

# The Musicians To Watch In 2011

Hip-hop sensation Tramar “Flo Rida” Dillard is feeling so optimistic about his financial prospects that he went out and got himself an early gift for the holidays.

“I just bought a Bugatti,” he told Forbes last week. “I was going to wait for Christmas, but I’m one of the Bugatti boys now.” He shouldn’t have much trouble working the \$2.5 million automobile into his annual budget—his new single “Club Can’t Handle Me” has clocked nearly 2 million downloads since July, which bodes well for sales of his recently released album, *Only One Flo: Part 1*.

Thanks in part to the new record, [Flo Rida](#) is one of our [11 Musicians to Watch in 2011](#). These artists hail from a wide range of musical genres, but all share the potential to make a leap into musical and financial superstardom in 2011. To form the list, we polled industry insiders including record label employees, attorneys and media buyers. The only restriction: The musicians must not have appeared on Forbes’ annual [Celebrity 100 list](#), at least not yet.

There was near-unanimous agreement among our sources that four artists are on the verge of joining the ranks of Coldplay, Jay-Z, Lady Gaga and the rest of the entertainment industry’s top earners: teen heartthrob [Justin Bieber](#), hip-hop prodigy [Drake](#), pop diva [Ke\\$ha](#), and the rock group [Kings of Leon](#). All four have new albums out or in the works and are planning ambitious international tours; they should all easily earn eight figures in 2011.

“Each of them is starting to dominate their space,” says Ryan Schinman, chief of Platinum Rye, the world’s largest buyer of music and talent for corporations. “Drake is still in Eminem and Jay-Z’s world, but as far as being an up-and-comer, he’s making that move. Same goes for Ke\$ha in her area. Justin Bieber is still controlling the tween market. And the Kings of Leon are truly the kings of rock.”

Below those four names, a slew of lesser-known artists are working their way up the ladder. Among them is [Bruno Mars](#), the 25-year-old singer/songwriter who's been nominated for a whopping seven Grammy awards this year, second only to Eminem's 10. Mars' voice soared across summer airwaves on the song "Billionaire," in which he sings of his dreams to be on the cover of *Forbes* magazine. That might not be out of the question if he keeps up his current pace.

"With a lead single that went straight to the top, a string of television appearances including a coveted performance on *Saturday Night Live*, and a sold-out tour, the iron is hot for Bruno Mars," says Diana Miller, a former NBC-Universal executive who now runs music blog [iListenToEverything.com](#). "I think 2011 will be an even bigger, more lucrative year for him."

A bit further from international superstardom, but promising nonetheless, are youngsters [Greyson Chance](#) and [Willow Smith](#). The latter is Will and Jada Pinkett Smith's 10-year-old daughter, who signed with Jay-Z's Roc Nation label earlier this year. Her first single, "Whip My Hair," quickly became an Internet sensation. Same goes for 13-year-old Greyson Chance, whose YouTube cover of Lady Gaga's "Paparazzi" was discovered by Ellen Degeneres this summer. Already signed to a deal with Interscope Records, Chance could be the next Justin Bieber.

"He's not just a teen sensation, he's a rock-n-roller and he's the real deal," says entertainment attorney Bernie Resnick. "He will surprise people with his talent and his rock edge, and he should last a lot longer than most of the recent disposable teen idols."

### **In Pictures: 11 Musicians To Watch In 2011**

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Both budding stars might want to take a lesson from Flo Rida, who recently broadcast his phone number on Twitter: Don't broadcast your digits if you value peace and quiet. Admits Flo: "My cellphone has been blowing up like crazy."

*Zack O'Malley Greenberg writes The Beat Report for Forbes. His first book, Empire State of Mind: How Jay-Z Went from Street Corner to Corner Office, will be published by Penguin this winter.*

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