

SDS236 Final Project

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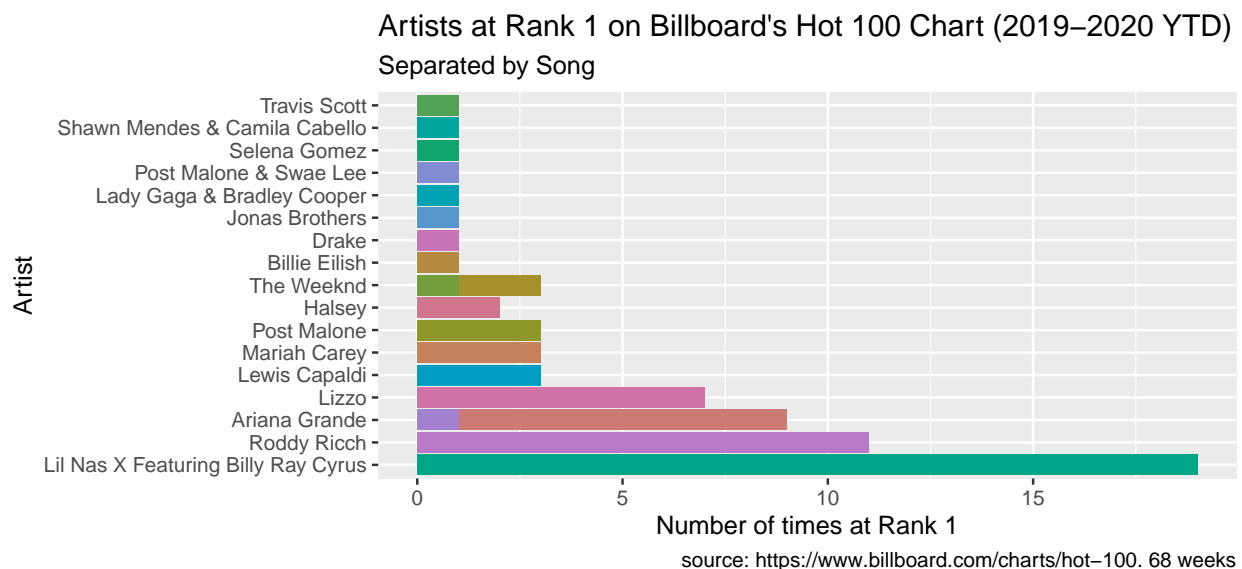
Can hard work lead to a successful career in the music industry? Billboard's Hot 100 Chart says it's almost impossible

Do you know someone who wants to be a musician? You most likely know a few people who are striving to become famous singers.

Many people dream of becoming well-known musicians. After all, celebrities not only earn a lot of money, but they also get special treatment in our societies. In order to determine how difficult it really is to reach the top of the music industry, we looked at Billboard's Hot 100 Chart for 2019 and 2020 year-to-date. This chart ranks the top 100 songs on a weekly basis.

After collecting all 100 songs and artists in the chart for each week in 2019 and 2020 so far, we found the following results: 1) it is difficult to make it to the top of the music industry and 2) even artists that make it to the coveted top position in the chart have difficulty regaining that position within the same year or two.

The graph below shows which artist was ranked at the top each week during the 68-week period covering 2019 and 2020. Each bar that corresponds to an artist is separated into different colors if they made the top rank with different songs. Out of the 17 total artists that made 1st place on the chart, the only artists that have more than one song are Ariana Grande and The Weeknd. Ariana Grande made 1st place on Billboard's Hot 100 Chart a total of 9 times. However, one of those times was with the song "Thank U, Next", while the other 8 times were with the song "7 Rings". The Weeknd was very successful with the songs "Heartless" and "Blinding Lights", which made the chart 1 and 2 times respectively



More details on which songs put these artists at the number one spot can be found in the table below:

Table 1: Billboard Hot 100 Chart’s Rank 1 by Artist and Song (2019-2020 YTD)

artist	song	number
Lil Nas X Featuring Billy Ray Cyrus	Old Town Road	19
Roddy Ricch	The Box	11
Ariana Grande	7 Rings	8
Lizzo	Truth Hurts	7
Lewis Capaldi	Someone You Loved	3
Mariah Carey	All I Want For Christmas Is You	3
Post Malone	Circles	3
Halsey	Without Me	2
The Weeknd	Blinding Lights	2
Ariana Grande	Thank U, Next	1
Billie Eilish	Bad Guy	1
Drake	Toosie Slide	1
Jonas Brothers	Sucker	1
Lady Gaga & Bradley Cooper	Shallow	1
Post Malone & Swae Lee	Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse)	1
Selena Gomez	Lose You To Love Me	1
Shawn Mendes & Camila Cabello	Senorita	1
The Weeknd	Heartless	1
Travis Scott	HIGHEST IN THE ROOM	1

Some of these artists spend a lot of time training and planning to be acknowledged as the best in the music industry.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Mariah Carey, who made the top of the chart in the past two years with her song “All I Want for Christmas is You”, started performing as a child and moved to New York City at the age of 18 to pursue a signing career.¹

A 2019 article by Insider covering Jonas Brothers’ career states that the band started in 2005. The band was not successful in the beginning, which led to “Columbia Records dropping them after the album “It’s About Time” had poor sales.” The band only started becoming famous when they signed with Disney in 2007.²

However, many artists reach the top of the industry not purely based on talent and hard work. Knowing the right people seems to be the most important factor.

For example, according to a 2016 Rolling Stone article about Halsey, Halsey was introduced to “a music guy, who invited her to his house to maybe do some sort of collaboration” at a party at a Holiday Inn in Newark. During this first meeting, Halsey started writing “Ghost” and later uploaded the song to SoundCloud. Her song gained a lot of interest in SoundCloud, which led to “five labels contacting her.”³ A Billboard’s article about her latest song “Manic” states that Halsey “had no interest in being a singer”; therefore, if Halsey had not attended the party in Newark, her career might not have taken off.⁴

¹Encyclopedia Britannica. “Mariah Carey” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mariah-Carey>

²Insider. “From ‘Year 3000’ to ‘Sucker,’ here’s how the Jonas Brothers’ careers have evolved” <https://www.insider.com/the-jonas-brothers-career-timeline-2019-3#over-the-next-few-years-the-brothers-went-their-separate-ways-but-remained-close-9>

³Rolling Stones. “Inside Halsey’s Troubled Past, Chaotic Present” <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/inside-halseys-troubled-past-chaotic-present-97968/>

⁴Billboard. “Halsey in Hindsight: Her Long and Winding Road to ‘Manic’ ” <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/pop/8548319/halsey-manic-career-recap>

In addition, many of these artists got their start from a different industry. Ariana Grande and Selena Gomez gained their fame in the acting industry, which made it easier to later succeed in the music industry as they were already well-known celebrities.

Steve Lee, a local aspiring musician from Atlanta, GA, said that “technology can help current musicians gain popularity and attention.” Media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have allowed people to quickly share their singing with up to millions of people. When referring to reaching the top of the industry, Lee says “if you want to make a living out of singing and be super famous, technology might not be enough- only a few people gain continued popularity.” Instead, he says that “your network is your biggest asset- much like in any other industry.”

During the 68-week period that the graph includes, only 17 artists made it to 1st place on Billboard’s Hot 100 chart. Most of these artists only held the spot for one week. Five of the artists held it for 2 or 3 weeks, and only 4 artists occupied the top rank for more than 3 weeks. Even artists who are on this list and are considered famous only made the chart with one song during the 68 weeks. All this data and Lee’s insights show that it is indeed very difficult to reach the top of the industry. Furthermore, hard work is not all someone needs to make it in music.