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BUSINESS NEWS 01/10/2025

Executive Turntable: Disney Veteran Dips for Sphere CFO Role, Plus Live Nation Hires Pro to Expand Country

Also this week: SiriusXM's general counsel plots his retirement, Jody Gerson joins the Project Healthy Minds board and Salem hires Trump's former campaign manager.

BY MARC SCHNEIDER



Robert Langer Courtesy Photo

Dust off that old Pioneer or Thorens — there's a guy below who can set it up for you — and check out the year's first edition of Executive Turntable, Billboard's compendium of promotions, hirings, exits and firings — and all things in between — across the music business.

There's a full slate of personnel news this week, which of course has been dominated by the devastating fires across Los Angeles. We have a running [list \(https://www.billboard.com/business/business-news/la-wildfire-relief-music-workers-resource-guide-1235873344/\)](https://www.billboard.com/business/business-news/la-wildfire-relief-music-workers-resource-guide-1235873344/) of organizations offering relief for musicians and music industry professionals, plus a [tally \(https://www.billboard.com/business/business-news/la-wildfires-list-canceled-postponed-music-events-1235872417/\)](https://www.billboard.com/business/business-news/la-wildfires-list-canceled-postponed-music-events-1235872417/) of affected industry events. More coverage on the wildfires can be found [here \(https://www.billboard.com/t/la-wildfires/\)](https://www.billboard.com/t/la-wildfires/).

Sphere Entertainment appointed **Robert Langer** as executive vice president, chief financial officer and treasurer, effective Jan. 13. Langer, with over 30 years of experience, will work closely with the management team to support the company's long-term direction, providing strategic financial insights and overseeing financial matters, strategy and business development. He will be based in Burbank and report to CEO James L. Dolan. Langer arrives from The Walt Disney Company, where he most recently served as head of corporate strategy and financial planning. During his 25-year tenure at Disney, he held various financial leadership roles, including CFO of Disney ABC Television Group and Disney Consumer Products. He also has significant global experience, having served as country manager for Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Dolan expressed confidence in Langer, saying the UCLA grad's "multifaceted finance and strategy experience across the media and entertainment industry, both domestic and international, will be an asset as we continue to pursue our long-term goals and advance key initiatives."

Trending on Billboard

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Live Nation appointed **Milly Olykan** as senior vp of artist development and global touring, starting in January. Reporting to Omar Al-Joulani, president of touring, Olykan will spearhead the global expansion of Live Nation's Country

and Americana strategy. In this capacity, she'll work with promoters worldwide to identify new touring opportunities, strengthen artist relationships and drive growth in the international country music market. Olykan arrives from the Country Music Association (CMA), where since 2018 she served as vp of international relations and development, and also as interim festival director. At CMA, she expanded the international strategy, built industry networks and increased global awareness of country music. Previously, Olykan was Vice President of Live Music and Major Arena Events at AEG Presents in the UK, co-founding the Country to Country (C2C) festival and establishing country touring for AEG Presents. Al-Joulani praised Olykan's experience and connections across the wide worlds of country and Americana, saying they "make her a great asset to support our efforts in continuing to expand touring of those genres worldwide."

Patrick Donnelly, longtime executive vp, general counsel and secretary of **SiriusXM**, has telegraphed a slow-burn retirement after 27 years. According to a filing with the SEC, Donnelly's employment agreement was allowed to expire earlier this month, however, he will remain a full-time employee until April 4. Afterward, he'll transition to a part-time role through the last day of the year, assisting with the handover of his responsibilities. During the full-time period, Donnelly will maintain his current salary of \$1,025,000 while continuing in his existing roles until a successor is appointed. Afterward, he'll transition to an advisory role for the new GC. In the part-time stretch, he'll provide continued support, with compensation including a pro-rated 2025 bonus and part-time salary of \$615,000 through year-end. He joined the company in May 1998 following stints at ITT Corporation and Simpson Thacher & Bartlett.

Warner Music Belgium hired **Youssef Chellak** as the label's new general manager, effective immediately. Based in Brussels, Chellak will report to Niels Walboomers, president of recorded music and publishing for WMG Benelux. His role focuses on expanding Warner Music Belgium's domestic roster, fostering innovative collaborations and driving cultural curiosity within the team. Chellak brings over 20 years of experience in the music industry, having started around 2000 as a producer, executive producer and publisher, collaborating with artists across Belgium, France, and Germany. In 2018, he

became GM of Top Notch Belgium, where he developed artists like Dikke and Stikstof. Most recently, he served as A&R director at Universal Music Belgium, nurturing talents such as Aaron Blommaert and Berre. Chellak expressed enthusiasm for Warner Music's entrepreneurial culture and commitment to supporting Belgian artists. Walboomers praised Chellak's "proven track record, culturally curious approach and inspiring vision for the local music industry" for making him ideal for the role. "I'm confident that he'll create an inspiring environment where local artists, emerging as the voices of their generation, can collaborate, excel and reach their full creative potential," he said.

iHeartMedia elevated **Nicky Sparrow** to executive vp of multicultural sales and **Dee Dee Faison** to vp of multicultural partnerships and alliances, effective immediately. Both report to Tony Coles, president of multicultural business and development. Sparrow will use iHeart's radio, podcast and events assets to drive results for advertising partners while focusing on The Black Effect and My Cultura Podcast Networks. With a 25-year tenure at iHeartMedia, she previously served as svp of multicultural sales and is active in philanthropy. Faison, with 24 years in media and entertainment, will expand iHeartMedia's multicultural initiatives, having joined the radio giant in 2020 as director of client success and has worked with major clients such as Toyota and McDonald's. "These talented leaders bring a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective that will be instrumental in driving our mission forward of connecting our clients and partners with iHeartMedia's multicultural audiences," said Coles.



Jody Gerson // John Michael Fulton

BOARD SHORTS: Project Healthy Minds, a mental health tech non-profit, named UMPG chairman and CEO **Jody Gerson** to its board of directors. As the first woman to lead a global music company, Gerson aims to forge pacts within the music and entertainment industries to enhance access to mental health resources. “Anxiety and other mental health issues often walk hand-in-hand with artistry, and it’s my responsibility to let the creative people I work with know that they don’t have to deal with these issues on their own,” Gerson said. “In turn, artists can help to publicly dispel the notion that surviving in an often lonely and isolating world is just a matter of toughening up. Life is not easy, and seeking care for good mental health needs to be both destigmatized and encouraged.” Gerson joins a board that includes Carson Daly, Lisa Licht, Kalen Jackson and Sally Yates, among others ... **The Copyright Alliance** added two new board members on Jan. 1: **Alicia Calzada** from the National Press Photographers Association and **Jessica Richard** from the Recording Industry Association of America. Both will serve two-year terms ... **Brian Magerkurth** has been appointed chairman of the board for **SongwritingWith:Soldiers**. A board member for the past four years, Magerkurth succeeds Gary Leopold, who has served as chairman since 2018. Leopold will remain actively involved with the organization as a director.

Ben Sharman is the new director of booking at **Co-op Live**, Oak View Group’s [much-hyped \(<https://www.billboard.com/pro/co-op-live-arena->](https://www.billboard.com/pro/co-op-live-arena-)

[chaotic-opening-explained-uk-arena-repair-pr-damage/](#) arena in Manchester, England. Sharman brings over a decade of experience in the live events industry, having managed British Athletics' commercial partners for the London 2012 Olympics and secured major sponsorships for Aston Villa Football Club. He joined the NEC Group in 2014, transitioned to arena programming in 2017, and was promoted to head of programming for Utilita Arena Birmingham and bp pulse LIVE in 2022. Gary Hutchinson, executive vp of Oak View Group International, praised Sharman's expertise and industry relationships, expressing confidence in his ability to elevate the venue as a premier destination. In 2025, Co-op Live will host global talents such as Sabrina Carpenter, Tyler, the Creator, Bruce Springsteen, Lionel Richie and Hans Zimmer. OVG also announced that Katie Musham, Co-op Live's director of strategic programming, will be moving to its international unit to aid their expansion efforts across Europe and beyond.

TuneCore, the Believe-owned digital music distributor, named **Mike Ceglio** as vp of operations strategy. Reporting to CEO Andreea Gleeson, Ceglio will oversee a wide swath of business operations, including the content review, trust/safety and copyright teams, while collaborating with the product team to enhance operational processes. Ceglio brings over a decade of experience in digital operations and rights management. Before joining TuneCore, he served as vp of creator operations at SoundCloud, where he managed creator services, among other duties. He has also held leadership roles at UnitedMasters and Vydia. Gleeson praised Ceglio's industry insight and ability to build high-performing teams. "His leadership will enable us to be even more proactive in working alongside DSPs, tackling new industry challenges and streamlining workflows to create a smoother, more efficient experience for both DSPs and artists," she said. "By deepening these partnerships, Mike will further enhance TuneCore's position as a trusted partner that continuously delivers operational excellence in the evolving digital music landscape."

AEG Presents named **Weston Hebert** as vp of global touring, reporting to Rich Schaefer, the president of global touring. Based in Nashville, Hebert will lead global touring strategies and initiatives. Hebert previously worked as a talent buyer at Live Nation, managing bookings for venues in the Great Lakes region

and promoting tours for emerging artists like The Red Clay Strays and Gavin Adcock. He began his career at WME Nashville, where he focused on expanding the country touring business internationally. Hebert praised the global team's "exceptional sense of collaboration & community with the artists, managers & agents they work with," while Schaefer highlighted Hebert's "strong relationships with artists, managers, and agents, as well as his exceptional taste in music."

Across the pond, **Emma Bownes** was promoted to senior vp of venue programming at **AEG Europe**, where she'll lead programming strategy for prominent venues, including The O2 in London, Barclays Arena in Hamburg and Berlin's Uber Arena. Bownes, a 25-year veteran of the live business, joined AEG in 2010 and has played a pivotal role in building successful event calendars. "At AEG, our vision is to be the best-in-class live entertainment business and Emma's work is fundamental to this," said John Langford, chief operating officer at the AEG subsidiary. The live giant also announced other team promotions: **Jo Peplow-Revell** as director of corporate and special events and **Marc Saunders** as head of programming at The O2, both reporting to senior programming director Christian D'Acuna.



Jose Nova // Complex

Jose Nova is the new head of Latin at **Complex**, where he will oversee music, content strategy and artist collaborations to help the brand drive growth in the

Latin music space. Previously, Nova was global Latin industry relations lead at Amazon Music, spearheading campaigns for top Latin artists like Bad Bunny and Karol G. His work, which scaled major tours, live-streaming events and marketing campaigns, got Nova recognized on Billboard's 2023 Latin Power Players list. Nova's career also includes roles at Spotify and Interscope, where he curated strategies for U.S. Hispanic and Latin American audiences. "I've always regarded Complex as a brand that pushes boundaries and redefines culture, creativity, and storytelling," he said. "After discussing our shared vision with (Complex CEO) Aaron Levant and the team, it became clear how aligned we are in driving meaningful impact for Latin audiences, artists, and creators."

NASHVILLE NOTES: Brown Sellers Brown, which includes Quartz Hill Records, Stone Country Records and BSB Management, hired **Ash Bowers** as director of artist management and A&R support, where he will also lead management strategy for BSB artists including Ben Gallaher and Spencer Hatcher. **Wendy Buckner** joins as day-to-day manager for artists including Gallaher and Hatcher, while **Abby Driscoll** joins as day-to-day manager for artist Annie Bosko. **Angela Wheeler** has been promoted to director of content and creative ... **Universal Attractions Agency** added booking agent **Ryan Slone** to its rock & pop division, led by Matt Rafal. Slone brings to UAA artists including Danielle Nicole, dada, 7Horse, LOVE with Johnny Echols, Talking Dreads, Scott Mulvahill, Black Circle, and Monkeys on a String. Slone's previous career stops include Bonfire Touring, Ovation Artist Group and New Frontier Touring. —*Jessica Nicholson*

EastCoast Entertainment promoted **Brad Strouse** to managing partner, recognizing his contributions since joining the full-service agency in 2016. Strouse, who began his career in Nashville specializing in artist booking, touring and live event production, previously served as location managing director for ECE's Richmond and DC offices. He has played pivotal role in expanding the company's National division, overseeing large-scale productions and booking acts like Darius Rucker, Trace Adkins and Sister Hazel at venues including Levi's Stadium and the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. ECE President John Wolfslayer commended Strouse's leadership, integrity

and dedication to artists, adding he has “qualities of a true role model for the next generation, with his unwavering integrity, tireless work ethic, and deep commitment to our community of artists.”

Music finance firm **Sound Royalties** promoted **Allison Portlock** to executive vp of marketing and **Bryan Field** to director of royalty analysis. Portlock, who has been with Sound Royalties since 2018, most recently as vp of marketing, is based in West Palm Beach, Fla. and reports to Michael Bizenov and Alex Heiche. As a key executive team member, she oversees marketing, business development and customer experience, while also guiding company strategies and expanding the brand into new markets. She focuses on long-term customer relationships and leads the marketing team’s growth. Fried joined SR in 2014 and was most recently the senior royalty analyst. Based in WPB and reporting to Barbara Ocasio, he manages the royalty analyst team, performs in-depth analysis of royalty earnings, identifies risks and produces projections.

Believe beefed up its UK team with the appointments of **Paul Trueman** as director of artist services and **Joe Edwards** as head of marketing. Trueman, formerly COO at un:hurd music and GM at AWAL, brings extensive expertise in marketing, promotions and audience development. At Believe, he’ll lead A&R, new business, commercial strategy and global marketing campaigns, reporting to UK managing director Alex Kennedy. Edwards, previously senior director of marketing at AWAL, has worked marketing strategies and award-winning campaigns for artists such as Jungle, Djo and Bombay Bicycle Club, and will now report to Trueman.

Brad Parscale, the digital director for Donald Trump’s winning 2016 campaign who later had a [lengthy stint](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/15/us/politics/trump-campaign-brad-parscale.html) (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/15/us/politics/trump-campaign-brad-parscale.html>) as campaign manager in 2020, is the new chief strategy officer of Christian conservative media company **Salem Media Group**. SMG recently [stuck a fork](https://www.billboard.com/pro/salem-media-sells-contemporary-christian-radio-stations/) (<https://www.billboard.com/pro/salem-media-sells-contemporary-christian-radio-stations/>) in its music ambitions by selling off its seven

remaining Contemporary Christian-formatted radio stations to the Educational Media Foundation (EMF) for \$80 million.

Acoustic Sounds reappointed turntable specialist **Chad Stelly** to their team. Stelly, who initially joined Acoustic Sounds in 2005, is feted for his expertise in HiFi equipment sales and turntable setup. After leaving in 2019, he worked at Musical Surroundings, providing dealer training and supporting phono cartridges, preamps and turntables, as well as contributing to product development. Later, he joined Bluebird Music, focusing on SME support and repair. Acoustic Sounds, founded by Chad Kassem and based in Salina, Kansas, is home to Quality Record Pressings, its in-house record pressing plant, and Analogue Productions, its vinyl reissue label. The company also operates an original production label, APO Records, along with Acoustic Sounds Printing, its dedicated print shop. Additionally, Acoustic Sounds boasts Blue Heaven Studios and The Mastering Lab, specializing in recordings and LP mastering.

Emerald City Music, a Seattle-based chamber music series, appointed **Sean Campbell** as its new executive director, effective Feb. 3. Campbell, formerly the artistic planning manager at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, will work alongside ECM's founding artistic director, Kristin Lee. His responsibilities include providing administrative leadership, supporting the board of directors, developing engagement events and educational programs, fostering partnerships with community organizations and local businesses, serving as a community ambassador, and creating a strategic plan for ECM. Campbell aims to enhance ECM's innovative programming for audiences in the Pacific Northwest and beyond.

ICYMI:



Derek Chang

Lyndsay Cruz left her [post \(https://www.billboard.com/pro/acm-lifting-lives-executive-director-lyndsay-cruz-leaves/\)](https://www.billboard.com/pro/acm-lifting-lives-executive-director-lyndsay-cruz-leaves/) as executive director of ACM's philanthropic arm ... **Liberty Media** named **Derek Chang** as its [new \(https://www.billboard.com/pro/liberty-media-names-derek-chang-new-ceo/\)](https://www.billboard.com/pro/liberty-media-names-derek-chang-new-ceo/) president and CEO ... **Kobalt** tapped **Rani Hancock** to be its new executive vp [and \(https://www.billboard.com/pro/kobalt-names-rani-hancock-executive-vp-head-u-s-creative/\)](https://www.billboard.com/pro/kobalt-names-rani-hancock-executive-vp-head-u-s-creative/) head of U.S. creative ... **Wasserman Music** scooped up **Kevin Shivers**, **James Rubin** and **Cristina Baxter** — plus the [artists \(https://www.billboard.com/pro/wasserman-music-kevin-shivers-james-rubin-cristina-baxter/\)](https://www.billboard.com/pro/wasserman-music-kevin-shivers-james-rubin-cristina-baxter/) they represent — from rival agency WME ... **Lauren Davis** was [promoted \(https://www.billboard.com/pro/lauren-davis-associate-chair-nyu-clive-davis-institute/\)](https://www.billboard.com/pro/lauren-davis-associate-chair-nyu-clive-davis-institute/) at NYU's **Clive Davis Institute** ... **SALXCO** named a new [CEO \(https://www.billboard.com/pro/the-weeknd-management-company-salxco-new-ceo-co-presidents/\)](https://www.billboard.com/pro/the-weeknd-management-company-salxco-new-ceo-co-presidents/) and co-presidents.

Last Week's Turntable: [Warner Records' New Head of International Marketing \(https://www.billboard.com/pro/executive-turntable-warner-records-avex-usa-sphere-music-jobs/\)](https://www.billboard.com/pro/executive-turntable-warner-records-avex-usa-sphere-music-jobs/)

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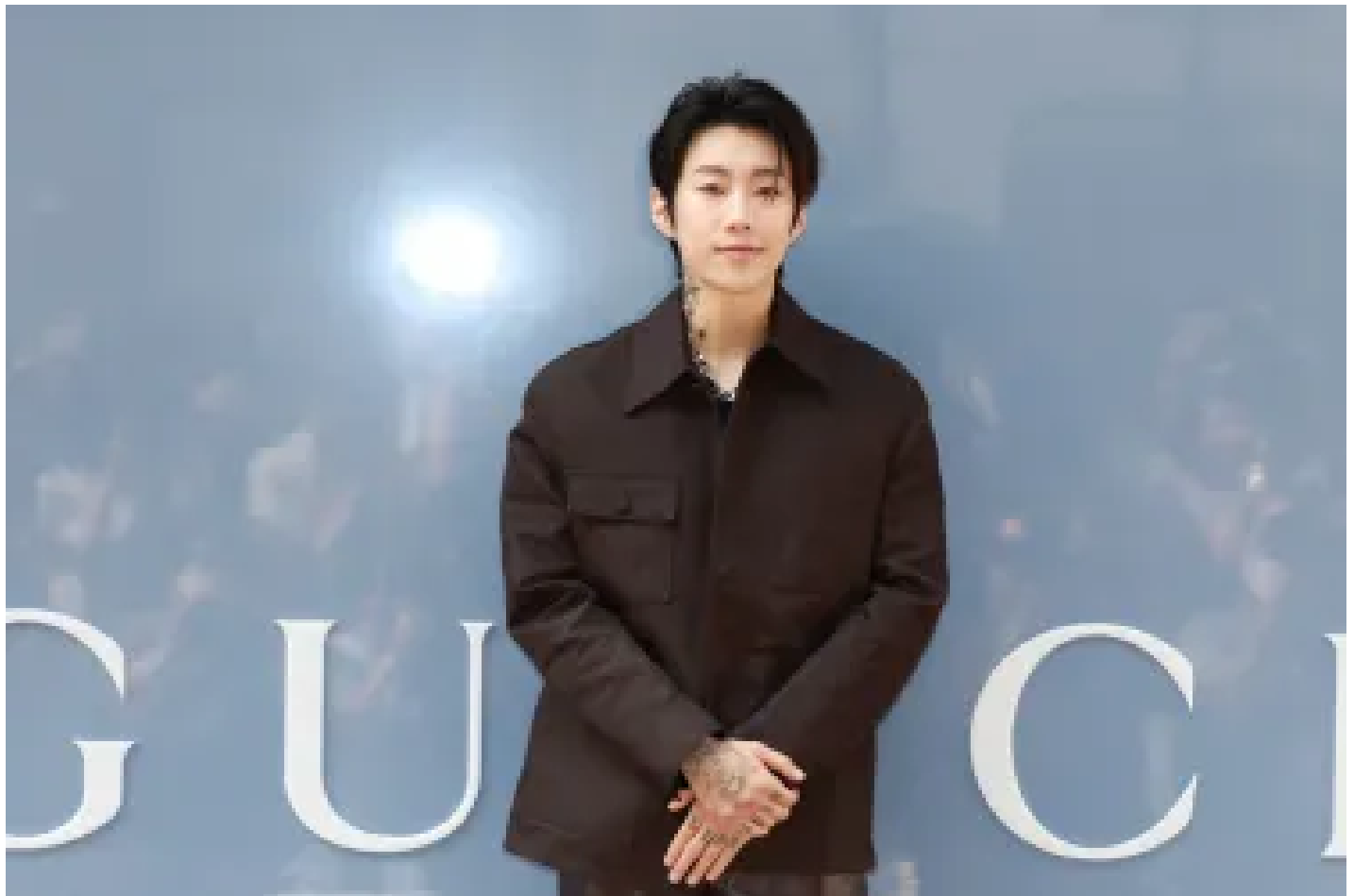


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