

YEAR-END SURVEY 2019: THE LIVE INDUSTRY LOOKS BACK & AHEAD AT 'LOTS OF TOURING'

by SARAH PITTMAN

As we look back on 2019, a year that saw the number of touring acts increase, new artists rise to the top and inaugural festivals continue to pop up, Pollstar surveyed executives across the industry to get their takes. The survey was also an opportunity to look ahead to 2020 and reflect on how we can bring about positive changes, including working together to create a more inclusive, diverse industry, while maximizing opportunities for artists and the business at large.

What accomplishments are you most proud of this year and why?

Matt Galle, senior agent at Paradigm: Shawn Mendes sold out multiple arenas and stadiums this year, which was a massive accomplishment. His world tour grossed over \$100 million and sold over 1.1 million tickets. I'm also proud of Janet Jackson's successful Vegas residency, which grossed over \$13 million. Plus, My Chemical Romance's return show at the Shrine Dec. 20th sold out in minutes and grossed over \$1.3 million. My Chemical Romance was one of my first clients 20 years ago and it's very exciting to have them back.



SUSIE GIANG
agent at Ground
Control Touring

Susie Giang, agent at Ground Control Touring: Seeing my artists reach new heights is what makes this work meaningful to me. It was inspiring to see Ani DiFranco launch her memoir this year. Ani has made such an impact on our touring industry and on pop / indie culture — a true iconoclast. I was thrilled to see Gregory Alan Isakov sell out another Red Rocks show and to finish off the year with a Grammy nomination. Finally, I was very proud to watch Haley Heynderickx play her first Newport Folk Festival set from the side stage.

This year, I was also very proud to move to Ground Control Touring. The team has welcomed me with open arms, and I am excited about what we can build together, and what the chemistry of our work together can create.

Steve Gordon, co-head of electronic music at UTA: I am thrilled about the success of Illenium's "Ascend World Tour." My UTA colleague Guy Oldaker and I put tremendous effort into developing and executing the tour, which has sold out venues like Madison Square Garden, Staples Center, Chase Center and more. I am also very proud of my involvement in helping curate Excision's Bass Canyon and Lost Lands events, which I worked on with UTA agent Max Freeman. Both events exceeded the previous year's sales and are now the two largest purely dubstep events in the world.

Nadia Prescher, co-founder of Madison House: We will celebrate 24 years in business July 2020. I look back at 2019 and see that 168 artists and seven booking agents signed on with Madison House this year. We expanded our Nashville office and opened two new locations in California (Oakland and Pacific Grove).

Hans Schafer, senior VP, Live Nation Latin: Romeo Santos becoming the first Latin artist to sell out MetLife Stadium was a historic feat, one that's been accomplished by very few artists across any genre. Watching Romeo perform for over 60,000 screaming fans was momentous. It was a one night only Bachata celebration, over four hours long with more than a dozen guest performers. On top of all that, he broke the all-time concert gross record in a single night throughout the stadium's history.



MATT GALLE
senior agent at Paradigm

Kevin Shivers, partner at WME: Helping Crooked Media and "Pod Save America" put on their benefit show at The Greek, which benefited non-profit organizations Vote.org, Election Protection, Think Social Impact and the National Redistricting Foundation.

Marlene Tsuchii, co-head of international touring and music agent at Creative Artists Agency: I am proud and honored to be involved in the yearlong Ariana Grande "Sweetener World Tour." It is a massive success and further establishes her as a superstar icon. Her immense talent, strength and courage are an inspiration. I am also extremely proud to help sign the incredible Korean multimedia company SM Entertainment. They are the perfect partner as they embody a similar culture to what is valued at CAA. Their roster of K-pop artists is top level as are their team both in Korea and in the U.S.

Stacy Vee, VP festival talent at Goldenvoice and VP of artist relations for Messina Touring Group: Setting both new attendance and good vibes records out at Stagecoach. I absolutely love working on this show and have the best team in the business. I am also really happy that I have been able to absorb the role at MTG [Messina Touring Group] while also continuing to grow and take on new things at Goldenvoice, my home for the past 18 years.

Which business executive, artist, company, technology or event over the last year had the largest impact on the live industry?

Matt Galle: Platinum G+ Premium ticketing technology. Artists can now control the secondary market more and maintain the majority of their well-deserved revenue.

Susie Giang: Streaming platforms, and more so curated playlists, are giving many new bands important exposure as they launch their touring careers. Bands that have never toured before can play rooms with audiences in them because their music is being heard before they



STEVE GORDON
co-head of electronic music at UTA

even hit the market. But how do you transform streaming fans into fans that will continue to buy the tickets and see the artist again and again? That is when the artistry of playing the live set comes in, balanced with the tailoring that agents need to do to find the right events, venues and promoters for the artist to grow.

Steve Gordon: Post Malone has revived the concept of a "rock star." He is flat-out incredible. Post has successfully united all demographics of music fans and has made a lasting impact on the music industry at large. His "Runaway Tour" is blowing out across the world and he continues to deliver great music to his loyal fans. Post, his UTA agent Cheryl Paglierani, and his manager Dre London collectively built an outstanding tour and, in turn, have elevated his career to new heights.

Nadia Prescher: I know this was an industry at large question, but as it relates to my personal business right now, I don't have to look further than Marc Geiger (WME) and Rob Light (CAA) who continue to have an impact on the live business directly in front of me. They know that Madison House fulfills a vital entrepreneurship

role in our industry, and over two decades later, they continue to support Madison House by looking elsewhere when shopping for new clients.

Marlene Tsuchii: The meteoric rise of new artists like Maggie Rogers and Billie Eilish. This disruption in the traditional path to success is invigorating! It is inspiring to see these young women have such a massive global impact.

Stacy Vee: Artists who are doing things their own way, carving their own path and ruling the school such as Billie Eilish, Kacey Musgraves, Luke Combs and Sturgill Simpson.

What was the biggest challenge you faced this year in conducting business?

Matt Galle: Radius clauses.

Susie Giang: Things are moving faster and earlier. When I commit to working with an artist team, I'm looking at the long-term picture. Now we see very young teams hitting the ground running fast and hard. Artist touring development that used to happen over the course of years is now expected to be built over the course of months. But it still takes strategic decisions to build hard-ticket careers with artists. We need to build toward sustaining careers, and not be overly influenced by the thrill of making it on the festival poster alone.

Steve Gordon: The number of touring acts has increased this year, causing a shift in the music landscape. We needed to book venues further in advance to make sure that markets were not oversaturated with too many similar shows in proximity to each other.

Nadia Prescher: Working on arena shows with promoters who still can't use "your" and "you're" properly. Grammar jokes aside, there are always real challenges, but our MH business is healthy and growing at a stable rate. Certainly not the biggest, but a challenge for some music lovers and fans is that some social media has created a façade of being "social" when most users are alone somewhere on their phone. The industry is aware of the isolation that can come as a result, especially for our youth who don't have memories of life before

the handheld. Madison House strives to work with promoters and artists who connect with their fan families in creative ways beyond social media. We have found real value in supporting communities that get created online, but then translate into creative group efforts in person, where human connection can happen.

Marlene Tsuchii: Two of the biggest challenges I noticed were volatile global economies and climate change. All of these unpredictable factors have affected business across the U.S. and world. We have experienced wild new weather patterns that have threatened festivals and outdoor shows. We have had to relook at markets where currency devaluation have made touring extremely difficult.

What was your favorite live event you attended in 2019? What made it so special?

Matt Galle: Shawn Mendes at Rogers Centre in Toronto. That is Shawn's hometown and he



NADIA PRESCHER
co-founder of Madison House

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HANS SCHAFER
senior VP, Live Nation Latin

has always wanted to headline a stadium. We ended the North American tour leg there and it sold out in two days, about a year in advance of the show. The energy and excitement was magical that night.

Susie Giang: I was floored by the magic of the Newport Folk Festival this year. They really delivered on the promise of live music, those special moments when you say to yourself, I will not see this anywhere else again. One such moment was seeing Brandi Carlile on stage with Dolly Parton. I was overwhelmed by the power of those two women together.

Steve Gordon: Post Malone's Bud Light Dive Bar show with Sublime with Rome was my favorite event of the year. I loved organizing the show with Cheryl and Post's team. It was one of the best sets I have ever seen, and watching Post and Sublime With Rome play together for 200 people in such an intimate venue was truly special.

Nadia Prescher: I saw Tryllefløyten at the Den Norske Opera in Oslo. It was eccentric and quirky, but more importantly it encompassed all of the reasons I love live events. The whole Norwegian evening was a reminder that

international travel, beautiful venues, food, art, comedy, costumes, music, theatre, and HUMANS CONNECTING are all reasons why I love this business so much.

Hans Schafer: Two events come to mind: watching J Balvin headline his own stadium show in his hometown of Medellin and J Balvin headlining Lollapalooza. It was a significant moment seeing him as the first Latin artist to headline the festival in its 28-year history.

Kevin Shivers: Camp Flog Gnaw hands down. It is one of the best and most interesting festivals.

Marlene Tsuchii: The Capitol Records launch of SuperM on their lot. It was a magnificent example of successful teamwork. A brand new act with no music or touring history had an incredible performance that led to a No. 1 album on the *Billboard* 200 and a successful first time tour in arenas!

Stacy Vee: I think my favorite was Coachella. It is like a big family reunion every year both internally with the staff and externally with the industry guests. This year will be 20 years in L.A. working in the industry so I'm now at a point where there are people I "came up with" and that feels good.

Do you think the election year will impact the live business? And if so, how?

Susie Giang: Yes. We all know that economics and entertainment have a direct correlation, but there is much more at stake in the 2020 election. Even the act of standing next to a stranger and holding a tune together is as a political and spiritual act during these divisive times. I think it is more important than ever for artists to create spaces where politics and art intersect.

Steve Gordon: I really don't think it will impact the live business. The music industry remains consistently busy, and it's a growing market. The election is clearly very important but it does not take away the want or need for people to go out and have a good time. If anything, it may increase the public's desire to attend shows to help escape the stress of the outside world and

completely immerse themselves in the music.

Kevin Shivers: Yes. I think given our current political climate and the fact that it's an election year, we will see artists using their power to influence the election and past artists making appearances and reuniting for concerts to draw further attention to it.

Nadia Prescher: If anyone is not happy with what's happening (and that's a lot of our industry), we have to use our platforms to get people registered to vote and then encourage voting, in all elections. HeadCount is doing critical work and has registered over 600,000 voters. Truly a job well done by all of the board, volunteers, artists, agents, managers and promoters who have supported this important work. We need to get voters to the polls and create safe and fair polling locations. However the election goes, our country is now viewed very differently on a global scale than it was 3 years ago. We've got some real inter-



KEVIN SHIVERS
partner at WME

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MARLENE TSUCHII
co-head of international
touring and music agent at
Creative Artists Agency

national damage control ahead. The election results on Nov. 3, 2020, will determine how much and the strategy for the repair.

Marlene Tsuchii: Yes, there will be a definite impact from the election. Whatever the outcome, it will impact the economy and frankly the psyche of the country. This current administration has affected the industry starting from their Machiavellian immigration policies.

Stacy Vee: It is going to be a wild year, that is all I can say.

What trends do you predict in the live business for 2020?

Matt Galle: More package tours and co-headline bills. Less festivals. Rock music being more prominent in some newly molded, modern form.

Susie Giang: I think we will see more artist-curated events, and in that ethos of niche culture, I think we will continue to see experts and industry creatives knocking out specialized events that will uncover new ways of doing business. I think there will be rewards for those who focus on thriving and not just growing, and for teams that know who they are and focus in on their unique strengths. There is strategy in standing out as different,

and not just fitting the formula of the masses.

Steve Gordon: Market saturation will increase. More artists will be playing club and theater venues and fewer acts will be playing amphitheaters, which will lead to more packaging across the board.

Kevin Shivers: Lots of touring. 2020 is going to be bigger for touring than 2019.

Nadia Prescher: In the coming years, we will continue to see less and less brick and mortar college enrollment. Recording / touring artists, agents and promoters who financially rely on the current college culture, over time, will need to adapt to the ever-changing college education environment. Fortunately for all involved, it won't be an overnight matter.

Marlene Tsuchii: This isn't anything new but the continuing trend of packaged tours – we have all found there is safety in numbers. With the volume in touring traffic, creating packages that are aesthetically solid with smart ticket pricing is a proven formula for success. There are also a lot more artist-curated festivals cropping up each year as artists are looking for creative ways to reach out directly to fans.

Stacy Vee: It is about to get political, people! Artists will be using their microphone as a tool to spread a message. I also think/hope to see artists maintaining a strong sense of who they are and not compromising.

What changes in the live business do you hope to see next year?

Matt Galle: Less scalping. Primary ticketing companies giving artist more control (direct to fan) and sharing everything with them (data and all revenue streams).

Susie Giang: I would like to see more of a focus on building diversity on our side of the industry, and in our rosters. We need to elevate new voices and tastemakers, and we should be fearless in lifting them high. There are more successful artists and creatives out there, once we can open the doors.

Steve Gordon: I predict an influx of large-scale packaged events coming to the table similar to the Global Dub Festival at Red Rocks, which we helped put together, or C3's Camp Nowhere multi-city festival experience. I think we'll also see more events that mirror mini-festivals, which target very specific demographics of music fans.

Nadia Prescher: While there are many organizations doing fantastic work creating awareness around addiction, suicide, etc., we've got to keep the conversation current, not just a discussion surrounding the headlines and funerals of our friends, clients and idols.

Due to the nature of our industry, whether we're on the road, in an office, on stage or in a studio, we seem to be at higher risk, which means more attention needs to be focused here. A few organizations that are doing key work in this area are Backline, MusiCares, Rock to Recovery, To Write Love On Her Arms and there are many more. Find them and support them, because we need them.

Hans Schafer: More Latin female acts touring.

Kevin Shivers: I want to see more diversity. Everyone in live must do their part to hire and retain more diverse faces and make more diverse people aware they can have careers in live music.

Marlene Tsuchii: Less festivals!

Stacy Vee: More women in offices with windows. ★



STACY VEE
VP festival talent at
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