a greater chance of success if free streaming services like Spotify are taken out of the picture. There's even been talk that Apple offered to cover the cost of the music licensing fee that YouTube gets from Universal Music Group if the label disallowed its songs on the video-sharing site. Ad-supported 'freemium' streaming services are clearly in Apple's crosshairs right now.

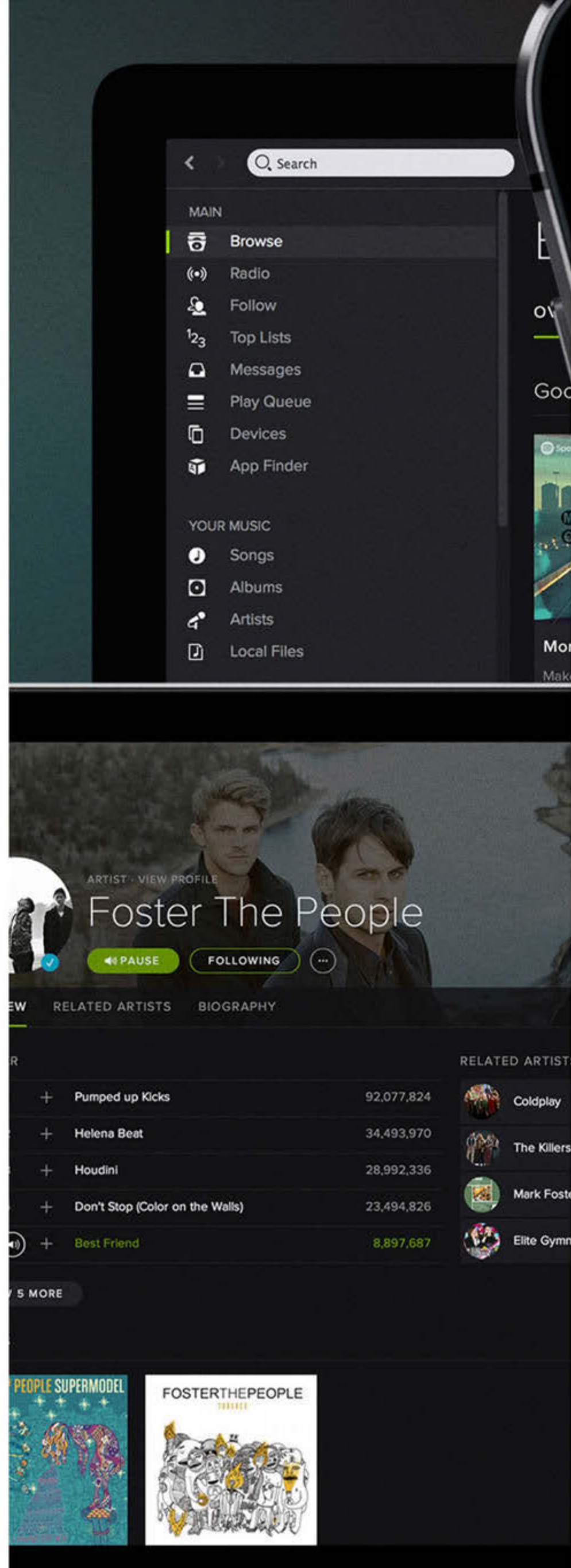
...BUT SPOTIFY RETURNS THE CHALLENGE

But it's equally obvious how keen Spotify is to fight back, at least according to another report of disgruntlement from the streaming giant **over the 30% cut that Apple takes from in-app Premium subscriptions in its iOS apps**. Such a so-called "Apple tax" forces Spotify to hike the price of its premium service from \$9.99 per month - which is what you will see quoted on its main website - to \$12.99 when one subscribes for the premium service through the app.

Apple could, of course, offer its own Beats Music service without such a 'tax', leading to accusations from Spotify and other music industry players of an unfair advantage. Although it's perfectly possible for those who have already paid for Spotify's \$9.99 monthly subscription service to continue using this through the iOS app, if someone is using the app to upgrade to the paid version of the service, they'll be asked to fork out the \$12.99.

App Store guidelines even prevent Spotify from alerting prospective subscribers to the lower price available through its main site. Meanwhile, there have been reports of Apple wanting to pitch its own service at as low a price point as \$5 per month, and then \$7.99 a month, only for difficulties in negotiations with music labels to scupper both aims.

The new Beats Music service is expected to be integrated into the existing Music app and break cover at Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC) in June.



Carrier

6:21 PM



Foster The People

FOLLOWING

908,149 FOLLOWERS

▶ SHUFFLE PLAY

LATEST RELEASE



Supermodel
11 tracks • 2014

ning Comr
e it to work the

Spoti
SPOTLIGHT

FOLLOWERS
1,079,828
FOLLOWING
1

RELATED M



Best
Foster



Sex
The 19



Sleepyhe
Passion P



The Mother
CHVRCHES



Contact High
Architecture In



The Struggle
Grizfolk



Miss You
Foster The People



My New Favorites

FOLLOWING

23 FOLLOWERS • BY SARA CHIN

▶ SHUFFLE PLAY

Available Offline



Best Friend

Foster The People • Supermodel



Pumpin Blood

NONONO • Pumpin Blood



Burn

Ellie Goulding • Halcyon Days



It Girl

Pharrell Williams • G I R L



Get Lucky

Daft Punk • Random Access Memories



My Silver Lining

First Aid Kit • Stay Gold



Best Friend

Foster The People • Best Friend



Friend • Foster The People



4:28



James E

FOLLOW

56,398 FOLLO

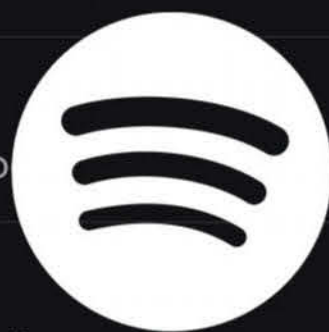
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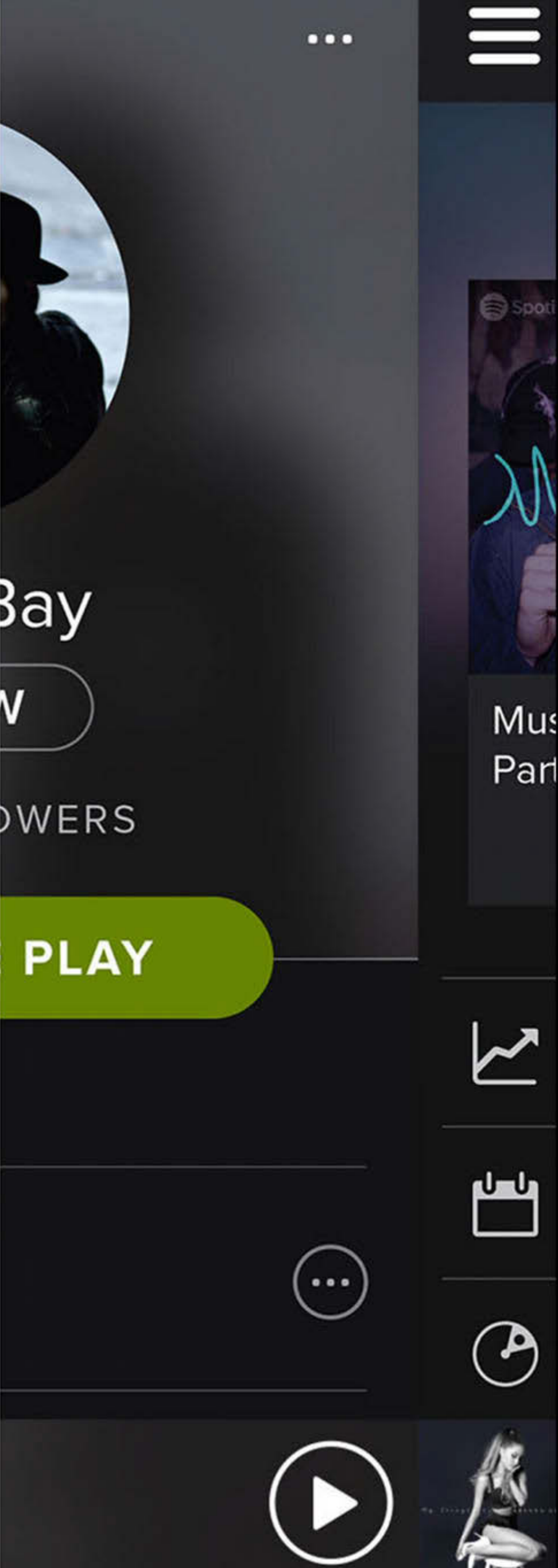
ve Me Harder

ana Grande

Image: Dado Ruvic



Spotify®



THE LATEST CHAPTER IN A LONG STORY

Of course, these aren't tensions that have only just arisen - they have existed for a while, and represent merely the latest chapter in the long story of digital music. It's a matter that has taxed many of us who care about music for many years - how can we make the music industry truly commercially viable, in an age where so many people treat music as if it is free?

Consternation still reigns as the biggest participants in the industry seek the ideal consumption model. Should that model be based on paying a subscription fee to access music libraries? Does free streaming still have a long-term future, and if so, what should its relation to paid streaming be? Or should we just accept that the genie has effectively been allowed out of the bottle - that music is destined to be free forever more, whether or not the industry is happy about that?

One might have thought that the industry has had enough time to figure out how to strike the right balance between the needs of creators and the desires of the music-listening populace. **After all, it has been a long time since the 1999 rise and 2001 fall of the first large scale P2P network Napster,** following the late '90s emergence of eMusic, which was the first site to offer MP3 files for download online.

Since then, we've had the likes of last.fm - the first ad-funded Internet radio platform to offer personalized music - and the launch of iTunes-





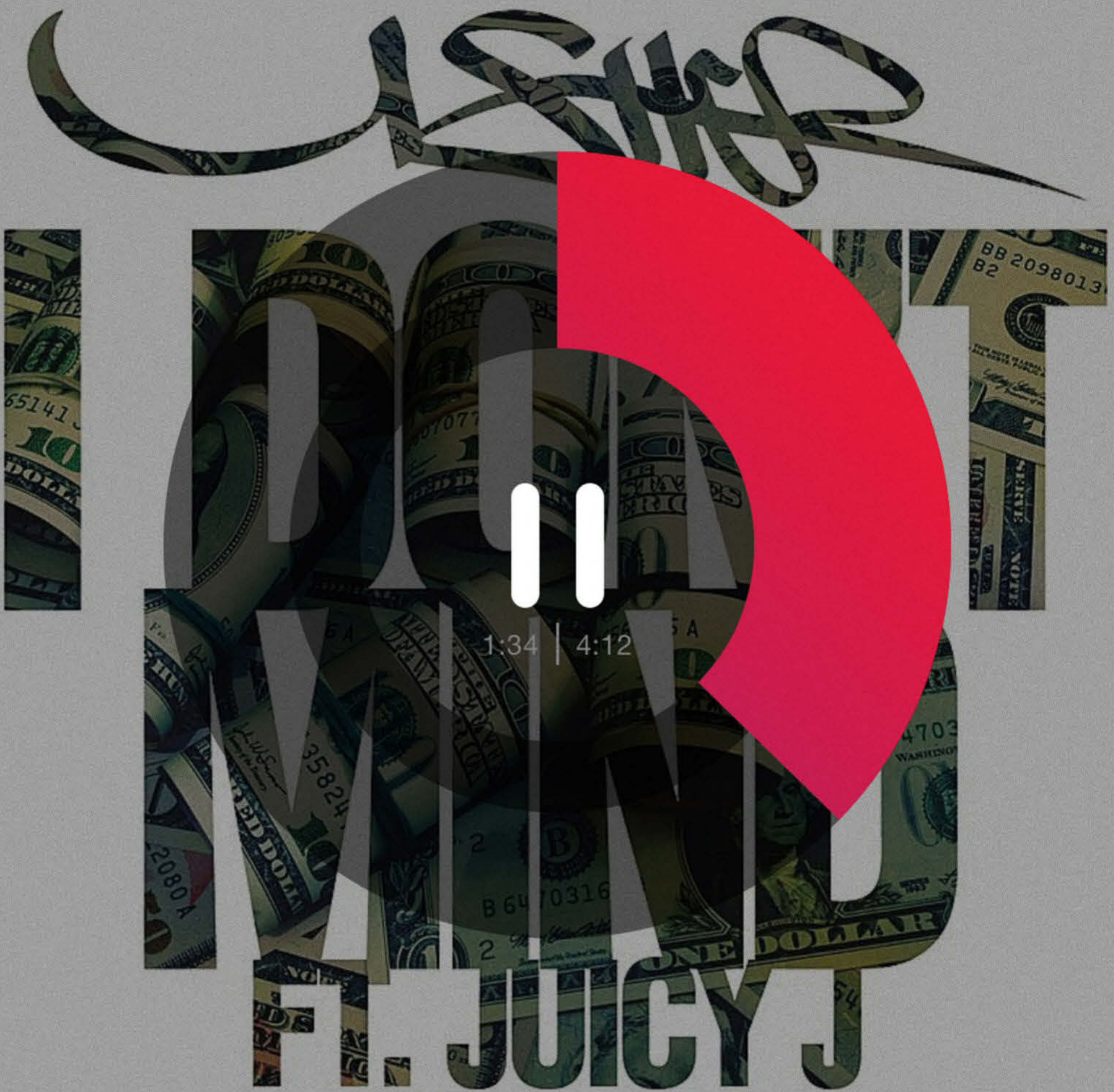
esque online music sites by the likes of HMV and Virgin Megastores in the mid-2000s, as downloaded tracks began to outsell physical singles. There have since been redoubled efforts to combat illegal file sharing.

Meanwhile, the rest of the digital entertainment industry has seen some notable success stories in its quest for a positive route forward - including the on-demand Internet media streaming service, Netflix.

A CONUNDRUM THAT MIGHT SOON BE RESOLVED

There's no question that the music industry has suffered through these revolutions in how we consume music - **it's not a coincidence that the first year of the new millennium was also the first to see a drop in global record sales**, and the decline in the popularity of physical media - notwithstanding a modest vinyl revival in the last few years - has continued apace since. However, if there's a solution on the horizon, Apple's Beats Music re-launch has a good chance of being it.

The right noises are certainly being made by the music industry executives who might not mind if Apple wins its battle against Spotify. Back in March, Sony Music SEO Doug Morris expressed confidence in light of the involvement in the new service of the respected Beats Music co-founder Jimmy Iovine, telling HITS Daily Double: "If there's a subscription model that gives people what they want, it'll work."



T FOR YOU



FRIE

@friendsof

I'M

IN



Follow

0
Fo

PLAYLISTS



Imagine Dragons' Traveling Tune

Friends of Beats

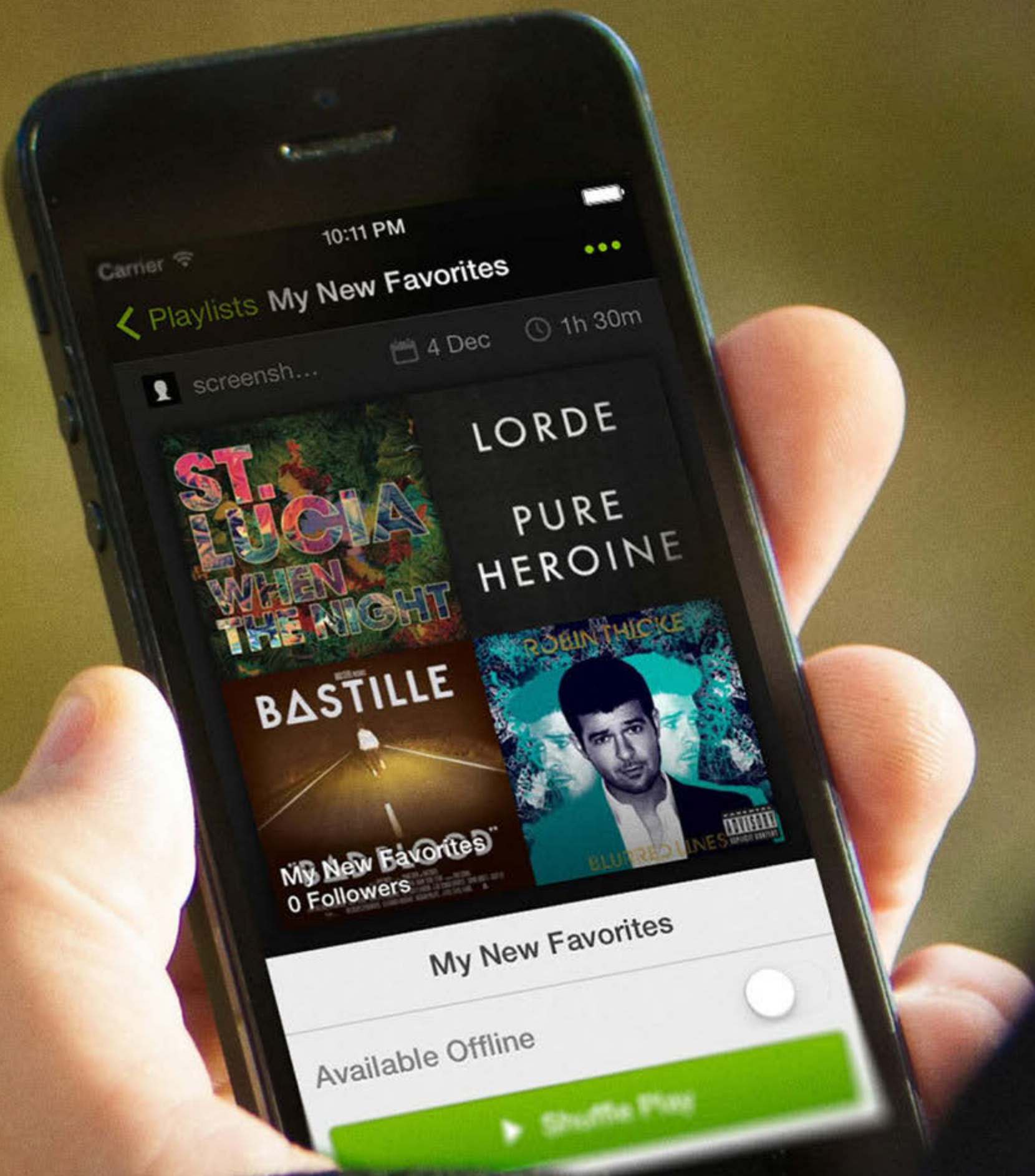
Tracy Anderson's Hour of



Morris continued: "[Irvine] knows how to market things brilliantly. He'll make it sexy enough to have a real chance. They've got 850 million credit cards and \$160 billion in the bank - that's a good start." There were similar warm sentiments from **Universal Music Group CEO Lucian Grainge, who declared in a Code/Media interview:** "I think Apple has been a fantastic partner to all of the content industries. They have been around for a long time. They have done phenomenally well with music. They ended up with a tremendous share of the pie."

With the music labels having fallen out of love with streaming but customers still clinging doggedly onto it, it seems that something has to give - the industry needs a new savior, even if the customer doesn't. Whatever happens in the coming months, you can be sure that we will learn a lot about the forms that music consumption will take for the years to come. ■

by Benjamin Kerry & Gavin Lenaghan



Oregon Band Wins Essentially Ellington Competition

The American Music Program of Portland, Oregon, has won Jazz at Lincoln Center's Essentially Ellington high school jazz band competition after an emotional performance honoring its ailing director.

Wynton Marsalis, JALC's Managing and Artistic Director, presented the band with the first-place trophy and a \$5,000 award at Saturday night's finals concert at Frederick P. Rose Hall.

Last year's winner, the Tucson Jazz Institute, took second place, while Lexington High School from Massachusetts finished third.









Marsalis, who helped judge the competition, said he was impressed that the Portland band played one of Duke Ellington's most difficult pieces, "The Tattooed Bride," from memory.

The student musicians dedicated their performance to their director Thara Memory, Marsalis said.

Memory, who founded the American Music Program in 2005 as a regional jazz youth orchestra, has been in poor health in recent years due to complications from diabetes.

"There's an emotional commitment to playing 'Tattooed Bride' from memory. No professional group does that," Marsalis said backstage.

"American Music Program wanted to play that for their band director, Thara Memory. They love him. They wanted him to feel it. ... For this band to play at that level, it was a great achievement."

Memory won a Grammy with his former student Esperanza Spalding in 2013 for Best Instrumental Arrangement Accompanying Vocalists for the song "City of Roses" from her album "Radio Music Society." The track also features students from the American Music Program.

The three-day Essentially Ellington competition featured 15 finalist bands - chosen from among 88 entries - performing Ellington compositions.

Online:

<http://academy.jazz.org/ee/>






Last Season of 'American Idol' Set For Fox's 2015-16 Lineup

The swan song of "American Idol" and heavy doses of comedy and sci-fi will mark Fox's 2015-16 season. The once-blockbuster singing contest, which launched the careers of Kelly Clarkson, Carrie Underwood and Jennifer Hudson, has seen its audience dwindle and age. "Idol" will come back next year for its 15th and final season with returning judges Jennifer Lopez, Harry Connick Jr. and Keith Urban, Fox said Monday. Ten new series will debut next season on Fox, including the comedy-horror series "Scream Queens" from "Glee" producer Ryan Murphy, with veteran scream queen Jamie Lee Curtis in the cast. New dramas will include "Minority Report," based on Steven Spielberg's futuristic film, and "The Frankenstein Code," about a resurrected former lawman. Fox and the other broadcast networks are unveiling their plans to advertisers in New York this week to lure them to spend on their programs.

WHAT'S NEW

There will be four new comedies, a comedy-horror anthology, four dramas and the return of "The X-Files," which Fox is billing as a six-episode





“event series.” Five of the shows will debut in the fall, with the rest scattered throughout the season as Fox and other networks attempt to engage viewers year-round.

WHAT’S GONE

“The Mindy Project,” along with fellow comedies “Weird Loners” and “Mulaney,” were canceled. Also gone are the dramas “Backstrom,” “Red Band Society” and “The Following,” and the reality series “Utopia.”

WHAT’S BIG

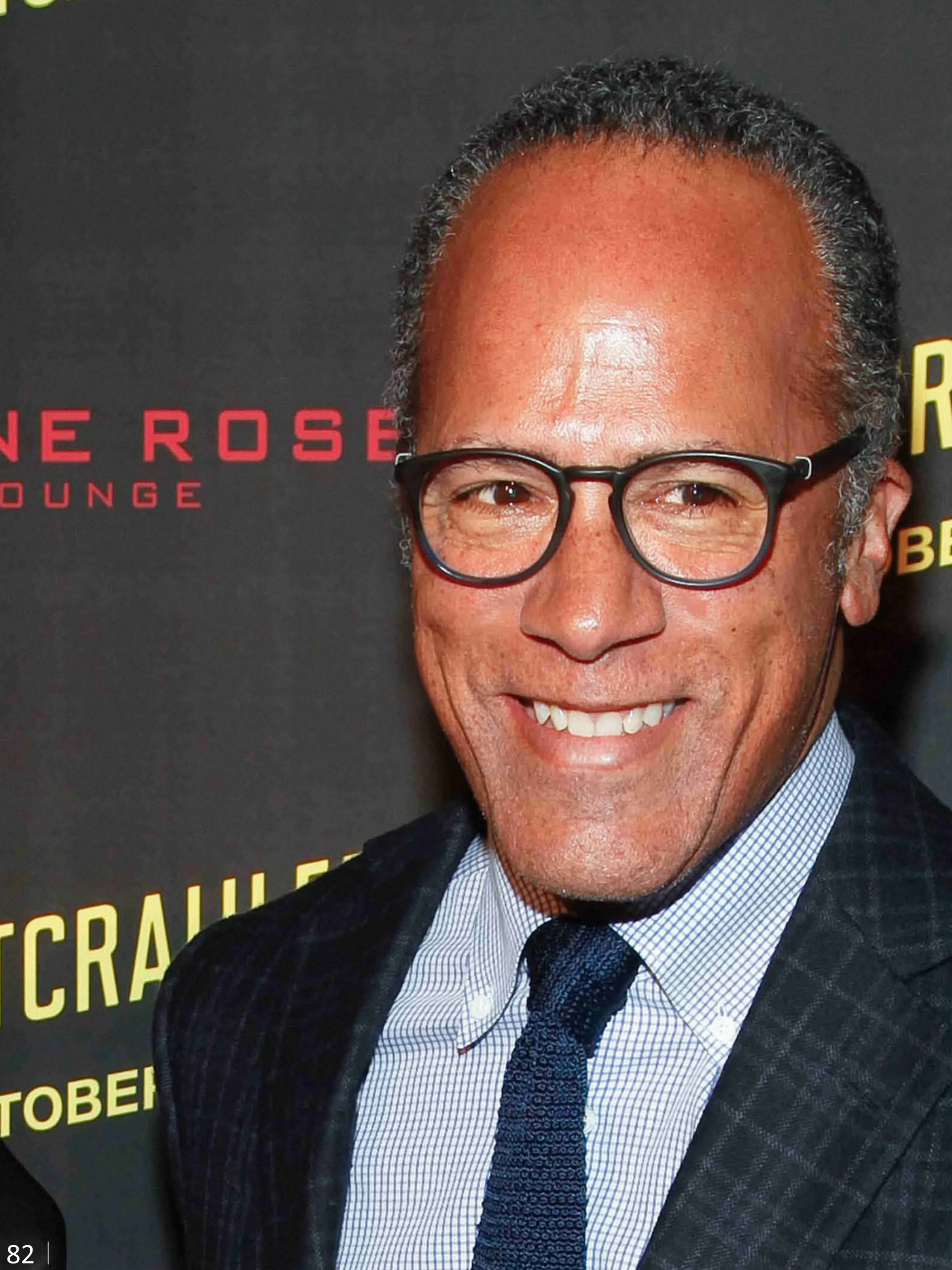
The last chorus of “American Idol” will begin in January, with stalwart host Ryan Seacrest ushering the show to a (hopefully) graceful conclusion after a long and influential run that, at its peak, drew 30 million viewers every week.

PROVEN PLAYERS

Ryan Murphy, who gave Fox a hit with “Glee,” is getting another chance with “Scream Queens.” Writer-producer Chris Carter, who created a landmark Fox series with “The X-Files” (1993-2002), will reunite with stars David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson to try to recapture the magic with a sequel starting in January.

SO EERIE

“The X-Files” will have company in the sci-fi and fantasy camp. Futuristic “Minority Report,” based on the Steven Spielberg movie, will follow a duo trying to stop crimes before they happen, while DC Comics-inspired “Lucifer” reimagines the fallen angel as a crime buster and “The Frankenstein Code” is about a resurrected lawman.



AWLER
ER 31

LIVE

It worked for NBC with “The Sound of Music,” not so much with “Peter Pan,” but that isn’t deterring the peacock network from planning a live “The Wiz” or Fox from airing “Grease: Live,” a three-hour version of the musical. Julianne Hough and Vanessa Hudgens will star in the January special. With broadcasters desperate to keep viewers watching shows and commercials in real time, expect more such efforts.

COMEDY CAVALCADE

Fox is upping the ante by creating a Tuesday comedy night this fall with three of its new comedies: “Grandfathered,” starring John Stamos; “The Grinder” with Rob Lowe and Fred Savage; and “Scream Queens.” The new year will bring another sitcom, “The Guide to Surviving Life,” and the animated comedy “Bordertown” from Seth MacFarlane and Mark Hentemann of “Family Guy.”

STAR POWER

Although the small-screen is said to create stars, there is no reason they can’t be recycled. Besides Lowe, Stamos, Savage, Duchovny and Anderson, returning actors with a track record include the (barely absent) Lea Michele of “Glee,” back in “Scream Queens”; Morris Chestnut (“Nurse Jackie”) in “Rosewood”; and Rob Kazinsky (“True Blood”) in “The Frankenstein Code.”

DOUBLE DIPS

It promises to be a busy year for Rob Lowe and Jennifer Lopez, who are starring in shows for both NBC and Fox next season.

Lowe stars as a TV lawyer who loses his job and is forced to become a real lawyer in “The Grinder,” a comedy on Fox’s schedule in the fall. On Sunday,





NBC announced that Lowe is a featured player in its comedy, "You, Me and the End of the World." How will he do both? Fox co-chairman and CEO Dana Walden said Lowe's series with NBC has already been filmed and finished.

It may be busier for Lopez, who plays a New York City detective in NBC's "Shades of Blue," which is due in the midseason and, according to NBC, hasn't been shot yet. Lopez is also back as a judge for the final season of "American Idol" on Fox.

PIANO MAN

Not since former ABC Entertainment chief Stephen McPherson showed off his dancing moves a few years ago has a network executive displayed a hidden talent at one of the annual schedule presentations. This time it was NBC Entertainment Chairman Robert Greenblatt, who played piano Monday as Dolly Parton sang "I Will Honestly Love You" to an audience of advertisers at Radio City Music Hall. Parton is making a TV movie, "Coat of Many Colors," for NBC next season.

Parton kept her eye on the prize, telling Greenblatt - and the audience - that she's discussing other projects with NBC, "so get that money out."

NO NEWS

Chairs at NBC's schedule presentation at Radio City were decorated with the "Today" show's "rise to shine" slogan, water was passed out with the "Today" logo and video of the morning show's stars was featured in a reel of NBC highlights. There was no sight of any news executives onstage, however, or any mention of the suspended "Nightly News" anchor Brian Williams or his substitute, Lester Holt.





Justin Bieber Nearly Done with Sentence in Vandalism Case

Justin Bieber has completed most of the terms of his probation in a vandalism case filed after the pop singer threw eggs at his former neighbors' house, a probation report filed Monday says.

The performer has completed 12 anger management sessions and has signed up to work with a South Los Angeles group to improve its facilities, according to the report. Bieber, 21, has to complete five days of community service with the group to finish his sentence in the misdemeanor case. "His overall performance on probation has been good and he continues to display a cooperative attitude," Bieber's probation officer wrote. Bieber caused \$80,000 worth of damage to his neighbors' home in a gated community in Calabasas, a Los Angeles suburb, when he egged the couple's home in January 2014. The singer has since reimbursed them more than \$80,000 and moved away. His former neighbors, Jeffrey and Suzanne Schwartz, sued Bieber in March over the egging incident and other bad behavior. The lawsuit claims Bieber terrorized their family with loud parties, unsafe driving and by spitting in Jeffrey Schwartz's face during one incident.

Bieber did not attend Monday's hearing. Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Anita Dymant scheduled another update in the case for Aug. 3.



Trailer

Movies & TV Shows



iTunes Preview



by Shira Piven
Genre: Comedy
Released: 2015
Price: \$14.99



68 Ratings

Rotten Tomatoes



71%

Welcome to Me

A woman with borderline personality disorder, Alice Klieg (Kristen Wiig) wins the Mega-Millions, and soon sends her parents, therapist, gay ex-husband and local TV station into despair by spending the winnings on her own cable access talk show. Obsessed with becoming famous, Klieg sets her sights on becoming the next Oprah.

FIVE FACTS:

1. Welcome to Me was directed by Shira Piven and written by Eliot Laurence.
2. Other cast members included James Marsden, Linda Cardellini and Wes Bentley.
3. Filming took place largely in the Greater Los Angeles area.
4. The movie **premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 5, 2014.**
5. Laurence has said that the film was based on a personal experience: "I had a rather dark period in my life. A close friend of mine died, and I really went into myself. But then I laughed about it, and wrote it all down."

See more in
iTunes



Interview with Kristen Wiig



Maggie

A “necroambulist virus” slowly turns the infected into cannibalistic zombies in this Henry Hobson-directed post-apocalyptic thriller. Wade Vogel (Arnold Schwarzenegger)’s daughter Maggie (Abigail Breslin) is the latest victim, but he refuses to allow her to be killed by the authorities seeking to eradicate the virus.

FIVE FACTS:

1. The film also stars Joely Richardson as Caroline Vogel, Wade’s wife and Maggie’s stepmother.
2. The screenplay formerly appeared on the Black List of “most liked” motion picture screenplays not yet produced.
3. Chloë Grace Moretz **was initially tipped to play the zombie lead, only for scheduling conflicts to rule out her involvement.**
4. Filming **took place in New Orleans, Louisiana.**
5. The movie premiered at the 2015 Tribeca Film Festival on April 23, 2015.



Trailer





iTunes Preview

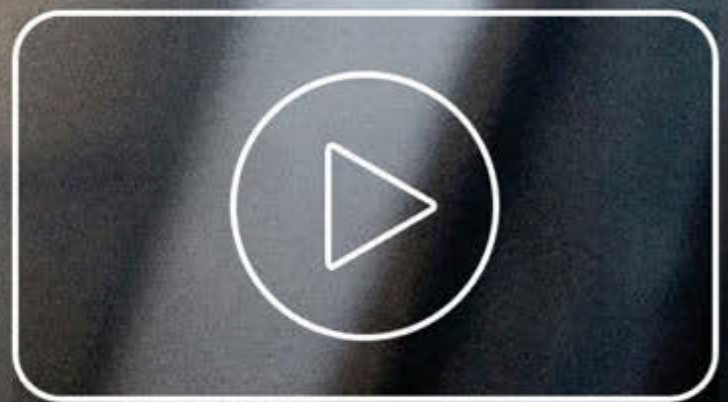


by Henry Hobson
Genre: Thriller
Released: 2015
Price: \$14.99



123 Ratings





*Interview with Arnold Schwarzenegger
and Joely Richardson*



Traveller (Live)

Music



iTunes Preview



Genre: Country
Released: May 04, 2015
14 Songs
Price: \$9.99



428 Ratings

Traveller

Chris Stapleton

This Dave Cobb-produced effort may be the Lexington, Kentucky native's debut album, but you may recognize his name from songwriting credits for such stars as Kenny Chesney, George Strait and Darius Rucker. Now, he finally gets to stand out in his own right, with a lead single - "Traveller" - written solely by him.

FIVE FACTS:

- 1.** Christopher Alvin Stapleton was born on April 15, 1978.
- 2.** He has four number one songs to his credit as a songwriter, including "Never Wanted Nothing More", "Love's Gonna Make It Alright" and "Come Back Song".
- 3.** His songs have also been recorded by such artists as Adele, Luke Bryan, Tim McGraw, Brad Paisley and Dierks Bentley.
- 4.** Stapleton is the former lead singer and guitarist of the bluegrass band The SteelDrivers, from 2008 to 2010.
- 5.** He is a current member of the rock band The Jompson Brothers.

See more in
iTunes



Fire Away (Live)



Special Effects (Deluxe Version)

Tech N9ne

Tech N9ne's 15th studio album boasts the production talents of Seven, Excision and Joseph Bishara, in addition to collaborations with the likes of Corey Taylor, B.o.B., Lil Wayne, 2 Chainz and Eminem. The album is split into several portions representing days of the week, with the artist himself declaring it "a roller-coaster ride".

FIVE FACTS:

1. Tech N9ne is the stage name of Aaron Dontez Yates.
2. Yates **was born on November 8, 1971.**
3. His stage name originated from the TEC-9 semi-automatic handgun, **rapper Black Walt giving him the name in tribute to his fast-rhyming Chopper style.**
4. Yates has cited old school hip hop acts like Slick Rick, N.W.A, Public Enemy, Boogie Down Productions and Bone Thugs n Harmony among his influences.
5. The iTunes deluxe edition of Special Effects features two bonus tracks, "Anti" and "Young Dumb Full of Fun".



iTunes Preview



Genre: Hip-Hop/Rap
Released: May 04, 2015
27 Songs
Price: \$14.99



★★★★★
710 Ratings



Hood Go Crazy







Interview with Tech N9ne







TOP 10 SONGS

SEE YOU AGAIN (FEAT. CHARLIE PUTH)

WIZ KHALIFA

SHUT UP AND DANCE

WALK THE MOON

A THOUSAND YEARS

(THE VOICE PERFORMANCE)

SAWYER FREDERICKS

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

(THE VOICE PERFORMANCE)

SAWYER FREDERICKS

**EARNED IT (FROM THE "FIFTY SHADES
OF GREY" SOUNDTRACK)**

THE WEEKND

HONEY, I'M GOOD.

ANDY GRAMMER

HEY MAMA (FEAT. NICKI MINAJ & AFROJACK)

DAVID GUETTA

WANT TO WANT ME

JASON DERULO

TENNESSEE WHISKEY

(THE VOICE PERFORMANCE)

MEGHAN LINSEY

GIRL CRUSH

LITTLE BIG TOWN

TRAVELL
— CHRIS —
STAPLETON





ER *TOP* 10 ALBUMS

WILDER MIND (DELUXE VERSION)

MUMFORD & SONS

FIFTY SHADES OF GREY

(ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK)

VARIOUS ARTISTS

JEKYLL + HYDE

ZAC BROWN BAND

WILDER MIND

MUMFORD & SONS

TRAVELLER

CHRIS STAPLETON

BLURRYFACE

TWENTY ONE PILOTS

1989

TAYLOR SWIFT

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC! VOL. 54

VARIOUS ARTISTS

MONTEVALLO

SAM HUNT

SOUND & COLOR

ALABAMA SHAKES





TOP

10

MUSIC VIDEOS

UPTOWN FUNK (FEAT. BRUNO MARS)

MARK RONSON

GIRL CRUSH

LITTLE BIG TOWN

DEAR FUTURE HUSBAND

MEGHAN TRAINOR

THINKING OUT LOUD

ED SHEERAN

SHAKE IT OFF

TAYLOR SWIFT

ALL ABOUT THAT BASS

MEGHAN TRAINOR

SHUT UP AND DANCE

WALK THE MOON

GROWN WOMAN (BONUS VIDEO)

BEYONCÉ

BLANK SPACE

TAYLOR SWIFT

WORTH IT (FEAT. KID INK)

FIFTH HARMONY





TOP 10 TV SHOWS

THE MILK AND HONEY ROUTE

MAD MEN, THE FINAL SEASON

LIP SERVICE

KEEPING UP WITH THE KARDASHIANS, SEASON 10

WANNA PARTNER?

THE GOOD WIFE, SEASON 6

TWO GRAVES

REVENGE, SEASON 4

IN MY HEART THERE WAS

A KIND OF FIGHTING

THE ROYALS, SEASON 1

OPERATION MONGOOSE, PT. 1

ONCE UPON A TIME, SEASON 4

OPERATION MONGOOSE, PT. 2

ONCE UPON A TIME, SEASON 4

REUNION, PT. 3

THE REAL HOUSEWIVES OF ATLANTA, SEASON 7

A FEW GOOD WOMEN

SCANDAL, SEASON 4

LOST HORIZON

MAD MEN, THE FINAL SEASON





TOP 10 BOOKS

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN

PAULA HAWKINS

14TH DEADLY SIN

JAMES PATTERSON & MAXINE PAETRO

MEMORY MAN

DAVID BALDACCI

FIFTY SHADES DARKER

E L JAMES

PAPER TOWNS

JOHN GREEN

GATHERING PREY

JOHN SANDFORD

ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE

ANTHONY DOERR

FIFTY SHADES OF GREY

E L JAMES

FIFTY SHADES FREED

E L JAMES

THE LIAR

NORA ROBERTS

'The Witcher 3' Takes a Cue From 'Game of Thrones'

"The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt" isn't shying away from its name.

With quests involving topless sorceresses, supernatural fetuses and missing frying pans, the third installment of the role-playing saga is expected to be the wildest yet for Polish video game developer CD Projekt RED

The latest edition of the video game franchise based on Polish writer Andrzej Sapkowski's fantasy book series unflinchingly begins with a horse decapitation.





"It's a medieval world," said Marcin Iwinski, co-founder and CEO of Warsaw, Poland-based CD Projekt RED. "It's nothing strange. There are people dying on battlefields, and there are animals dying on battlefields. It's just a way to show the world of 'The Witcher' as it was described in the books. I actually see a lot of similarities between 'The Witcher' and 'Game of Thrones.'"

It's true both fantasy franchises are mercilessly brutal, as well as morally ambiguous and unapologetically adult.

Shortly after that horse loses its head, the M-rated series' mystical protagonist Geralt shares a sudsy moment with his lover. Later, he's slicing foes in half and witnessing a barroom brawl that ends with a bloody bludgeoning, depending on how players approach the open world of "Witcher 3." It's entirely possible to avoid some conflicts with smooth talk.

"We are not removing any of the violence, but I promise it's not there to shock you," said Iwinski. "It's there to show you that sometimes there are ruthless people who are much worse than the monsters you fight in the game."

The game's "Wild Hunt" subtitle isn't a reference to racy content but to an icy army that white-haired hero Geralt battles throughout the lengthy single-player experience, which is set for release May 19. Inspired by "Game of Thrones" and other TV shows, Iwinski said the developers at CD Projekt RED created several animated recaps that will launch each time players load up the monstrous title.

"I think gamers have a lot of distractions these days, so we wanted to make it easier for them to understand where they left the story," said Iwinski. "We didn't want them to just say, 'What the (expletive) was going on?' then turn it off."

That's not likely.







The original “Witcher” and “Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings” sold more than 7 million copies. With a virtual world billed as 35 times larger than its predecessor, one that will take 100 hours to completely conquer, expectations are high for “Witcher 3.” Game Informer magazine said last week a recent reader poll found “Witcher 3” and “Batman: Arkham Knight” were the year’s most anticipated titles.

“It’s an extremely important moment,” said Iwinski. “I hope the gamers like it. We’re still quite stressed until the reviews come out and users start playing the game, and they say on social media around the world whether they like it or not. At the same time, there’s a feeling of accomplishment. It’s my baby. I have six babies now, if you combine my real babies with my game babies.

Online:

<http://www.thewitcher.com>



A hand in a white glove holds a test tube containing a red liquid. In the background, several other test tubes with red caps are visible. A white line graph with a grid overlay is superimposed on the image, showing a fluctuating line that trends upwards. The text is positioned in the lower right area of the image.

NEW BLOOD
TESTS, LIQUID
BIOPSIES, MAY
TRANSFORM
CANCER CARE

A new type of blood test is starting to transform cancer treatment, sparing some patients the surgical and needle biopsies long needed to guide their care.

The tests, called liquid biopsies, capture cancer cells or DNA that tumors shed into the blood, instead of taking tissue from the tumor itself. A lot is still unknown about the value of these tests, but many doctors think they are a big advance that could make personalized medicine possible for far more people.

They give the first noninvasive way to repeatedly sample a cancer so doctors can profile its genes, target drugs to mutations, tell quickly whether treatment is working, and adjust it as the cancer evolves.

Two years ago, these tests were rarely used except in research. Now, several are sold, more than a dozen are in development, and some doctors are using them in routine care.

Gurpaul Bedi had one for colon cancer that spread to his lungs. About 10 percent of patients with metastatic colon cancer at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center now get liquid biopsies.

"I think it's wonderful," said Bedi, who lives in Atlanta and goes to Houston for his care. "A lung biopsy, many doctors told me, is not easy."

In Philadelphia, a liquid biopsy detected Carole Linderman's breast cancer recurrence months before it normally would have been found.

"Had this test not been available, we may not have known I had cancer on my spine until symptoms showed up," which may have been too late for good treatment, she said.

The huge potential for these tests is clear. The problem: There are no big, definitive studies to show they help patients, how accurate they are, which type is best or who should get them and when.





Still, patients do better when drugs are matched to their tumors, and liquid biopsies may give a practical way to do that more often.

“I’m really excited about all of this,” said Dr. Razelle Kurzrock, a University of California, San Diego cancer specialist. “I spent most of my life giving drugs that were useless to people” because there was no good way to tell who would benefit or quickly tell when one wasn’t working, she said. “This is so much better.”

WHO GETS TESTED NOW

The tests are mostly used when a tissue biopsy can’t easily be done, when the cancer’s original site isn’t known, or when drugs have stopped working and doctors are unsure what to try next, said Dr. Scott Kopetz, a colon cancer specialist at MD Anderson. The tests are catching on “faster than I anticipated,” he said.

At Philadelphia’s Thomas Jefferson University, Dr. Massimo Cristofanilli has used them on about 120 breast cancer patients, including two dozen like Linderman with a high risk of recurrence.

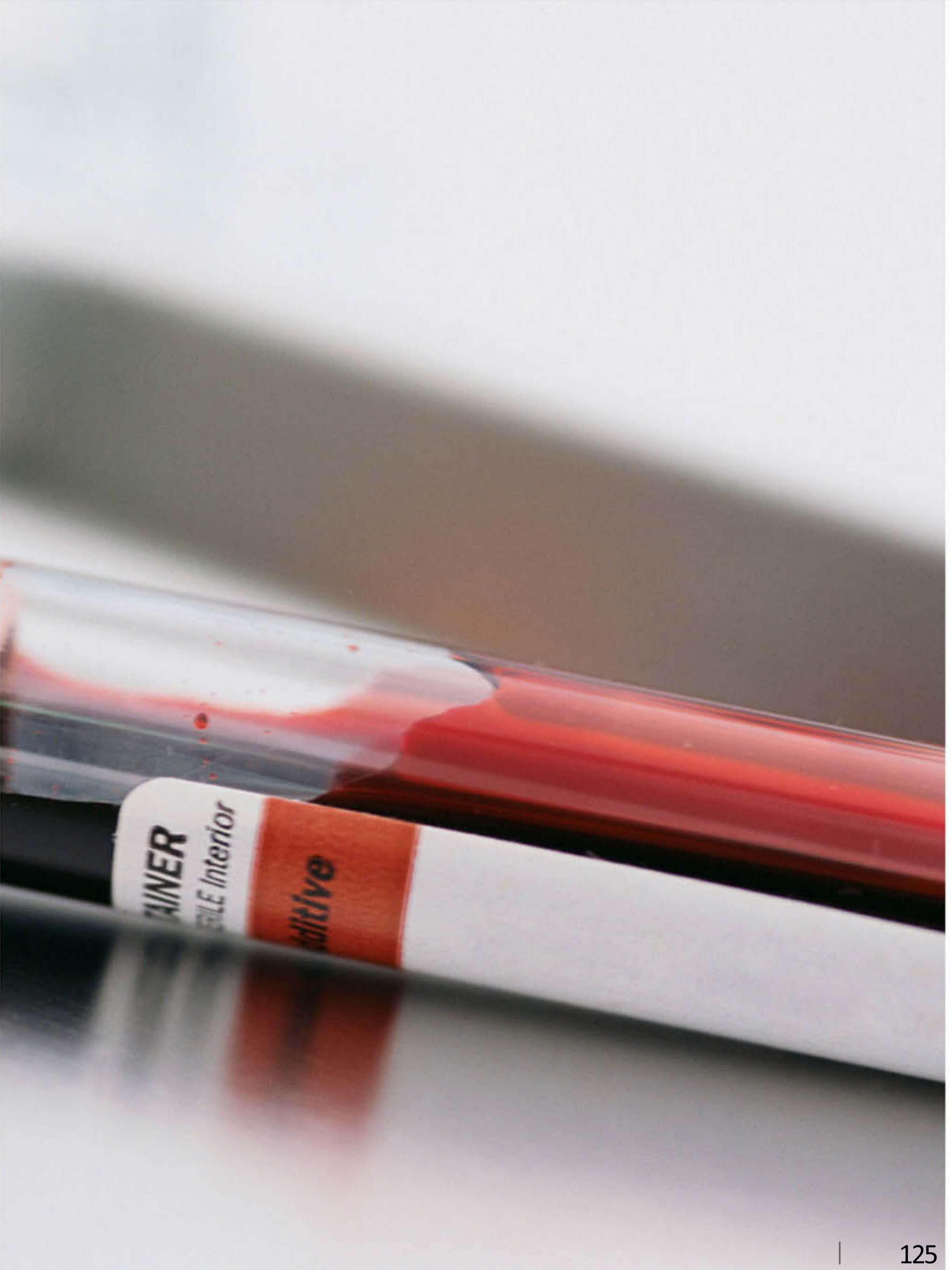
A tissue biopsy typically samples one section of a tumor, and tumors can vary widely, with different genes and hormones active in different parts, he said. Also, cancer that has spread often differs from the original site, and tumors change rapidly in response to treatment.

With a tissue biopsy, “our treatments lag behind and they’re still based on limited information,” Cristofanilli said. With a liquid biopsy, “the power of this test has been to really find out how the disease changes, even in a short period of time.”

HOW THEY WORK

Early versions looked for whole tumor cells in blood. Newer ones look for free-floating cancer DNA, enabling gene profiling to see









what mutations drive the cancer. Kopetz and Cristofanilli use one from Guardant Health Inc. of Redwood City, California, that has been sold in the U.S. since June 2014 and in parts of Europe and Asia.

Many companies are working on similar tests including Sequenom, a San Diego biotech that already sells one for prenatal screening, using fetal DNA in maternal blood. Many companies tried prenatal screening with fetal cells but it didn't work, said chief science officer Dirk van den Boom. "Cell-free DNA really was the breakthrough" that enabled wide use, and the same could happen with these cancer tests, he said.

THE COST

Whether liquid biopsies will be cost-effective is unknown. Guardant's test costs \$5,400; some insurers cover it for certain types of patients. Gene profiling from a tissue biopsy costs about the same. The promise of liquid biopsies is that they can be done periodically to monitor care, but more tests means more cost.

They may save other costs, though. A traditional lung biopsy is thousands of dollars. Money could be saved by skipping cancer drugs that ultimately don't work; many cost \$10,000 to \$15,000 a month.

With cell-free DNA tests, even doctors in rural areas can offer precision medicine because they can ship a blood sample to a lab. "We think that's the future," said Dr. Charles Baum, a former Pfizer cancer drug chief who now heads Mirati Therapeutics, a San Diego biotech company developing gene-targeting drugs





DO THEY WORK?

Many studies suggest that liquid biopsy results largely mirror those from tissue ones, and sometimes find more mutations. A study Kopetz presented in April at an American Association for Cancer Research meeting found the blood tests detected cancer mutations in the vast majority of 105 colorectal cancer patients. For 37 percent of them, doctors thought a drug could target a mutation that was found.

Still, no big studies show that liquid biopsies give better care or extend lives. Without that proof, how much they will be used by doctors and covered by insurers remains to be seen.

THE FUTURE

A San Diego company, Trovogene, is working on an even faster, easier liquid biopsy - a test to detect tumor DNA in urine. One scenario: a patient collects a urine sample every day for a week after starting a new drug and ships them to a lab.

“In as little as three to five days, you can observe dramatic changes” that suggest a response to treatment, said Trovogene’s chief executive, Antonius Schuh.

Work on this test is still very early.

Ultimately, liquid biopsies might offer a way to screen for cancer besides the mammograms, colonoscopies and other methods used now. That raises even more questions, including when to call something “cancer” and whether it needs treatment if there are only abnormal cells in the blood.

“Why does there have to be a tumor? The tumor is the symptom. The disease is the DNA,” Schuh said.





Review: Dazzling 'Mad Max: Fury Road' Is A Can't Miss Thrill

The silences in “Mad Max: Fury Road” are unsettling.

The moments are few and infrequent, but it's not until the fiery roar of the engines and the thrashing of the guitars are suddenly stripped away that you can fully feel how deeply the film has flooded your being. The theater - and your heart - pulsates with the lack as you recover and wait for more.

It's in the silences that director George Miller's singular genius becomes evident, and for good reason: It's the only time the film allows you to breathe.

Thirty years after Miller gave the world “Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome,” he's returned to his own post-apocalyptic world and created an exceptional, fearless and poetic masterpiece that's primed to become a modern classic.

In this anarchic world, Max Rockatansky (Tom Hardy) is a lone wolf. As he tells us in the prologue, he's a man whose past traumas have reduced him to a single instinct: Survival. Max's only humanity seems to be in his haunting visions of a child asking for protection. Otherwise, he's gone full animal.

As Max, Hardy doesn't so much speak. He grunts and growls and scurries for freedom.

But Max quickly gets entangled with others when the war lords of the wasteland put a fish hook in his neck and strap him on as a hood ornament to chase after the rogue Furiosa (Charlize Theron). She's managed to escape the Citadel in a powerful, lumbering War Rig with the wives of their tyrannical leader Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne, who also played Toecutter in "Mad Max").

Much of the film is spent with the women, and eventually Max, on the rig as they race across the desert away from the painted fighters on their tail. Furiosa, seeking redemption for untold sins, has made it her purpose to bring the wives to "the green place" - an idyllic haven she was taken from as a child.

The wives, played by Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, Riley Keough, Abbey Lee, Courtney Eaton and Zoë Kravitz, are all ethereal, spiritual beauties. Though physically perfect and visibly unmarked by the harsh conditions of the land, as Immortan Joe's property, their collective trauma is more insidious. When they fight back and jump in to help their more grizzled and skilled travel mates, they do so without fear or hesitation.

Looking almost sturdy in comparison, it is Theron who steals the show as the steely-eyed, one-armed, and aptly named Furiosa. Her fierce and unwavering commitment to her self-assigned mission propels the sparse narrative and invigorates those around her, when death often seems like not just the easier option, but probably









the more appealing one, too.

Painted and scarred to the point of disguise, Nicholas Hoult is also a standout as Nux, an unlucky, but endearingly devoted Immortan Joe foot soldier who delivers on one of the few actual character arcs of the film.

Ultimately, “Mad Max: Fury Road” is almost aggressively anti-character, though. The dialogue is beautifully lean and purposeful, allowing what does exist to have maximum impact. For Theron and Hardy, their triumphant performances are in their eyes.

In the end, it is the bright, fresh visuals juxtaposed with the impressively choreographed and always surprising action and pacing that make the film. Cinematographer John Seale (“The English Patient”) has infused the barren landscape with a feast of striking, saturated colors, while Miller has made a two-hour race across the desert into a truly riveting must-see and see again.

As we drive full speed into another summer (and half-decade) of sequels and interconnected universes, Miller has reminded us that blockbusters have the potential to not only be art, but radically visionary - even the fourth in a series. What a lovely day, indeed.

“Mad Max: Fury Road,” a Warner Bros. release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for “intense sequences of violence throughout, and for disturbing images.” Running time: 120 minutes. Four stars out of four.

MPAA Definition of R: Restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or guardian.





Bollywood Meets Hollywood: Priyanka Chopra Cast in ABC Drama

Bollywood star Priyanka Chopra is heading to American television with a lead role in the ABC drama "Quantico."

"Wow. I'm still reeling," she said Monday night at a party to celebrate the presentations in New York this week where networks unveil new programming to advertisers.





"Quantico" was "my first pick out of everything ABC sent me ... and I got it, so I was like, 'and it got picked up,' so it all happened so fast. I just hope it's amazing and people love it."

Chopra plays an FBI trainee at Quantico Base in Virginia.

"All of (the FBI agents) have secret pasts and something happens where one of us is blamed and then I have to find out who did it," she laughed, adding that there's "a lot of drama and all the fun, of course."

Chopra, 32, is a former Miss World. She has starred in films like the romance musicals "Fashion" and "Andaaz," and has also released music.

"American TV is at the best place it has ever been. It has incredible content," she said.

"I binge watch TV shows when I'm doing hair and makeup, and I just think that all (American) shows that are coming out are so different - so much variety and there's so many different kinds of people on it that the uniqueness of each show is amazing."

Chopra, who will continue to make Bollywood movies, said she knows her fans in India are excited because "they've trended 'Quantico' worldwide like five times."

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Executive Director - dir@enewsmagazine.com
Relationship Management - crm@enewsmagazine.com
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MINDFIELD DIGITAL ART & GRAPHIC DESIGN

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Art & Graphic Design Director

Raphael Vieira
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