

Media Questions Of The Week

Billboard ranks the best female rappers of all time:

- 1. Nicki Minaj*
- 2. Missy Elliott*
- 3. Lauryn Hill*
- 4. Lil Kim*
- 5. Queen Latifah*
- 6. MC Lyte*
- 7. Salt-N-Pepa*
- 8. Roxanne Shante*
- 9. Eve*
- 10. Foxy Brown*

– Pop Crave (@PopCrave) [April 7, 2025](#)

Did Billboard get it right with their list of the greatest female rappers that puts Nicki Minaj at number one?

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How did [Snoop Dogg](#) only earn 45,000 dollars for a billion streams on Spotify if a spokesperson for the company said that a billion streams is supposed to make an artist millions of dollars?



What will come of the FCC investigation into iHeartMedia for payola?

Throwback: Motown



On January 12, 1959, Berry Gordy Jr. founded Tamla Records in Detroit, Michigan. Gordy had previously owned a music store that exclusively sold jazz records and was a member of a songwriting team for singer Jackie Wilson and others. A meeting with a 17-year-old Smokey Robinson led to Gordy recording the single "Got A Job" by Robinson's group, The Miracles. He leased the song to End Records, and this practice of leasing songs to bigger labels outside of Detroit continued with the Marv Johnson song, "Come To Me." Robinson encouraged Gordy to start his own R&B record label, and he borrowed \$800 from his family to release Johnson's song on his Tamla label. In 1959, he started Anna Records, which was named after his sister, and they had the most success with Barrett Strong's "Money (That's What I Want)." In April of 1960, he merged both companies and incorporated Motown Records.

Strong's single was Motown's first hit record in June of 1960, and by that time, Gordy had purchased the building that was

the label's headquarters and called it Hitsville U.S.A. Motown eventually took up space in seven additional nearby houses for the company's administrative duties, artist development, management, payroll, sales, and recording. The Miracles' "Bad Girl" was the first official Motown release, but it was their single "Shop Around" that was the first million-seller for the group and label. Gordy's motto was to make music that appealed to both Black and white audiences. Motown became the most successful African-American business and independent record company in America, with 79 songs in the Billboard Top Ten between 1960 and 1969. Motown's influence was critical to the integration of pop music. The label was home to some of the most important artists in the history of music, including The Miracles, Mary Wells, The Temptations, The Supremes, The Jackson 5, and Stevie Wonder. The company also moved into the media world after moving to Los Angeles with television specials and movies. Diana Ross' starring roles in *Mahogany*, *Lady Sings The Blues*, and *The Wiz* opened the way for Whitney Houston's *The Bodyguard* decades later.

Motown stayed independent until 1988, when Gordy sold it to MCA. Universal Music acquired Motown in 1998 when they purchased Polygram. In 2025, Motown is home to Brandy, Erykah Badu, Kem, Migos, Lil Yachty, and The City Girls.

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NEW YORK DISK JOCKEY WILLIAM B. WILLIAMS SHOWS WHAT SPURS THE PAYOLA—THE HOT COMPETITION OF THE 8,000 RECORDS A DEEJAY RECEIVES EACH YEAR

Gimme, Gimme, Gimme on the old PAYOLA

As probers turn from TV to radio, clear evidence of disk jockey bribery crops up

With the facts of TV-quiz corruption firmly fixed, evidence has begun to turn up of wholesale corruption in radio—among the entertainers who dominate that field today, the disk jockeys. The U.S. was becoming familiar with a new word, "payola," trade jargon for bribes to promote certain records over the air. The Harris subcommittee in Washington considered public hearings on payola in December. Preliminary investigation indicated that there was plenty for the probers to dig up—and so does the lively slang prevalent among the disk jockeys themselves (right).

The climate for deejay corruption is created by the enormous output of popular records. Many more are produced than can be played

over the air—and moreover, as New York's William B. Williams (above) says, "If a disk jockey had to listen to all these records, he'd go to the kookie house."

Bribes in cash or goods are paid by music publishers, by record companies to boost their own disks and by record distributors to promote the makes they handle. Besides the deejays, others in a radio station who can influence music selection are paid.

Many disk jockeys like Williams, who makes \$65,000 a year, do not have to rely on payola. But on the following pages LIFE shows how payola does work, in stories by a disk jockey (pp. 46, 47) and a record executive (p. 48).

DEEJAY SLANG GLOSSARY

Dead Presidents—\$20 bills with Andrew Jackson portrait, \$50s with Ulysses Grant portrait, etc. used in payoffs
Bread—the cash involved in payola
Schlockmeister—a master at accumulating the schlock, or loot
Freebie—plug for a record given without payola
Charts—hit record lists in music trade magazines
Happening—a record making the charts
Breaking—a record moving up on charts
Ride—to play a record repeatedly
Hyping a platter—overselling a record
Bomb—a terrible record

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Does Drake's [lawsuit](#) against Universal Music accusing them of using bots and payola to boost streams for Kendrick Lamar's "Not Like Us" have merit?



Credit: Ben P L

Can Victor Willis of the Village People successfully sue anyone who calls "Y.M.C.A." a gay anthem?