

Company Profile - Roadrunner Records



Roadrunner is one of the world's most famous Hard Rock and Metal labels and in 2010 will be celebrating its 30th anniversary. Aside from its Netherlands headquarters, Roadrunner occupies offices in New York, now the A&R hub for the label, as well as the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, France, Japan and Australia.

Origins

The company, which was founded in Amsterdam in 1980 by the current Chairman, Cees Wessels, forged a name for itself early on by licensing US Rock repertoire for European release. The company's early catalogue featured albums from some of the most important names in the hard rock and metal genres, including Metallica, Slayer and Megadeth.

While Rock and Metal were the company's lifeblood, Roadrunner also represented some seminal US Punk and Alternative labels including SST, Taang!, Triple X, Twin Tone and Relativity - home to artists as broad-ranging as Black Flag, Jane's Addiction and Corrosion of Conformity. The diversity fostered in those early years lives on to this day, with successful artists in all the rock subgenres, as well as some surprising catalogue items.

The 1980s

Roadrunner opened its first US office in New York, in November 1986. The office was opened for two reasons: to sign, record, produce and develop the most cutting edge American bands for worldwide release and to directly handle the marketing of those acts in the US.

The level of success the label enjoys today is built upon a foundation of trendsetting artists that became staples of the company, the genre and the associated culture. King Diamond, with his operatic vocals, epic lyrical story-telling and ghostly white face paint, ushered in a sound and image that can still be seen and heard in

Best Sellers 2009 - Albums

1	Nickelback	Dark Horse
2	Nickelback	All The Right Reasons
3	Slipknot	All Hope Is Gone
4	Heaven and Hell	The Devil You Know
5	Lamb Of God	Wrath
6	Dream Theater	Black Clouds & Silver Linings
7	Kiss	Sonic Boom
8	Slipknot	Slipknot
9	Megadeth	Endgame
10	Porcupine Tree	The Incident

Best Sellers 2009 - Singles (2009 releases only)

1	Nickelback	If Today Was Your Last Day
2	Nickelback	I'd Come For You
3	Theory Of A Deadman	Hate My Life
4	Madina Lake	Never Take Us Alive
5	Kids In Glass Houses	Young Blood (Let It Out)
6	Theory Of A Deadman	Not Meant To Be
7	Slipknot	Sulfur
8	Killswitch Engage	Starting Over
9	Alexisonfire	Young Cardinals
10	Lynyrd Skynyrd	Still Unbroken

today's biggest artists from Marilyn Manson to Evanescence. Thrash metallers

Sepultura took the genre to a whole new level by integrating musical elements from their homeland, Brazil and taking it to a world stage. Their third album, released in 1989 and titled *Beneath The Remains*, was a key release for the label and went on to sell over half a million copies worldwide.



Type O Negative

The 1990s

Several of the bands that Roadrunner had been developing for some time went on to enjoy greater success in the 90s.

Already on their third album, Brooklyn-based **Type O Negative** suddenly found themselves with a big radio hit in the US in the form of *Christian Woman*, and the band went on to become Roadrunner's first Gold-certified act in America.

Meanwhile, in the UK, Sepultura were rapidly expanding their fanbase and achieved Gold discs for their mid-nineties releases *Chaos AD* and the Top Five album *Roots*. Acts such as Coal Chamber and Fear Factory, with their seminal and genre-defining electro-thrash, also began to reach wider audiences.

Perhaps the most surprising success story, however, was that of the mask-clad **Slipknot**, from Des Moines, Iowa. Their uncompromising sound, image and lyrical stance brought Roadrunner its first Platinum certification in the US.

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Into the Noughties

In the UK, Slipknot began appearing on magazine covers, radio playlists and prime time TV shows, defying the usual coverage garnered by any metal band. While their self-titled 1999 debut laid the groundwork, Slipknot entered the UK album chart at Number One in August 2001 with their



Slipknot

second album *Iowa*, arguably the heaviest and most extreme metal album to ever reach the top of the charts. The band were nominated for a Grammy in the two following years, confirming their surprising ascent into the Rock mainstream.

Not long after *Iowa's* release, it was the turn of Canada's **Nickelback** to come to prominence. Five years after their debut, the band rose to Number Two in the Billboard Top 200 with their third album *Silver Side Up* – one that would subsequently turn out to be Roadrunner's biggest selling album around the world. It spent two weeks at Number One in the UK album chart and achieved multi-platinum



Nickelback

status in several territories, including triple platinum in the UK and five times platinum in the US. The album has to date, sold in excess of 10 million units worldwide.

The band ushered in a new era of success for the label: their *How You Remind Me* became the most played song of 2002 in the US and was a huge global hit, reaching Number One in territories such as Austria, Denmark and Ireland. Their 2005 album, *All The Right Reasons*, was another huge hit, with sales totalling 7m in America and eventually turning double platinum in the UK on the back of the slow-burning success of the half million-selling *Rockstar* single.

Building The Brand

Over the years the label has worked hard on growing the Roadrunner brand and establishing it as both a mark of quality and a meeting point for likeminded fans. The UK label website has grown into an online community centered around the roster both past and present, with its traffic having increased tenfold since 2001.

In 2005 the company marked its Silver Anniversary with initiatives across every aspect of the business, from special reissues of the label's cornerstone titles, to tours that presented new signings. This activity culminated in a collaborative album entitled *Roadrunner United*, which contained original tracks bringing together past and present Roadrunner artists.

The company has also recently expanded into new territory with new imprint Loud & Proud Records that is home to established heritage Rock acts including **Lynyrd Skynyrd**, **Ratt** and **Kiss** (for Europe and select territories).

It has also begun partnering with the world of gaming, announcing that it is to release a digital EP that will act as a companion piece to the imminent *God Of War III* game on the Playstation 3.



Some Roadrunner releases from the past year.
From top: Dream Theater *Black Clouds & Silver Linings*; Heaven and Hell *The Devil You Know*; Lamb Of God *Wrath*; Porcupine Tree *The Incident*

Looking To The Future

Though initially known as a Hard Rock and Metal label, Roadrunner's roster now covers a range of styles, from the Southern Rock of **Black Stone Cherry** to the Progressive stylings of **Opeth** and **Dream Theater**.

The coming year is another busy one, with new titles from **Taking Dawn**, **Dommin**, **Rob Zombie**, **Mutiny Within** and **Airbourne** all scheduled for release in the first few months of 2010. There are also UK tours by **Machine Head**, **Trivium** and **Airbourne** among others.

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