

Billboard

YEAR IN MUSIC 2014

The No. 1s

A photo portfolio starring
JASON DERULO
+ 21 more chart-toppers



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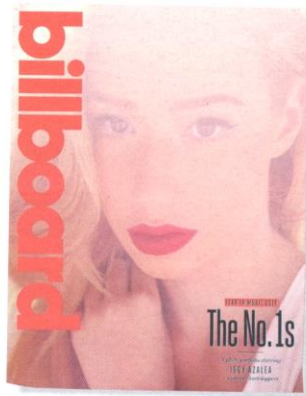
JASON DERULO
Photographed by
Meredith Jenks
on Oct. 22 at the
Warner Bros. offices
in New York.

MEGHAN TRAINOR
Photographed by
Smallz + Raskind on
Oct. 9 at The Line Hotel
in Los Angeles.

IGGY AZALEA
Photographed by
Miller Mobley on
May 31 at ROOT
Studios in Brooklyn.

SAM SMITH
Photographed by
Austin Hargrave on
Sept. 30 at The Greek
Theatre in Los Angeles.

For exclusive interviews
and behind-the-scenes
footage from the
No. 1s shoots, go to
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THE ROAD TO NO. 1

PREDICTING CHART SUCCESS IS AN IMPOSSIBLE SCIENCE. Every year, the surest things with the burliest marketing budgets tank while out-of-left-field oddities — no offense, Magic — earworm themselves into our brains and stay there for weeks and months.

Even established stars rise and fall in ways that cannot be predicted. This year, Taylor Swift defied conventional wisdom by completely bypassing country radio — and her roots — and courted a fickle pop audience by going door to door with 1989. Not literally, but nearly so.

And in a year when there are fewer million sellers (three) than members of U2, she easily cleared that mark in her first week.

Yet with all of the uncertainty heading into 2015 — as physical and digital sales continue to shrink while branding and live events save artists' bacon — the single reassuring fact about the music industry is that it remains driven by creativity. And even then, the best artists and songwriters aren't guaranteed chart positions. Yes, you need a great song. But self-awareness, pluck and work ethic are critical. In addition to that, luck certainly plays its part.

And so the stories behind the songs that topped our charts — told by the folks who penned, produced, performed and promoted them — demonstrate that elusive combination of purpose and

happenstance that alchemically produces a hit song or album.

As part of our inaugural No. 1s franchise, we created separate covers for four artists who made it to No. 1 and who we believe define the wild and woolly nature of 2014. There's Meghan Trainor, the Nantucket native who moved to Nashville and scored the unlikely hit with the 1950s doo-wop-infused "All About That Bass"; Iggy Azalea, the white Australian rapper who adopted a distinctly Southern patois and put two songs on the Hot 100 for several weeks this summer; Sam Smith, who single-handedly revived the term "blue-eyed soul singer" and may run the table at the Grammys; and Jason Derulo, who kicked around writing songs for others before finding his own voice when he wasn't expected to produce a string of hits.

Going into 2014, no one could have foreseen this group of artists enjoying such a level of success. But then we heard the songs and saw their performances. Then we knew.

Tony Gervino, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

THE LOVERBOY

[FROM LEFT]
FRANK HARRIS, JASON DERULO,
RICKY REED

"TALK DIRTY"
1 WEEK ON MAINSTREAM TOP 40;
3 WEEKS ON RHYTHMIC;
4 WEEKS ON R&B DIGITAL SONGS

THE YEAR 2014, JASON DERULO'S ANNUS mirabilis, started in a sweaty nightclub in Tel Aviv, Israel, in January 2013. There, embedded in a 2007 song called "Hermetico" by Israeli band Balkan Beat Box, was a saxophone riff in an ancient Turkish scale called "hijaz" that caught the ear of A&R man Miles Beard from APG. How those eight bars became 25-year-old Derulo's biggest hit yet, "Talk Dirty" (which topped the Mainstream Top 40, Rhythmic and R&B Digital Songs charts), is a ping-pong tale of musical globalization, personal transformation and luck.

RICKY REED, producer: Miles heard the song in January and played it for me on his phone in Los Angeles. As soon as the saxophone riff came in, I knew it was a hit waiting to happen.

JASON DERULO: When I first heard the track, I loved it because it sounded exotic and Eastern. The chorus came to me immediately. I channeled my experience touring the world. You don't need to speak the language to communicate — body language is universal.

FRANK HARRIS, manager: We knew it would be huge, but it wasn't the first single we released. After Jason broke his neck in 2012 [while practicing tour stunts], he had taken some time off to heal. We wanted to reintroduce him first.

PETER GRAY, executive vp/head of promotion, Warner Bros.: I was one of the people most concerned about the song. I wasn't nervous about it becoming a hit, but I was nervous because it was such a big, ambitious artistic step.

DERULO This was a shift — Jason Derulo like you've never heard before. That's why 2 Chainz is so important. My mother doesn't like his verse: "Does he have to say 'penis'?" But I told him to be as dirty as possible. His appearance opens up new doors. It's easier for a hip-hop artist to move into pop than a pop artist to move into hip-hop. After "Dirty," I recorded "Wiggle" with Snoop Dogg, and that spent 10 weeks at No. 1 on R&B Digital Songs. —JOSHUA DAVID STEIN

