

Your monthly  
music forecast!

*Artist and Brand Partnerships*

*Grace Vanderwaal*

*Luke Combs*

*Whethan*

*MUNA*

*Youngr*

*and more*

 memBrain

# THE STORM REPORT

ISSUE NO. 43  
MARCH 2017

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**On the Cover:**

*Lil' Yachty. Photo provided by Publicist*

# 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.

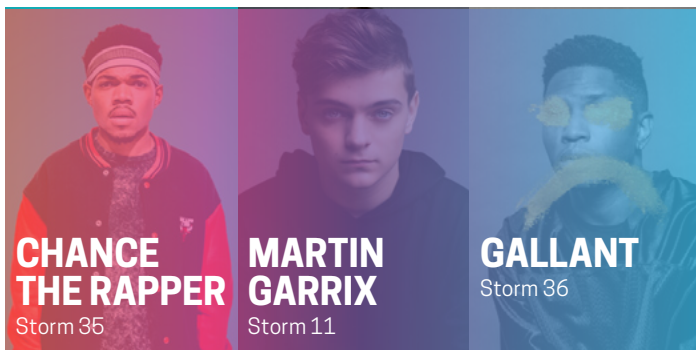
*How do we know?*

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

Hello STORM Readers!

This issue of The STORM Report explores the evolution of artist and brand partnerships. From avoiding the stigma of “selling out” to acting as creative collaborators, artists have evolved their role in the artist/brand relationship significantly over the past decade.

Featured on the cover this month is emerging Hip Hop artist Lil’ Yachty, who has had brand partnerships for as long as he has had a career in music. From appearing in a Sprite commercial with LeBron James, to becoming the face of Nautica’s special collection for Urban Outfitters, to his recent commercial for Target with Carly Rae Jepsen (which aired during the during 59th Annual Grammy Awards last month), Lil’ Yachty represents the next generation of music talent – and brand/artist partnerships.



Jennifer Sullivan  
President, memBrain  
Editor-in-Chief, The STORM Report

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Photo: Rachel Murray / Getty Images

## From Selling Out to Celebrated: Artist and Brand Partnerships

By Malorie McCall, Jennifer Sullivan, and Ian Hecht

It used to be that the worst label an artist could have was that of a “sellout.” During the ‘60’s, rock and roll was about staying true, and you’d be hard pressed to find advertisements featuring Led Zeppelin or The Rolling Stones. Fast forward to now, and times have changed. Just last year, The Rolling Stones’ music video for “Ride ‘Em on Down” prominently featured a 65’ Mustang. As musicians recoup costs or gain sponsorship dollars by featuring drinks, cars, clothes or other items in their music videos and songs, and increasingly take on the mantle of creative collaborators, the label “sellout” no longer holds weight or relevance.

For brands, partnering with music artists is a way to connect with their consumers on an emotional level. Brands also benefit because artists can use their influence, particularly via social and other digital channels, to reach fans that might ignore traditional advertising. Thanks to more tangible sales data, it has become more possible for brands to measure how a partnership with an artist can drive sales. For example, Warner Music’s Charli XCX worked with Unilever’s deodorant brand “Impulse” in 2016 to design two limited-edition spin-offs, “Rock & Love” and “Vanilla Kisses,” increasing the brand’s revenues by 462% in the first month compared with the same period the previous year. Charli XCX also helped to double Impulse’s Instagram followers during the campaign.

As the business model for making money in the music industry evolves, record labels are behaving more like consumer-goods companies – using insights and available data to understand their artists’ audiences. Truly understanding who the fans of an artists are – their interests, activities, and more - provides potential partner brands with tangible information that make a financial commitment more strategic.

The fashion industry has a well-documented history connected to music – from fans emulating the style of their favorite artists to performances at the Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show to artist exclusives for retail chains, fashion and music are popular bedfellows. Swedish “fast fashion” retailer H&M is a great example of a company

that embraces music to create exciting moments in popular culture. In 2012, the dark pop crooner Lana Del Rey collaborated with the retailer to be the face of their fall women’s range including a promotional video where the singer sang a sultry rendition of the classic song Blue Velvet - a cover that would later end up on her EP. But the brand didn’t stop there. The following year, Beyoncé was picked to star in H&M’s summer ad campaign - and fans flocked to the store to buy the clothes they saw Queen Bey wearing in posters. Their choice for their Spring 2015 campaign star was British singer, songwriter and drummer Florrie. As Florrie was only just emerging at the time, it shows that H&M is bold enough to take a strong stance on an artist and support artists big and small. The up-and-comer not only starred in print ads but debuted the video for her single “Too Young to Remember” on H&M’s site.

Last year, Vans released a limited-edition pair of Van’s with exclusive detailing and custom design, with Grammy winning band Cage the Elephant. The Parisian label Kitsuné went a step further when they decided to combine their fashion house with a record label. They signed up-and-coming acts who worked alongside the label to perform their material in videos featuring clothes from the Spring/Summer 2013 collection. Daft Punk was asked by Saint Laurent Paris to produce music inspired by American blues musician David “Junior” Kimbrough for his collection. In 2009, Dior Homme’s 2009 catwalk show was accompanied by an exclusive soundtrack produced by Justice. But sometimes the artist reached out to the brand. Justin Timberlake tapped Tom Ford to work as his creative director during Timberlake’s third studio album. Ford then helped create the fashion and look that JT used to brand his album the 20/20 Experience.

The historic Kanye West + Adidas collaboration is an example of a fashion partnership in which both parties have achieved their goals. The YEEZY line is not Kanye’s first foray into footwear, after designing the “Red Octobers” for

Nike, Kanye reportedly wanted royalties to provide for his family. When Nike said no and Adidas said yes, he quickly switched alliances. YEEZY Season 1's greatest success was the YEEZY Boost line, which sold out instantly despite a dedicated app to facilitate demand. While Adidas has since distanced themselves from his apparel, they have continued to produce YEEZY footwear, spurring their share of the secondary shoe market to increase by 30%, and their share of the North American footwear market by 5%.

In 2016, Grammy award-winning producer Alex Da Kidd paired with IBM's Watson technology to collaborate on a song. IBM's Watson analyzed millions of lines of text from Wikipedia articles, New York Times front pages, social media, and more, finding the most pervasive themes and uncovering the way people felt about them. Watson also analyzed the lyrics of over 26,000 Billboard Top 100 songs to uncover patterns of song structure and emotion. To speak directly to Alex, Watson presented these insights as colorful map of data and words, inspiring Alex to settle on heartbreak as the theme for their creation. Alex went on to write "Not Easy," tapping X Ambassadors to write the foundation of the song, featuring Elle King and Wiz Khalifa. The collaboration was widely considered a success due to the ground-breaking way in which Watson contributed to Alex's creative process.

The mutual benefits of an artist and brand relationship are ever evolving – but have become more acceptable and even expected. While endorsement deals and product placement remain popular vehicles for artist/brand relationships, the most successful partnerships are collaborative to the extent that there is an authentic connection made from the consumer/fan's perspective.

"Selling out," as it was previously defined, implied that an artist was somehow compromising his/her vision in return for a big payday. Now that traditional advertising and media channels are waning in influence, brands are seeking new ways to reach and convert consumers. Music is one of, if not the most, powerful forces – connecting on an emotional level. As brands continue to explore new ways to reach consumers and artists seek new ways to rise above the din of an endless stream of new music – look for the boundaries between artists and brands to continue to blur in the foreseeable future.

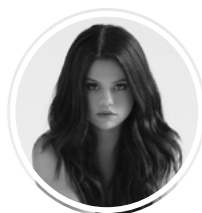
The STORM rages on for our alumni artists. Here's what they were up to this month!



**Purity Ring**  
(STORM No. 1)

### PURITY RING

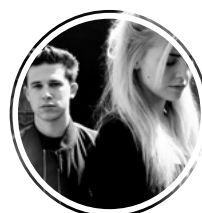
Purity Ring and Run the Jewels may seem like a strange pair but on April 29th and 30th, Fort Worth will see the two co-headline the Fortress Festival. They'll be supported by other acts such as Flying Lotus and Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.



**Selena Gomez**  
(STORM No. 3)

### SELENA GOMEZ

After taking a break from the spotlight for mental reasons, Selena Gomez returned to the public eye with a heartfelt speech at the AMA's. Now, the singer returns to headphones and headlines with her latest release – a collab with Kygo titled "It Ain't Me" released on February 16.



**London Grammar**  
(STORM No. 10)

### LONDON GRAMMAR

The indie-darling three-piece released 'Big Picture,' a characteristically dark and powerful single. The release, which came after a January release of 'Rooting For You,' is a gear up to a yet-to-be-titled album expected later this year.

## TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

From April 19th to the 30th, every tastemaker and culture snob's favorite festival comes to New York. The Tribeca Film Festival spans across film, culture and art with over 500 film screenings. The whole month offers talks and events including a conversation between Patti Smith and Ethan Hawke, sneak screenings of 'Grace and Frankie' and lectures from some of the industry's best.

## THE FATE OF THE FRANCHISE

It's hard to believe that kids born when the first Fast and the Furious movie was released are now getting their driver permits. The beloved franchise's first movie came out in 2001 and April will bring it to a close. The 8th and final film, The Fate of The Furious, is set for release on April 14th and will be the first film without Paul Walker's character, Brian O'Connor.

## COLD WAR KIDS LOSE A KID

This time last year, it was announced that lead guitarist Dann Gallucci would be leaving Cold War Kids after 4 years; his replacement was We Barbarians' David Quon. But it was only a matter of months after the loss that we gained the news of their sixth album. L.A. Devine, set to release on April 2, was preceded by the single "Love Is Mystical." It will be the first album with Capitol Records.

## TAKING SXSW BY STORM

SXSW returns to Austin this March 10-19, and as usual, the festival is stacked to the brim with must-see speakers, panels, and performances. Among the many tech, entertainment, and political luminaries speaking, featured speakers include astronaut Buzz Aldrin, Senator Cory Booker, John Cena, and Joe Biden. STORM Alumni performing through the festival include Aquilo (Issue 34), A\$AP Ferg (Issue 7), Diet Cig (Issue 37), FRENSHIP (Issue 39), Jain (Issue 37), Lo Moon (Issue 42), Sam Fermin (Issue 35), and SOHN (Issue 14).

# THE 20 ARTISTS ON OUR RADAR

Rank	Artist	Audio/Video	Label	Target Demo	Score
1	GRACE VANDERWAAL	 	Columbia	Teenagers, 20-something year olds	1088
2	LUKE COMBS	 	River House Artists / Columbia	20-something year olds, 30-something year olds	1025
3	WHETHAN	 	Atlantic Recordings	20-something year olds, college students	659
4	MUNA	 	RCA Records	College students, 20-something year olds	501
5	YOUNGR	 	N/A	20-something year olds, college students	486
6	STEVE JAMES	 	Seeking Blue	20-something year olds, college students	384
7	BRANDY CLARK	 	Warner Bros. Records	20-30 year olds	339
8	LECRAE	 	Reach Records	College students, 20-something year olds	326
9	THE LAST BANDOLEROS	 	Warner Music Nashville	20-something year olds, 30-something year olds	63
10	MOOSE BLOOD	 	Hopeless Records	College students, 20-something year olds	57
11	ROBERT RANDOLPH	 	Sony Masterworks	20-something year olds, 30-something year olds	54
12	SAWYER FREDERICKS	 	N/A	Teenagers, 20-somethings	19
13	STAL	 	Sony Music France	Sony Music France	5
14	THE SHELTERS	 	Warner Bros. Records	20-something year olds, college students,	3
15	KRANE	 	N/A	20-something year olds, college students	N/A
16	SURVIVE	 	Relapse Records	20-something year olds, 30-something year olds	N/A
17	K?D	 	N/A	Late-teens, 20-something year olds	N/A
18	BRYNN ELLIOT	 	N/A	Teenagers, 20-Somethings	N/A
19	THE BEACHES	 	N/A	College students, 20-something year olds	N/A
20	PALE LUNGS	 	N/A	Teenagers, 20-something year olds	N/A

## STORM WARNING

CLICK HERE FOR









### STORM has a new formula!

Artists are now ranked by the **number of Shazams** for their most recent track, divided by the number of days that track's been available online.

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

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

## SYMBOL KEY

-  Twitter
-  Facebook
-  YouTube
-  SoundCloud
-  Genre
-  Similar Artists



# 1 GRACE VANDERWAAL

📺 249K 📺 766K 📺 645K

🔊 Pop, Acoustic, Indie-pop

© Rachel Platten, Taylor Swift, Colbie Caillat

Winner of the eleventh season of America's Got Talent (at age 12, no less), Grace VanderWaal is able to encapsulate nuanced and universal feelings in her acoustic, ukulele-filled songs.

Photo © by Janelle Shirtcliff 2016

"The EP takes you through Grace's range, touching on issues that are all-too-well-known for young people, as well as soul-stokingly beautiful medleys that almost anyone could relate to. But that's Grace for you: a jack of all trades, and a master of them, too."

— TeenVogue





## 2 LUKE COMBS

📺 35.6K 📺 109K 📺 19.8K

🔊 Country

© Eric Church, Chris Stapleton, Tim McGraw

Luke Combs masters the contemporary take on country heartbreak. He's a southern crooner with raw, husky vocals adored by country fans.

Photo © by CK photo 2016



## 3 WHETHAN

📺 8631 📺 11.5K 📺 474

🔊 Tropical House, House

© Felix Jaehn, Kygo

Whethan knows exactly how to connect with his vocalists while exhibiting his own flare. His unique brand of future bass distinguishes itself wherever it's played.

Photo © by unknown

# 4 MUNA

📺 9011 📺 10.8K 📺 9105  
🔊 Electropop, Indie-Pop  
© CHVRCHES, Halsey

After meeting in college at the University of Southern California, the trio of girls known as MUNA began creating hooky electronic pop. Their success has earned them a remix

by Tiesto, a performance at Lollapalooza 2016, and a US tour with Grouplove.

Photo © Katie McCurdy





5

## YOUNGR

📺 N/A 📺 116K 📺 19.7K

🔊 Pop, Dance

© Léon, Phoebe Ryan, LANY

Youngr uses engaging intros before switching into smooth, slow beats that are an entrancing balance between dance and indie pop; not to mention with the added bonus of relatable lyrics.

Photo © by Christoffer Rosenfeldt 2016



6

## STEVE JAMES

📺 29.4K 📺 5946 📺 N/A

🔊 Dance Pop

© Madeon, Martin Garrix

EDM wunderkind Steve James was this year's youngest Grammy nominee for co-writing/producing the title track on Justin Bieber's album Purpose. He also co-produced Martin Garrix's smash hit "In The Name of Love," and his breakout single "Renaissance" debuted at #1 on Spotify's US + Global Viral 50. Aged only 18, the sky is the limit for this young talent.

Photo © by management



7

## BRANDY CLARK

📺 35.8K 📺 52.4K 📺 11.3K

🔊 Country

© The Band Perry, Miranda Lambert, Kacey Musgraves

Brandy Clark is an example of how country women are not to be messed with. Her back-to-the-roots sound and incredible gift at lyrical story telling endears her to fans of all genres.

Photo © by Pamela Litky 2016

"Throughout her second studio album *Big Day In A Small Town* — the bigger-sounding but still beautifully detailed follow-up to her 2013 solo debut, *12 Stories* — Clark speaks for those often pushed aside within the narratives that dominate the American scene: rural people, beauty queens who've lost their youthful shine, single moms muddling through their two-shift days"

8

## LECRAE

📺 1.1M 📺 2M 📺 17.6K

🔊 Soul, Hip-Hop

© Bryson Tiller, Chris Brown, Drake

Lecrae uses smooth production with soulful hip hop to inspire, rather than brag to, his listeners. Unlike a lot of up-and-comers in the same vein, Lecrae's lyrics use honest emotion and openness to create insightful encouragement.

Photo © by Management



9

## THE LAST BANDOLEROS

📺 1291 📺 7531 📺 705

🔊 Country, Rock, Pop

© Los Lobos, The Mavericks, Dwight Yoakam

The Tex-Mex style music of The Last Bandoleros squares itself confidently inbetween country and rock for a contagiously slow but tough sound.

Photo © by Sal Ochoa 2016



"Their music caroms wildly from rock and country to conjunto and pop, adding up to a sound that's hard to pin down — and to get out of your head."

— Rolling Stone

10

## MOOSE BLOOD

📺 46K 📺 80K 📺 N/A

🔊 Pop-punk, Indie Rock, Alternative

© Relient K, Yellowcard

Moose Blood capture the evolution of emo perfectly. Taking cues from the indie scene, Moose Blood has a light rock feel with the same raw, emotional and relatable lyrics of their emo peers with an ability to vary up the tempo and vibe throughout an album.

Photo © by Phil Smithies





11

# ROBERT RANDOLPH

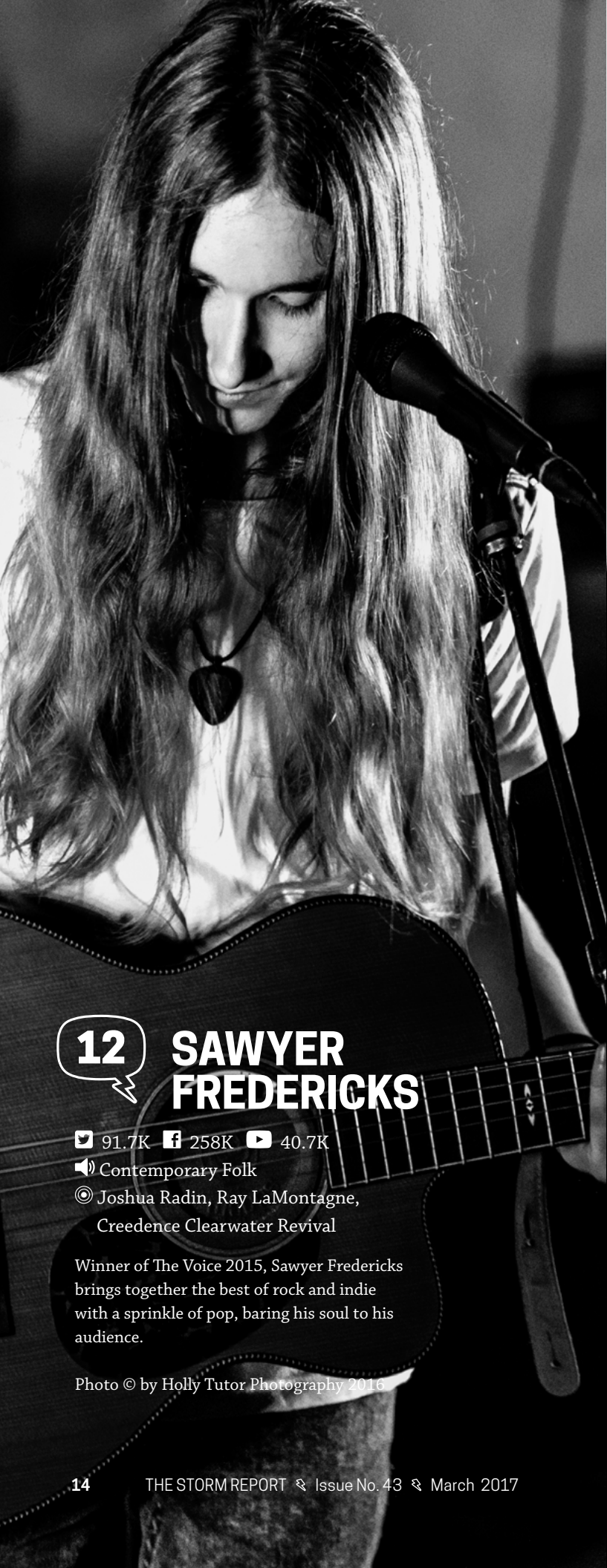
📺 19.1K 📺 98.8K 📺 184

🔊 Soul

© Dave Matthews, North Mississippi All Stars

Robert Randolph's song "Got Soul" could not be a better descriptor of his style. The technically excellent multi-instrumentalist brings the sound of classic rock and blues into the modern day with a funky but smooth sound.

Photo © by Management 2016



# 12 SAWYER FREDERICKS

📺 91.7K 📺 258K 📺 40.7K

🔊 Contemporary Folk

© Joshua Radin, Ray LaMontagne, Creedence Clearwater Revival

Winner of The Voice 2015, Sawyer Fredericks brings together the best of rock and indie with a sprinkle of pop, baring his soul to his audience.

Photo © by Holly Tutor Photography 2016

# 13 STAL

📺 413 📺 5080 📺 488

🔊 Rock, Alternative

© Sigur Ros, Explosions in the Sky

STAL may hail from France but they have the American alternative rock down cold. Their ability to weave simple beats with synth infused indie-rock choruses leaves them ready to take over the states.

Photo © by Julien Mignot 2016

# 14 THE SHELTERS

📺 11.6K 📺 119K 📺 6,867

🔊 Rock, Alternative

© The Struts, Declan McKenna, The Wild Feathers

Similar to Jet, The Shelters have a unique sound that can't quite be pinned down to a certain era. While theirs is a softer version

of rock than Jet's, the result is a refreshing, foot-tapping sound that's hard to not dance along to. Photo © by Brantley Gutierrez 2016



"With jangly Byrds-like guitars, plinking piano keys and a catchy melody that rambles along rollickingly, it's a rock anthem that would be at home on the radio decades ago and modern enough to fit in 2016."

— *Paste Magazine*

**JENNIFER'S  
TOP PICK!**



15

## KRANE

📺 26.8K 📺 13K 📺 N/A

🔊 Electronic

© San Holo, Boombox Cartel

KRANE uses the intro of his songs to emotionally engage the audience. His slow but funky sounds take influence from all instruments, rhythm guitar, bass, and even strings, creating a moody cinematic sound.

Photo © by Alex Abaunza 2016



16

## SURVIVE

📺 N/A 📺 35.3K 📺 N/A

🔊 Ambient, Electronic, Experimental

© HEALTH, Cold Cave, John Carpenter

If the X-Files and Kavinsky had a musical child, it would be SURVIVE. The masterminds behind the soundtrack to the Netflix phenomenon Stranger Things,

SURVIVE's music evokes a simple, polished and sci-fi feel perfect for the background to a kickback or an introspective night alone. Photo © by Dylan O'Connor 2016



# 17 K?D

8,062 13.4K 16

Dance, Electronic, EDM

© Flume, Porter Robinson

DJ's and producers nowadays find themselves caught in a swamp of similar artists with a trend for overcomplicating tracks to define themselves. K?D goes a different route, and breaks the mold by using dark, sparse ambient sounds to create his cinematic future bass style.

Photo © Drawn by K?D 2016

IAN'S  
TOP PICK!



# 18 BRYNN ELLIOTT

1152 13.3K 547  
Indie-Pop  
Katy Perry, Pink

Currently a student at Harvard, Brynn Elliot but has been laying the groundwork for her burgeoning music career well before arriving in Cambridge. Elliott has toured with her band and opened for major acts such as Brandi Carlile, Allen Stone and Tyler Ward. While majoring in philosophy and working on her music, Brynn will put out a series of singles this year before hitting the road again this summer. Photo © by Joseph Llanes 2016

# 19 THE BEACHES

3,124 6,790 362  
Rock, Indie Rock, Alternative  
Halestorm, Dead Sara, Gossip

The girls of the Beaches make empowering, hard indie-rock. They are empowering not just because they are girls, but because their technical and lyrical skill mean they're soon-to-be rockstars.

Photo © by Sabrina DiRenzo 2016



"Pale Lungs aren't just a byproduct of the Nashville punk scene, they're an active part of its continued growth."

— Noisey

# 20 PALE LUNGS

136 1,471 N/A  
Pop-Punk, Indie Rock  
The Front Bottoms, Brand New, Dashboard Confessional

The world of emo/pop-punk didn't die, it just adapted. Pale Lungs perfectly capture the infectious world of the 2000's in a way that fans of modern indie-pop desperately need.

Photo © by Nolan Knight 2016



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Digital Music News		-
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