

Your Monthly
Music Forecast!

**The Big NFT Bang:
What It Means
for Music**

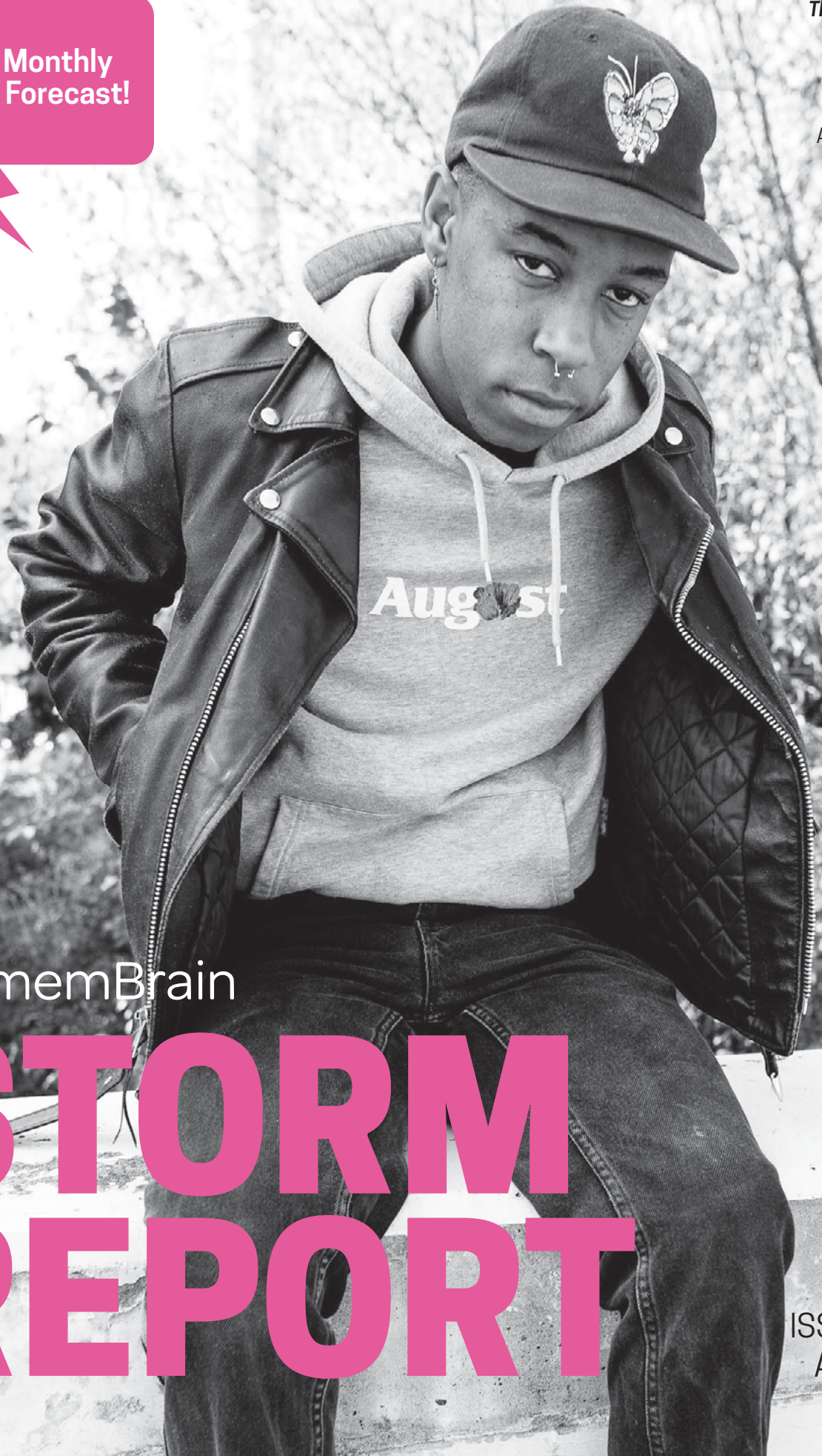
JP Saxe

JVKE

Andrew Jannakos

Abhi the Nomad

...and more!



 memBrain

STORM REPORT

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*Our signature countdown of 20
buzzworthy bands and artists on our radar.*

ON THE COVER:

KennyHoopla. Photo provided by management ©2021

ABOUT THE STORM REPORT

STORM = STRATEGIC TRACKING OF RELEVANT MEDIA

The STORM Report is a compilation of up-and-coming bands and artists who are worth watching. Only those showing the most promising potential for future commercial success make it onto our monthly list.

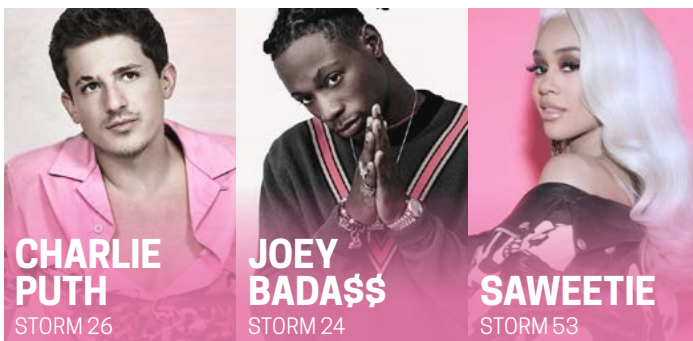
How do we know?

Through correspondence with industry insiders and our own ravenous media consumption, we spend our month gathering names of artists who are “bubbling under”. We then extensively vet this information, analyzing an artist’s print & digital media coverage, social media growth, sales chart statistics, and various other checks and balances to ensure that our list represents the cream of the crop.

Why do we do it?

Music is the best way to sell products because it creates such a powerful emotional connection with an audience. The STORM Report provides our clients with a tool to harness the music that will be the most relevant to audiences in the near future, thereby becoming very useful for the enhancement of products, promotions, and platforms.

STORM ALUMNI



A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It was inevitable. This month's issue of the memBrain STORM Report includes an article entitled "The Big NFT Bang," tackling the current hype and possible applications for NFTs in the music industry. We've hosted numerous discussions about blockchain, fandom, and the future of music, but it is exciting to combine all three into one topic. Since March, NFTs have been all over the news, with everyone from the NBA to McDonald's joining the craze. With the pandemic causing the shuttering of music venues and cancellation of live events, music artists have been hungry for new ways to create revenue—while also offering something exciting for their fans. In this issue, we explore how this is only the beginning of what blockchain could mean for companies, artists, and fans. While still controversial (including significant environmental considerations) and largely unproven, applications of blockchain like NFTs (like social media) are technologies that will continue to shift the world of music from an industry focus to an artist focus. In the past 20 years, digital technology has all but stripped music of its commercial value to consumers. Blockchain technologies like NFTs seem to be a way for artists to ultimately make more money - and that's something to get excited about.



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The Big NFT Bang: What It Means for Music

By Grace Slansky

There's an NFT craze dividing the nation. It's undeniable. It's everywhere. And it's separating the crypto/blockchain enthusiasts from those who aren't quite in the know. But NFTs have made a big splash, and at this point it's borderline irresponsible to just sit back and ignore it. Sales of music NFTs have reportedly grown 150x over the last six months, according to data from Water & Music. If this is truly where art and music are heading, shouldn't we all be informed enough to get involved, or at least join in a Zoom happy hour conversation?

The Basics: WTF are NFTs?

At the most basic level of understanding, NFT stands for Non-Fungible Token, but not everyone has "fungible" readily at the forefront of their vocabulary. Something fungible can be replicated and exchanged for goods or services, like coins. Conversely, a non-fungible item has unique properties that cannot be copied or easily used as currency, like a painting or a box of cupcakes. In the blockchain world, cryptocurrencies represent the fungible tokens and NFTs are the art, music, collectibles, and other unique items being auctioned off for hundreds of thousands, and even millions, of dollars.

An NFT can be compared to a digital certificate of authenticity. When one purchases an NFT, the customer gets proof of ownership, information that is stored on the blockchain for future owners, creators, and anyone else who might be interested in access. The NFT, which could include anything from signed vinyl to a special snapchat filter that only owners can use, cannot be copied. There can be multiple in existence or just one to begin with, but no one can create replications, something which was previously impossible when it comes to digital art.

NFTs x Musicians

Several artists are taking advantage of the NFT boom to great success. In March, Kings of Leon became the first band to release a new album as an NFT. Since then, the band has grossed over \$2 million in sales. Although this is the most mainstream and conventional use of NFTs to date, several other musicians serve as great case studies to explore the possibilities.

When GRAMMY-winning producer RAC was about to release his third LP, he was leaning towards releasing a vinyl version. Although releasing cassette tapes was not part of the major rollout plan, RAC decided to partner with the crypto-driven marketplace ZORA to create a \$TAPE token that was linked to a limited-edition cassette tape. They created 100 tapes, and therefore 100 \$TAPE tokens, and set the starting price at the crypto equivalent to \$20. People were able to buy and sell the tokens, but at any point a purchaser could redeem the token for the physical product, receive a cassette tape in the mail, and the quantity of \$TAPE available would drop by one to signify there was one less redeemable token in existence. On the first day, the token value went from \$20 to \$950. It even hit \$4,800 for a brief moment months later, making it the most expensive cassette tape in history. While expensive cassettes in 2021 are newsworthy on their own, the most interesting thing about this experiment is that the market was effectively determining how much the product was worth. RAC set the original price, but demand caused the fluctuation.

memBrain *STORM Report* Alum Tory Lanez released three of his new tracks as NFTs. The rapper, in collaboration with a blockchain company called Bondly.Finance, created 450 song tokens, all of which included a chance to meet and greet the star

virtually. The token sold out in two minutes, and within 24 hours had earned \$500,000. Half a million dollars in income was generated from the sale of 450 song downloads and meet-and-greets, using songs that were already going to be released to the public.

Another artist making waves in the world of NFTs is Grimes (who graced the cover of the *STORM Report* in December 2015). Earlier this year, Grimes auctioned off \$5.8M in NFTs within 20 minutes. That same weekend, DJ 3lau was the first to release album-holding NFTs. In rereleasing his 2018 album *Ultraviolet*, he made close to \$12 million in 24 hours and made history at the same time. In a statement following the frenzy, 3lau said, “I’m beyond excited to present the first tokenized album on a direct-to-collector platform built by Origin Protocol. This marks a major turning point in the NFT space; creators will have maximum flexibility in issuing digital assets to fans.”

However, this begs the question: Are NFTs only accessible and profitable tools for those who already have massive, loyal fan bases? Non-fungible tokens are being discussed as the solution for artists who are struggling financially, but much of what we’re seeing is big stars ascending to even bigger heights. Although there may well be a future where NFTs help emerging artists profit more off of their own work, it is important to note that most of the accomplishments we are seeing are among the elite few.

How NFTs Could Change the Music Industry

Many of the big industry changes we have to look forward to when it comes to the rise of NFTs come from the smart contract, a result of storing ownership on the blockchain. Smart contracts basically allow the creators of NFTs to write in certain rules, including but not limited to artists receiving a portion of the profit from every subsequent trade or limiting the number of times a token can be transferred.

Two of the most revolutionary applications for the music industry are happening in the live event sector, an area that has been put on the back burner for the last year. Thanks to smart contracts, booking could soon be done using NFT technology. Smart contracts allow the users to execute payments automatically and instantly as soon as contractual obligations are fulfilled. On a small scale, this means you book party entertainment, digitally sign the contract, and release the funds to your entertainer as soon as they finish the gig. On a large scale, this could mean a change in how venues, performers, and vendors financially interact.

There is a world where smart contracts could also eliminate scalping. A start-up called Yellowheart has made it their mission to eradicate scalping and shift the power back to

fans and artists. They write rules for each ticket into the smart contract, then sell them as NFTs in a limited number that correlates to the number of seats. Each individual seat has its own contract with unbreakable rules about how much the seat costs originally, how much it can be resold for, and how many times it can be resold. They can also dictate where the sales of these tickets go, working towards a more transparent division of profits between venues, promoters, artists, agencies, labels, and the like.

In the music industry, contracts often remind us of copyright, blurring the lines of legal jargon. And smart contracts are no exception. In fact, in the last couple of weeks NFTs have begun dealing in copyright. On March 18th, UK artist Big Zuu sold 75% of the rights to a song on his forthcoming album, divided up into several different chunks and wrapped up into NFTs. This means that each NFT owner will receive royalties on the song direct to their ethereum wallet anytime a profit is made. Taylor Bennett, Chance the Rapper’s brother, is following suit, selling 75% of the rights to one of his recordings through NFTs as well. Both creators retain 25%. This is huge, not just because it means transparency when it comes to profit from songs that we haven’t seen before, but because fans can now invest directly in music as an asset. This is the first instance of what could be millions of artists allowing fans to own a piece of their catalog, however small.

NFT Considerations

Although there are some clear benefits for the industry as a whole when it comes to this newly popular technology, there is one important global consideration. A very recent addition to the NFT conversation, it has been brought to the public’s attention that the environmental impact of selling NFTs could be detrimental. According to a recent study, the average NFT has a carbon footprint similar to a month’s worth of energy use from the average EU resident. *Wired* claims that in one instance, the 10 seconds it took for cryptocurrency website Nifty Gateway to process the necessary information used up 8.7 megawatts of energy – which is similar to how much electricity one household uses in a year.

There is also a disparity in who has the ability to purchase or even sell NFTs. There are clearly still problematic dynamics of race, class, power, and gender that are shaping conversations around what needs to evolve in order for the technology to matter in a broader context.

As with any new technology, we’re seeing pros and cons. There is promise, but not yet a substantial enough record to predict where NFTs may take us in the future. However, it is clear that they are an important piece of the conversation after this year of forced innovation for the music industry, and ignoring them won’t make them go away.

STORM TRACKER

Tracking Our STORM Report Alumni!



ANDRA DAY

(STORM No. 10)

Singer **Andra Day** has had a breakthrough year in the world of acting. This year, she received an Oscar nomination for Best Lead Actress for her work in *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*. We can't wait to see what comes next!



H.E.R.

(STORM No. 50)

The STORM Report is sweeping the Oscars this year! Following her win at the GRAMMY's this year, **H.E.R.** has been nominated for Best Original Song at the Oscars for "Fight for You" from *Judas and the Black Messiah*. 2021 is proving to be a big year for the R&B star.



ST. VINCENT

(STORM No. 16)

Almost 4 years after the release of her last album *Masseduction*, **St. Vincent** is back with a new album! *Daddy's Home* is dropping May 14th, and if her recent SNL performance is any indication, this is one to get excited about!

NFL DRAFT CONCERT SERIES

April 29-May 1, 2021

This year's 3-day NFL Draft will take place in Cleveland from April 29th-May 1st, starting with the Jacksonville Jaguars at #1 overall and closing with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers at #259. The draft's concert series will feature performances by Kings of Leon, Black Pumas, and Machine Gun Kelly.

STORM FORECAST

Events And Happenings For Your Radar

CANNES LIONS GOES 100% VIRTUAL

June 21-25, 2021

After cancelling entirely in 2020 due to the pandemic, Cannes Lions will be run as a fully digital experience for 2021. The annual festival of creativity will return to its awards programming and is launching Lions Membership in May which vows to be "the world's largest creative network of people and businesses to drive professional, personal and societal progress through creativity." As a bonus, members will receive complimentary access to Cannes Lions Live as part of their membership. Sign us up!

MOVIE THEATER MAGIC

Movie theaters are beginning to reopen, and just in time to catch some highly anticipated blockbusters! On April 23rd, *MORTAL KOMBAT* hits the big screen. On May 28th, don't miss *CRUELLA*, the new adaptation of the classic 101 Dalmations villain. And on June 11th, Lin Manuel Miranda's *IN THE HEIGHTS* debuts both in theaters and on HBO Max.

RECORD STORE DAY 2021

June 12th, 2021

In an effort to bring business to independent record stores, record store day is an annual coordinated drop of new music and special editions available at your local shop. This year's release includes work from Machine Gun Kelly, ACDC, and Jon Batiste

COMING TO A SMALL SCREEN

Streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, Disney+, Apple TV+, Peacock, HBO Max and Showtime are all bringing exciting new content to homes starting in May and June. Among our most anticipated must-see TV shows are *The Upshaws* starring Mike Epps and Wanda Sykes (May 12 on Netflix), the much-anticipated series, *The Underground Railroad* which is an adaptation of Colson Whitehead's acclaimed novel (May 14 on Amazon Prime), and *Loki* which picks up with Asgard's exiled trickster god after escaping through time in *AVENGERS: ENDGAME* (June 11, Disney+).

STORM WARNING

The 20 Artists On Our Radar

Listen to STORM REPORT artists on:



Watch STORM REPORT artists on:



STORM has a new formula!

Artists are now given a score out of 100 that takes several factors of music success into account, including streaming, social media influence, and industry support.

Click on the Spotify and YouTube icons next to each artist on the chart for featured audio tracks and video performances.

Also, check out our comprehensive Spotify playlist and YouTube playlist by clicking on the buttons above.

SYMBOL KEY

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Spotify
- YouTube
- Genre
- Similar Artists

RANK	ARTIST	AUDIO/VIDEO	LABEL	TARGET DEMO	SPOTIFY MONTHLIES
1	JP SAXE		Arista Records	20-Somethings, Young Professionals, 30-Somethings	12M
2	JVKE		Independent	Teenagers, 20-Somethings	4.9M
3	ANDREW JANNAKOS		Sony Music Nashville	20-Somethings, Young Professionals	1.3M
4	ABHI THE NOMAD		Undercurrent	20-Somethings, Young Professionals	1M
5	MEHRO		Heroine Music Group	20-Somethings, Young Professionals	521K
6	WOLF		Poorchoice Music	Teenagers, 20-Somethings	444K
7	AMBRÉ		Roc Nation Records	20-Somethings, Young Professionals	438K
8	JAX		Atlantic	Teenagers, 20-Somethings, Young Professionals	316K
9	OLIVE AMUN		Independent	20-Somethings, Young Professionals	220K
10	LENII		Independent	Teenagers, 20-Somethings	216K
11	MIMI BAY		Record Company TEN	Teenagers, 20-Somethings	215K
12	ALEXANDER BIGGS		Independent	20-Somethings, Young Professionals	202K
13	TESSELLATED		Independent	20-Somethings, Young Professionals, 30-Somethings	181K
14	SAVANNAH SGRO		Sandlot Records	Teenagers, 20-Somethings	101K
15	REILEY		Atlantic	Teenagers, 20-Somethings, Young Professionals	97.6K
16	KATY J PEARSON		Heavenly Recordings	20-Somethings, Young Professionals, 30-Somethings	96.4K
17	TORI TEMPLET		Independent	Teenagers, 20-Somethings	81K
18	MI\$HNRZ		Los Records	20-Somethings, Young Professionals	49.7K
19	COUCH		Independent	20-Somethings, Young Professionals	42.1K
20	MICHAL LEAH		Independent	Teenagers, 20-Somethings	23K



1 JP SAXE

 19.5K  42K  271K  Pop, Indie  FINNEAS, Andy Grammer

This GRAMMY-nominated Canadian singer-songwriter is well on his way to becoming one of the biggest artists of the next few years. With successful collaborations with Julia Michaels and Marren Morris, soothing vocals, and striking musicality, JP Saxe is certainly one to watch.

Photo by Nirav Patel ©2021

2 JVKE



🐦 3.8K 🔊 1.1K 📷 121K 🎧 Pop, Electro-Pop

© Charlie Puth, Ed Sheeran

After a meteoric rise following his the release of "Upside Down," a song built out of other viral TikTok videos, JVKE is keeping the momentum going. The 20-year-old who credits his mother as a producer is churning out electro-pop hits with no signs of slowing down. Photo by Brandon Pugsley ©2021



3 ANDREW JANNAKOS

🐦 2K 📘 33.4K 📷 59.9K 🎧 Country © Jordan Davis, Luke Combs

Georgia-native Andrew Jannakos is the newest country sensation to come out of TikTok. Jannakos first hit the scene with a stint on *The Voice*, but years later he has finally found his footing, garnering 15 million streams in one month for his breakout single "Gone Too Soon."

Photo by Matthew Berinato ©2020

4 ABHI THE NOMAD

"Naturally, a sense of dislocation and alienation permeates his music, which finds a spot on the spectrum between hip-hop and bluesy pop while plumbing serious emotional depths."

—Stephen Thompson
NPR

🐦 6.2K 📘 20.6K 📷 34.8K 🎧 Alternative Rap, Hip-Hop, Pop 🎧 Chance the Rapper, Lupe Fiasco

This multi-instrumentalist is bending genres and the music industry itself. With a passion for funk-pop rhythms, melodic hooks, and catchy rap verses and an eye on upcoming trends, not just in the music industry but across tech as well, it's safe to say Abhi the Nomad is ahead of the curve and ready to bring listeners the next big thing. Photo by Levi Thompson ©2020



ROBERT'S
TOP PICK!

5 MEHRO

🐦 2.5K 📺 2.4K 📷 196K 🎧 Indie, Indie Pop 🎵 Bon Iver, Death Cab for Cutie

Singer-songwriter mehro draws on indie, folk, electronica, and ambient sounds to create beautiful tracks. He delivers bittersweet lyrics with breathtaking falsetto and impeccable guitar. Photo by Russell Tandy ©2021

In a time when Indie Pop reigns supreme, Wolf is a stand out. Not only is her music catchy and her self-made visuals engaging, but she is dedicated to building a community with her fans including a Levi's collab where for every pair given to a fan two were donated to a women's shelter. Photo by Julia Wolf ©2020

🐦 1.6K 📺 N/A 📷 14.8K 🎧 Indie Pop, Pop 🎵 Sia, Alec Benjamin

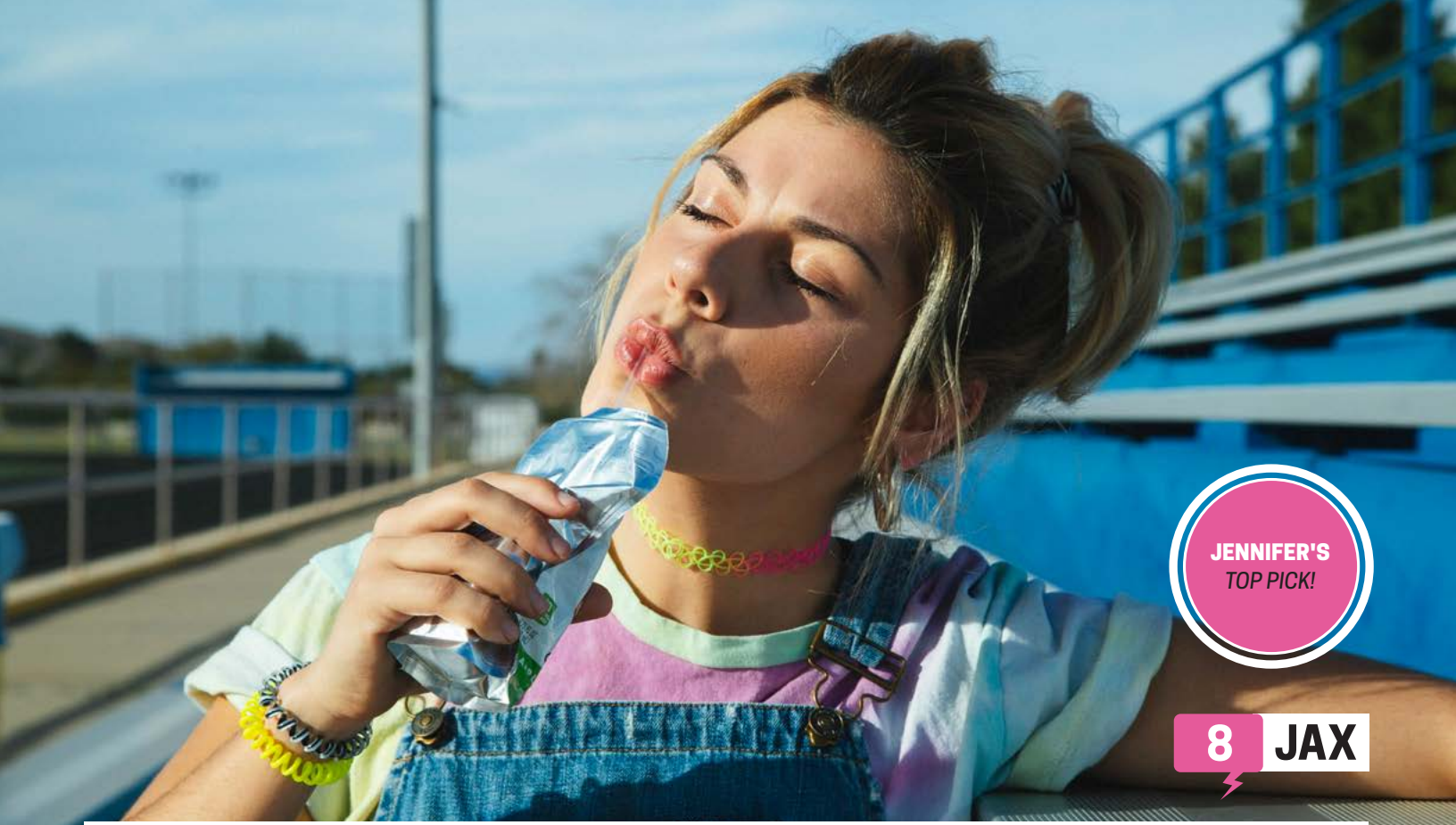
6 WOLF



7 AMBRÉ



🐦 8.6K 📺 1.4K 📷 60.5K 🎧 R&B 🎵 Brandy, Kehlani
Ambré's sultry vocals, artful harmonies, and punchy lyrics create an audio effect that pulls you in. She demonstrates incredible range jumping from slow jams to playful tracks with funk elements and back again. Photo by Sharon Marrero ©2020



**JENNIFER'S
TOP PICK!**

8 JAX

🐦 N/A 📺 78K 📷 261K 🎧 Pop 🎵 Julia Michaels, FLETCHER
Jax is yet another example of the power of TikTok. After spending quarantine writing and posting satirical jingles, Jax has amassed 1.9 Million fans and 38.1 Million likes on the platform alone. Photo by Gregg Braverijah ©2021

In short couple years since Olive Amun started his musical journey, he has honed his songwriting skills. He creates songs with depth, which manage to be both personal and relatable to a broader audience, packaged as anything from ballads to bangers and in between. Photo by Emilio Dumar ©2021
🐦 44 📺 359 📷 1.4K 🎧 Alt Hip-Hop, Indie Pop 🎵 Mac Miller, Dominic Fike

9 OLIVE AMUN





10 LENII

 680  5.7K  19.8K  Alt Pop

© Zara Larsson, Ellie Goulding

Lenii is multi-talented to say the least. A singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and producer, she is comfortable across genres and it's leading to great success with catchy tracks and a steadily growing fan base. Photo by the artist ©2021



11 MIMI BAY

5.8K N/A 52.2K Alt Pop, Acoustic Clairo, Soccer Mommy
mimi bay first found success with her acoustic ukelele songs, but she has recently found her sound with sultry alternative tracks. With layered harmonies and her lilting voice, mimi bay pulls her listeners in. Photo by Ida Blom ©2021

Alexander Biggs combines acoustic guitar, soft piano, and hushed vocals to create hauntingly beautiful tracks. His sound is enveloping and calming, drawing listeners in to the world he creates. Photo By Mike Ridley ©2021
 573 2.9K 2.9K Indie Folk The Paper Kites, Passenger



12 ALEXANDER BIGGS

13 TESSELLATED

3.6K 587 23.8K

Island Pop, Reggae

Skip Marley, Koffee

Tessellated, born Joshua Meeks, is a Jamaican songwriter and producer, whose career has taken off since his song "I Learnt Some Jazz Today" was featured in an Apple AirPods commercial. Tessellated's unique brand of Island Pop combines Reggae elements with familiar pop sounds and the result impossibly catchy.

Photo provided by management ©2021

GRACE'S
TOP PICK!

"The Kingston, Jamaica-born, LA-based producer, songwriter and artist makes music that teeters and borrows from the sonic palette of reggae, dancehall, funk, pop, and for his newest visual, jazz."

—Sharene Taylor
Complex

14 SAVANNAH SGRO



🐦 491 📺 1.3K 📷 5K 🎧 Indie Pop
© VÉRITÉ, Phoebe Ryan

Savannah Sgro specializes in sad girl pop. Her music is full of emotion and crescendo all wrapped up in a pop music package. With lyrics so relatable, it's no surprise that her music has garnered over 30 million streams across all platforms.

Photo by Phoebe Neily ©2021

15 REILEY

🐦 919 📺 2.6K 📷 3.4K 🎧 Dance, Indie, Techno
🎧 Kraftwerk, Electric Six

Reiley is a major part of the TikTok boom, jumping from 10 million views to over 100 million likes and counting. Although he has only released one track, his combination of cinematic fashion, theatrical delivery, and charisma mean he's on his way to not just a successful music career but to securing his place in pop culture. Photo provided by Atlantic Records ©2021

"TikTok sensation Reiley is officially pivoting to music with his debut single, "Let It Ring"—and it's already historic. The track notably features the first-ever licensed sample of the official iPhone ringtone, transforming that recognizable jingle into a pop song about ignoring all the lovers who've wronged you."

—Justin Moran
PAPER Mag



16 KATY J PEARSON

🐦 1.7K 📺 3.3K 📷 5.3K
🎧 Indie, Country Pop
🎧 Stevie Nicks, Pat Benetar

Katy J Pearson is a timeless artist, combining a unique voice with effortless pop hooks. Her tracks are reminiscent of 70s folk with a modern twist.

Photo by Seren Carys ©2020



🐦 N/A 📺 N/A 📷 8K 🎧 Indie Pop 🎵 © Lennon Stella, Mallrat

Tori Templet uses soft vocals and catchy beats to solidify her standing as an independent artist. Passionate about building her own career, Templet has been releasing dynamic singles for the last year, proving her consistency, dedication, and talent. Photo by Bailey West ©2021



18 Mi\$HNRZ

🐦 280 📘 1.7K 📷 3.7K 🎧 Urbano Latino, Latin, Pop 🎧 Ozuna, J Balvin

Mi\$HNRZ, pronounced missionaries, is a product of the Latin music explosion. The bilingual duo weave 90s nostalgia and new wave vibes to create something both cohesive and catchy. Photo by Matthew Rey ©2021

Couch has made it their goal to reshape familiar pop tropes in fresh ways. By pulling from funk, soul, R&B, jazz, and rock, the group is able to leverage nostalgic elements for an end result that is innovative and unique. Photo by Zoe Salvucci ©2019



🐦 157 📘 1.1K 📷 3.4K 🎧 Funk, Pop, Soul 🎧 Lake Street Dive, Lawrence

19 COUCH





20 MICHAL LEAH

 337  N/A  24.7K  Bedroom Pop, Indie Pop  St. Vincent, King Princess

Michal Leah has a deep voice that fills the room. Elegantly weaving soul elements into her own brand of bedroom pop, the singer is quickly picking up momentum. She may only have two tracks on Spotify but if those are any indication, there are huge hits on the horizon. Photo by Andrew Grove ©2021

