

Youth
Bore
Brunt
of Iran
Crackdown

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

By Feliz Solomon

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

On Jan. 7, Parviz Afshari received the last messages his son, Sam, would ever send him: “I’m planning to join the protest tomorrow / But don’t tell Mom.”

Relatives found the boy’s body four days later, among rows of corpses laid out on a morgue floor in the Iranian city of Karaj, his father said in a phone interview from his home in Germany.

Please turn to Page 2

Cocaine
Clouds
U.S.-Colombia
Talks

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

By Juan Forero

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

BOGOTÁ, Colombia—Once the most reliable U.S. ally in Latin America, this country is now racing to mend ties with Washington after its leader fell out with President Trump. Its biggest challenge is controlling a record surge in cocaine production.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro headed to Washington for a White House meeting Tuesday with Trump at a time when his country is producing almost nine times as much cocaine as in 2012.

Please turn to Page 2



A sea turtle in Zakynthos Island, a key habitat for the loggerhead turtle (Caretta caretta).

MEDIASET

TO BHMA International edition

The Fight to Save Greece’s Sea Turtles

By Melina Giannakouli

Every summer, Greece’s islands and coastlines fill with residents and visitors seeking the “Greek summer”: long days by the sea, busy beaches,

and a tourism-driven rhythm that defines much of the country’s economy. Yet this seasonal influx also places significant pressure on coastal and marine environments.

Marine habitats in particular are under strain. Undersea meadows such as

Posidonia oceanica and other seagrass, along with coral and reef systems, are declining due to pollution, anchoring, coastal development, and rising sea temperatures. These changes affect a wide range of marine species, including sea turtles, which rely on

healthy coastal and marine ecosystems to survive.

Sea turtles navigate the Mediterranean basin throughout their lives, returning to coastal areas to reproduce. Today, climate change, coastal erosion, and increasing human ac-

tivity have made this process more precarious. Nests can be washed away by storms or lost to beach alteration, while artificial lighting, boat traffic, and unmanaged tourism further reduce survival rates.

Please turn to Page 6



A screenshot of Judy Garland performing Over the Rainbow for the film The Wizard of Oz.

20 Songs That Defined America

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

By Heidi Mitchell

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Before Billboard charts, before radio, before recorded sound itself, America still had “hit songs.” There were different metrics—say, the number of sheet-music copies pulled from a publisher’s warehouse or the frequency of reprints or how often it appeared in minstrel shows.

Whatever way its success was measured, a hit song touched something among the masses.

In the 19th century, a song that sold 2,000-5,000 copies of sheet music could be considered a hit; a blockbuster moved 10,000-20,000.

By the 1890s, the industry’s scale exploded, with top songs selling more than 100,000 copies, and rare megahits supposedly reaching the million mark

(their publishers at the time may have been inflating numbers, according to the Library of Congress).

When radio—then record players, then TV, then MTV, then streaming services—emerged, tallies were taken differently, and success was measured accordingly.

But almost since its founding, America has had hit songs that often defined an era.

Please turn to Page 4



YOU HAVE THE
BUSINESS
WE HAVE THE
ENERGY



Integrated energy solutions
for your business.
Find the products that suit
your needs, at dei.gr



One with the future

Iran’s Gen Z Helped Propel the Protests. They Paid With Their Lives.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A generation who grew up in a more connected world rebelled against a failing economy and strict social rules

Continued from Page One

Sam, who had just turned 17, is one of an expanding list of teenagers and other young people emerging as victims of the brutal crack-down on protests in Iran, a country where almost half of the population is under 30. Among the dead were athletes, artists and students whose photographs and brief biographies have since flooded social media, creating a digital memorial of young lives snuffed out under an internet blockade.

Ranks of youth often form the front lines of mass protests—from China’s 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations to the Arab Spring uprisings of the early 2010s, to Myanmar’s youth rebellion against a military coup in 2021. The Gen Z protest movement that has rolled around the globe in recent years has felled governments in places as far apart as Bangladesh and Bulgaria.

The demonstrations in Iran took on a different tenor, initially spearheaded by conservative bazaar workers



A protester lights a cigarette off a burning poster of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a demonstration in Berlin, Germany, in support of the protests in Iran against the government, January 14, 2026.

disgruntled at the collapse in Iran’s currency. The regime acknowledged their concerns and promised to make economic concessions. But when young people joined in, the protests morphed into an antiregime uprising that presented the greatest challenge to the country’s Shiite cleric rulers in their almost five decades in power. The crackdown was swift and decisive.

The scale of the violence in Iran is still coming into view. The regime shut down the internet on Jan. 8, the night Sam disappeared, and moved to crush

the protests that had swelled in cities nationwide. Most of the country was under a near-total communications blackout for weeks, making information slow to transmit and difficult to verify. Connectivity remains heavily restricted.

Still, stories have trickled out, mostly via Starlink satellite connections and testimonies of people who either left the country or got online using foreign SIM cards near its borders. Human-rights researchers who are painstakingly piecing together evidence say the death toll may surpass 10,000, which would make it the deadliest episode of political suppression in modern history.

Iranian authorities said more than 3,100 people were killed and alleged, without providing evidence, that most of the deaths were linked to terrorism.

The U.S.-based non-profit Human Rights Activists in Iran puts the confirmed death toll at more than 6,000. Of the dead that it has identified so far,

A Cocaine Boom Ruptured the U.S.-Colombia Alliance. Can It Be Repaired?

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Colombia’s president is visiting the White House to make the case the drug trade is under control, despite record production levels

Continued from Page One

Heavily armed narcotics-trafficking militias have doubled in size since 2022. So much cocaine is reaching American shores that the U.S. has threatened to cut off foreign aid and sanctioned Petro for not doing enough to stop it.

Ahead of Petro’s meeting with Trump, Gen. Pedro Sánchez, the Colombian defense minister, visited Washington with a message that the country is cracking down.

The security services here say they are destroying a cocaine-production lab every 40 minutes. They seized almost 2 million pounds of cocaine last year, a record. And, they say, they have pinched supply so much that cocaine prices are rising.



Bags of coca paste, which is used to make cocaine.

“It’s reached its peak,” Sánchez said by phone, taking a break from talking to U.S. officials in Washington last month. “The rate of growth has declined.”

James Story, a former U.S. diplomat who led antinarcotics efforts in Colombia from 2010 to 2013, said Colombia has indeed interdicted a lot of cocaine, but the reason isn’t very impressive. “You have record sei-

zures of cocaine, sure, because you have record production of cocaine,” said Story, a former ambassador to Venezuela. “They’re producing a ton of cocaine.”

The fate of U.S.-Colombia ties might come down to the chemistry between Trump and Petro, a leftist former guerrilla who is openly hostile to capitalism, close to Cuba’s Communist government and frequently critical of the U.S., including its signature antidrug campaign of airstrikes on speedboats ferrying drugs from South America.

Trump has called Petro “a low-rated and very unpopular leader, with a fresh mouth toward America.” Last fall, the U.S. canceled Petro’s visa and froze any assets he may hold in the U.S., accusing him of allowing drug cartels to flourish. The U.S. hasn’t provided evidence to justify placing him on the Office of Foreign Assets Control list, typically reserved for major traffickers.

Trump even suggested that Colombia could be next the day after U.S. commandos extracted Venezuelan autocrat Nicolás Maduro from Caracas, Venezuela.

But Trump invited Petro to the White House after a 40-minute conversation on Jan. 7. Trump said he came away open to hearing Petro’s side in person. Petro, 65 years old, said he told Trump that political figures from Colombia’s “extreme right” had spread false rumors to undermine his leftist rule.

The hope for Petro is that he can reset relations that had been close since the 1980s. Successive Colombian governments received about \$14 billion in U.S. aid to fight cocaine trafficking and insurgencies in close coordination with Washington—a partnership unmatched in the region.

The coming meeting between the two leaders is a “huge step in the right direction,” said Daniel García-Peña, Colombia’s ambassador to Washington. But he added: “That doesn’t mean the differences are going to be resolved.”

One problem might be that Petro denies that cocaine trafficking is flowing north from Colombia like never before. He told a huge crowd of supporters gathered on Bogotá’s central square recently that such assertions were a “bag of lies.”

“They tell this story to Trump,” the president said in



Colombian workers in a field of coca plants in Cauca province.

his speech. “There’s no evidence at all.”

Evidence from Colombia’s countryside—including United Nations monitoring of drug crops, military data and interviews in coca-growing regions—shows otherwise.

Figures collected last

Featured articles licensed from The Wall Street Journal

at least 137 people were under the age of 18 when they were killed. Tallies by other human-rights groups suggest about half of those killed were likely members of Iran’s Gen Z, those born roughly between 1997 and 2012.

They were the first generation of Iranians to grow up with widespread access to the internet, exposing them to the outside world like never before. They witnessed a brief window of optimism with the easing of sanctions in 2016, which raised hopes of an economic rebirth—until Iran’s nuclear deal collapsed two years later and plunged the nation further into isolation.

Some 42% of Iranians are under 30 years old, according to the United Nations population agency. Their prospects have shrunk as the economic situation has worsened—youth unemployment is above 20%—and many feel the ultraconservative Islamic regime is out of touch.

Young Iranians last took to the streets en masse in 2022, outraged over the death of a young woman in custody of the country’s “morality police,” who accused her of wearing her headscarf improperly.

The U.N. says at least 551 people were killed when authorities crushed those protests, known as the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement.

“These young Iranians take to the streets fully aware



Cars burn in a street during a protest over the collapse of the currency’s value in Tehran, Iran, January 8, 2026.

that they may be met with bullets and batons, and do so because they believe their future is worth fighting for,” said Holly Dagres, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute who grew up in Iran. “Iranian Gen Z wants to be part of the world and, in very basic terms, be able to express themselves freely, have economic opportunities, and live with dignity,” she said.

Like many of his generation, Sam belonged to a scattered family. Parviz, his father, moved to Germany in search of opportunity when

the boy was about 10. The distance was painful, Parviz said, but they spoke regularly on WhatsApp video calls, sometimes three times a week. Sam was his only child.

Back home in Karaj, Sam studied English and German languages and was planning to join his father in Bavaria later this year to complete his education in information technology. He loved computers, his father said, but his greatest passion was swimming.

When he didn’t come

home, his family hoped that he had only been detained. Local authorities said they had no record of his arrest and that the family should check the hospitals. One by one, they scoured the city’s medical centers until they came across a medic who said they had seen the boy.

The medic told them Sam was in critical condition being treated for a single gunshot wound in the back of his head, until authorities came and took him and other patients away. The medic advised them to check the

morgues, Parviz said.

They found him inside a body bag on Jan. 11 with a second bullet wound that tore through half of his face and made him almost unrecognizable, Parviz said.

“My son could have built the future of the country, this regime is just killing kids who are asking for freedom,” said Parviz, sobbing. “It isn’t fair.”

Relatives of three other teenagers killed in the crackdown shared similar stories with The Wall Street Journal. One, a 16-year-old from the

city of Kermanshah, told his parents he was going to the library but never returned.

Another, 17-year-old soccer player Rebin Moradi, called his family as he was leaving a game and told them he was joining a demonstration on his way home. They found him four days later in Tehran’s Kahrizak morgue.

And another, Amirali Heidari, was days away from his 18th birthday when he joined a protest in Kermanshah with a group of close friends, according to a relative who lives abroad. A witness who later fled the country told the relative he saw security forces shoot Heidari in the chest and then beat him to death with the butt of a rifle as he lay bleeding on the ground, the family member said.

As young as he was, Heidari felt a duty to fight for his generation’s future, the relative said. The relative fled Iran years ago after being badly injured at an antiregime protest. He said his own history with the regime had an impact on the young boy, who took up the fight in his absence.

“The younger people always take more risks, in protests and in life,” said Ghazal Abdollahi, an Iranian artist who went into exile after participating in the 2022 protests. For her, too, the struggle was personal—her mother is a well-known activist who spent many years imprisoned.

“This was their time,” she said.



year by the U.N. show Colombia was covered with 647,000 acres of the leaf essential to making cocaine—445% more than in 2012, when the U.S. and Colombia had dramatically reduced the size of the coca crop and cocaine production after a dozen years of spray-

ing chemicals from crop dusters. The amount of cocaine that can be produced reaches 3,300 tons, nearly nine times as much as the U.N. drug researchers reported was produced in 2012.

Since Petro took office in 2022, drug militias, each fielding thousands of heavily

armed fighters, have doubled in size to more than 25,000 members. The National Liberation Army, or ELN, counts 6,700 members, hundreds of them in Venezuela. The Gulf Clan, which the U.S. recently designated a foreign-terrorist organization, has about 9,000 members. And other groups

made of renegade guerrillas who rejected a 2016 peace accord have 9,200 members.

In his mountainous home in southwest Cauca province, Uverney Ijaji, 42, who helps lead a cooperative of farmers, says coca remains central to the local economy and to the gangs that have grown strong trafficking it.

“The armed groups have taken territory, and so people from one place can’t cross over to where the other group is,” he said, calling government assertions that it had gained back some ground “a lie.” He added, “The farmers around here find themselves caught in the crossfire.”

This isn’t Colombia as it was a quarter-century ago, when the U.S. embarked on a bipartisan, multibillion-dollar program to curb cocaine production and contain Marxist guerrillas who some policymakers in Washington believed could seize power.

By the early 2010s, the industrial-sized fields of coca in Colombia’s remote far south had been decimated. Nationally, the coca crop had been reduced by 70%. And the Revolutionary

Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC—once Latin America’s largest and most powerful guerrilla group—had abandoned its goal of taking power and instead entered peace talks.

“It was an incredible drop,” said Story, the former diplomat who once led antidrug efforts. “There was a point in time where we no longer had any coca to spray in southern Colombia.”

The reversal since then—which experts trace to a 2015 court ban on aerial fumigation—is visible across remote regions, particularly those close to the borders of Venezuela and Ecuador where groups compete for control of booming drug routes.

Hugo Gomez, who oversees a program by the American group Mercy Corps to help coca producers switch to legal crops, said farmers in the Catatumbo region next to Venezuela breed heartier crops that result in more harvests. They also now cram 36,000 coca bushes per hectare, as opposed to 12,000 in the past.

The increased productivity means more cocaine available to traffic to the U.S. and the world’s expanding

markets, from Australia to Eastern Europe.

“It’s not only an increase but in the density of plants, the number,” driving the growth in cocaine, Gomez said. “That means technological advances that are making coca fields more productive are leading to an increase in cocaine.”

Unilateral cease-fires called by the government to spur armed groups into peace talks have eased battlefield pressure, military analysts said, allowing militia commanders to recruit more fighters and use drug profits to upgrade their arsenals.

In Catatumbo, that has led 100,000 people to flee their homes in the past year as the groups battled over drug routes. And Jose Abril, a farmer who has grown coca but fled amid the violence, said the state failed to make the sustained investments to persuade farmers to switch crops.

“At this moment, Catatumbo is in a war without hope that there’s going to be any change,” he said. “As long as the ELN is there with other groups, they’re going to fight it out. It’s impossible there’ll be an end to it, impossible that there’ll be an end to the coca.”

20 Songs That Defined America

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

The biggest hit of each decade since the 1840s—and what it said about the country

Continued from Page One

Here’s a look at 20 such songs, the artist that made them famous, and what they reveal about their times.



1 ‘Old Dan Tucker’ (Daniel Decatur Emmett, 1843)

The first sheet music of this folk song was published in 1843, by a Boston publisher, though the song had been passed along (and added to) through oral traditions and minstrel shows, the roving performances by mostly white people in blackface. The lyrics amplify the caricature of a blundering Black man in the same vein as Jim Crow who boasts, drinks and gets into fights.

What it says about America: The minstrel show was intended for an audience of poor and working-class white Northerners who were part of the majority, but felt left behind economically, socially and politically. “The songs were rude and raw,” says Bob Fink, professor of music industry and musicology at the University of California at Los Angeles Herb Alpert School of Music.



2 ‘Swanee River’ (Stephen Foster, 1851)

This song, also known as “The Old Folks at Home,” became the most-performed song of 19th-century minstrel shows, and was adopted as the state song of Florida, through which the Suwannee River flows, in 1935.

What it says about America: The U.S. was building a national soundtrack; however, it was one shaped through the racial caricatures of minstrel shows. “With Foster, we shift into a sentimental, se-

pia-tone portrayal of slavery, which is morally kind of worse than the caricatures of the folk songs,” says Fink.



3 ‘Battle Hymn of the Republic’ (Julia Ward Howe, 1861)

During the Civil War, patriotic songs often reached 10,000-20,000 copies per edition, a massive figure for the time. This marching song was first published in the Atlantic Monthly in February 1862, and was the unofficial anthem of the Union Army, set to the tune of the also-popular song, “John Brown’s Body.”

What it says about America: Music became a tool of ideology and morale. Everyone in the North knew the lyrics: “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord/...His truth is marching on.” Meanwhile, in the South, most Confederates would be more familiar with “Dixie,” which Emmett, a Northerner, also claimed to have written. Lyrics like, “I wish I was in the land of cotton,” romanticized the plantations and lifestyle of the South.



3 ‘The Lost Chord’ (Adelaide Anne Proctor and Arthur Sullivan, 1877)

Some sources name this as the single most commercially successful song of the 1870s and 1880s. It was also one of the first songs ever recorded, and the tune with which Thomas Edison’s phonograph was introduced to the London press on Aug. 14, 1888.

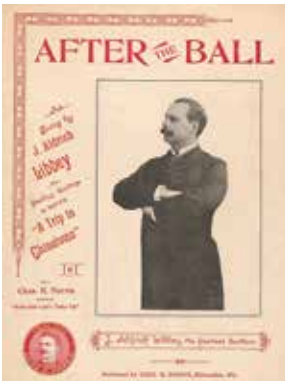
What it says about

America: The rising tide of gentility and middle-class values swept across American culture during the second half of the 19th century, says Fink. “Home music-making was at the core of Victorian domesticity, and a woman—wife, mother, daughter—considered the ‘angel in the home,’ would have been sitting at the genteel parlor piano playing this tune,” he says.

5 ‘Oh, My Darling Clementine’ (Percy Montrose, 1884)

The Western folk ballad “Clementine” appeared in more than two dozen known 19th-century song collections, with an estimated cumulative circulation in the tens of thousands. It centers on the daughter of a gold miner and her suitor who cannot swim to save her.

What it says about America: The steam-driven printing press meant that music was democratizing. Folk songs now entered mainstream American printed music alongside opera selections, etudes and parlor ballads. Sheet music was no longer limited to the affluent.



6 ‘After the Ball’ (Charles K. Harris, 1891)

“After the Ball” is widely considered America’s first true pop megahit, according to the Library of Congress. It was the first sheet music to sell more than one million copies and became a global phenomenon, translated into numerous other languages.

What it says about America: The music business had become a proper industry, now that the U.S. had its first commercial blockbuster engineered by Tin Pan Alley, a collective of writers, producers and publishers in New York, of which Harris is considered a founding father. Because it was a waltz, listeners could

dance to the tune, lending to its popularity.



7 ‘I Love You Truly’ (Carrie Jacobs-Bond, 1901)

This was the first song by a woman to sell more than a million copies. Unable to break into the male-dominated music business of the time, Jacobs-Bond had to start her own publishing company.

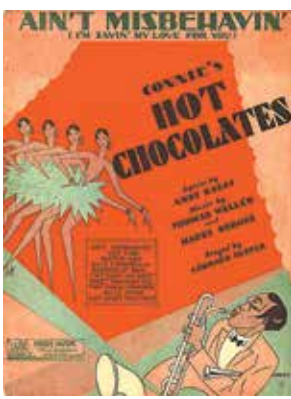
What it says about America: America was a sentimental people at the turn of the 20th century, and women—the keepers of that romantic flame—were beginning to discover their power. “The struggle for suffrage was just around the corner,” notes Fink



8 ‘Swanee’ (George Gershwin, 1919)

This song also sold more than one million copies of sheet music, as well as two million records. It sat at the top Billboard’s newly published chart, called “Last Week’s Ten Best Sellers Among the Popular Songs,” for nine weeks, mainly due to Al Jolson performing the song (in blackface) for his show, “Sinbad,” which was eventually pressed into vinyl.

What it says about America: While the song obviously calls back to Stephen Foster’s “Swanee River,” it also represents the contribution of the wave of American immigrants—especially Jewish Americans like Gershwin and Jolson—who transformed the country in the period from 1880-1924.



9 ‘Ain’t Misbehavin’ (Fats Waller, 1929)

The swingy jazz number was one of the most-performed songs of the decade, and the sonic location where jazz and pop collided. Originally composed by Waller for a Harlem revue called “Connie’s Hot Chocolate,” it moved to Broadway with Louis Armstrong performing the rousing trumpet solo.

What it says about America: The Harlem Renaissance wasn’t niche; it was American popular culture. In fact, many scholars argue that American pop culture has always been dominated, or at least strongly influenced, by Black culture.



10 ‘Over the Rainbow’ (Judy Garland, 1939)

The song, performed a few minutes into the movie, “The Wizard of Oz,” won the Academy Award for Best Original Song, and in 2001, it was anointed as the greatest song of the 20th century in a joint survey by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Recording Industry Association of America.

What it says about America: The music industry had just emerged from decades of turmoil caused by expiring recording patents, the rise of radio, the Great Depression and the disruption of sound films. By the late 1930s, the system had reconsolidated into a tightly integrated, quasi-monopolistic structure dominated by three national radio networks and a handful of powerful movie studios. Fink argues that the song reflects a time of centralized power within the music industry,

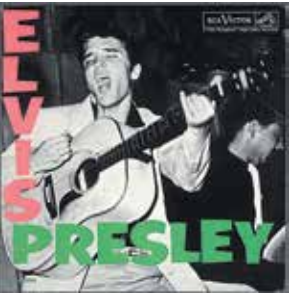
but symbolizes a desire to escape.



11 ‘White Christmas’ (Bing Crosby, 1942)

This is the bestselling physical single in history, with more than 10 million copies sold in the U.S. and more than 50 million sold worldwide. Its sheet-music sales also numbered in the hundreds of thousands during the first Christmas of its release.

What it says about America: Wartime nostalgia and postwar domesticity codified the modern American holiday season. The song also reminded Americans what they were fighting for and captured a yearning to be home with family during the festive season. Ironically, it was written by a Jewish American, Irving Berlin.



12 ‘Hound Dog’ (Elvis Presley, 1956)

The two-sided single, which originally had “Don’t Be Cruel” on the A-side and “Hound Dog” on the B-side, flew off the shelves, with the B-side surprisingly topping the charts for 11 weeks, a record at the time. The song sold three million copies by 1958, the first nonholiday single to do so.

What it says about America: Although “Hound Dog” had done well when the New York songwriting team of Leiber and Stoller wrote it for Alabama-born R&B shouter Big Mama Thornton in 1953, Presley’s hip-shaking performances on “The Milton Berle Show” and “The Steve Allen Show” made the song—and Elvis—a national sensation. The record’s driving energy captured the optimism of the postwar economic boom.



Top 40 programming pumped through AM radios in affordable cars helped mid-wife rock 'n' roll: A new youth-driven pop culture, powered by television, teenage spending and a rapidly transforming media landscape.



13 'I Want to Hold Your Hand' (the Beatles, 1963)

The bestselling single by the Beatles moved 250,000 copies within three days of its release, the day after Christmas. The British Invasion, and Beatlemania, had begun.

What it says about America: Amid protest and upheaval, America embraced catharsis and connection in its pop music. "You can make the case that the same girls who were flocking to these stadiums, 10 years later were marching in the streets for women's liberation," says Fink. With Beatlemania, argues Fink, "huge masses of women got used to smashing through police barricades."



14 'Stayin' Alive' (the Bee Gees, 1977)

The "Saturday Night Fever" soundtrack sold more than 40 million copies, one of the bestselling albums ever, driven by "Stayin' Alive." It's an early example of a movie soundtrack boosting a particular song into the popular psyche, according to the Library of Congress.

What it says about America: A country facing deindustrialization and stagflation turned toward escapist glamour and pop songs that fused funk, soul and R&B—and got people on the dance floor. Disco may have been feared by many (see Disco Demolition Night in Chicago, circa 1979), but no one could deny its popularity.



15 'Billie Jean' (Michael Jackson, 1983)

Racking up two Grammy awards and frequently featured on "best of all time" lists, this funky dance-pop hit was the second single off "Thriller," Jackson's sixth studio album. It reached No. 1 on the Billboard Hot

100, where it remained for seven weeks.

What it says about America: Cable television created global superstars while breaking racial barriers in mainstream media. Although British New Wave bands had pioneered the use of the music video as an art form, Michael Jackson was one of the first Black artists to be given the chance to do the same.



16 'Friends in Low Places' (Garth Brooks, 1990)

The hit single appeared on the album "No Fences," one of the bestselling albums of all time. Country music has been a part of the unofficial American songbook since the invention of the radio and the opening of the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, where stars like the Carter Family, Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash performed. But Brooks is often credited with being the first major crossover artist, able to fill stadiums and bring country music into the mainstream.

What it says about America: Country music

was far more popular than the gatekeeping critics wanted to admit, says Fink. Turns out, Americans like sincerity, authenticity and a splashy showman. Today, there are more country-music stations than any other format. That said, this may not represent a true measure of nationwide popularity, argues Fink.



17 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' (Nirvana, 1991)

The single was a huge hit, selling more than 13 million copies and streaming over a billion times to date.

What it says about America: Grunge brought Gen X disillusionment to the center of American culture. "It effectively killed the last vestiges of '80s glam rock, all that hair, metal and theatrics," says Fink.



18 'Porcelain' (Moby, 1999)

Richard Melville Hall,

aka Moby, dug deep into America's musical library to create the album "Play," on which the song "Porcelain" appears. It combines drum machines, synthesizers, strings and a reversed sample from a 1960 film soundtrack. That mixture sold millions of copies.

What it says about America: "Play" was the first album on which every song was licensed for commercial use. "Moby represents the moment when the music industry recognized the power of licensing to break an artist," says Fink. "Selling out becomes the norm."

Moby also helped establish electronic dance music, or EDM, in the U.S. market. Though it was descended from funk and disco and flourished as an underground style in 1980s Detroit and Chicago, rave culture had to be reintroduced to America as an import from Britain.



19 'Hey Ya!' (Outkast, 2003)

With more than 10 million combined sales and dominant airplay, "Hey Ya!" was one of the most ubiquitous songs of the decade. Even your grandmother probably knows how to shake it like

a Polaroid picture.

What it says about America: Genres were dissolving and the internet was flattening the musical landscape into a shared monoculture. Hip-hop, and its predecessor, rap, had become cultural mainstays.



20 'Uptown Funk' (Mark Ronson featuring Bruno Mars, 2014)

With 14 weeks at No. 1 and more than one billion streams early in the switch to streaming, this was a digital-era juggernaut. Ronson and Mars knew how to hit the zeitgeist.

What it says about America: The algorithm epoch had begun, creating precision-engineered nostalgia for a global audience. "That song represents decadence," says Fink. "It's what we call 'retromania,' a bunch of rhythmic clichés and recycled sounds from the postdisco era. It feels like what a musical AI would create when asked to write the most popular song imaginable."

The Fight to Save Greece’s Sea Turtles

To BHMA International Edition speaks with Eva Maria Alexandra Panagiotou, project manager at MEDASSET, to find out about Greece’s marine conservation efforts

Continued from Page One

A well-known example of this tension can be seen in areas where sea turtle tourism has grown rapidly. While regulations exist to limit disturbance—such as rules governing boat distance and behavior—enforcement is often inconsistent, particularly during peak tourist season. Local communities may be increasingly aware of conservation needs, but visitors are not always familiar with the rules or their impact.

Over the years, conservation organizations have worked to study populations, safeguard nesting areas, and raise awareness about the challenges turtles face.

To better understand the struggles sea turtles face in the Mediterranean TO BHMA International Edition spoke with Eva Maria Alexandra Panagiotou, project manager at the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET), one of Greece’s longest-standing environmental organizations.

What inspired you to get involved in sea turtle conservation?

I actually started studying veterinary medicine, in my first year of university, because I thought that was the only way to get involved with wildlife. After a year in university, I decided it wasn’t exactly what I wanted, and I did an internship in South Africa in wildlife conservation. And I fell in love completely. I came back to university, switched majors, and then whenever I wasn’t at university, I’d be volunteering for different organizations. Initially, I was more terrestrial-based, until my masters in the UK, where I studied conservation science and policy. I began work on my dissertation there, which was about reducing the demand for sea-turtle products, and researched the illegal wildlife trade. Then, when I came back to Greece to finish it, I decided to volunteer at ARCH-ELON, a rescue center here in Greece, and fell in love with turtles. And the rest is history.

Do different species of sea turtles have different needs?

Yes, especially when it comes to their care in reha-



Alexandra Panagiotou holding Arnie the three flipped Green Sea Turtle to gather morphometrics at the Two Oceans Aquarium Turtle Conservation Centre.



Seabed clean-ups in Zakynthos Island, part of the Caretta² Zakynthos project.



bilitation. But in the wild, too, their migration routes, and diet often vary greatly.

In the Mediterranean, the most populous species of sea turtle is the loggerhead (*Carretta Carretta*). We also have the green sea turtle, which is nesting more and more in Greece. We used to see it more in Turkey and Cyprus, but a few nests were recorded in Greece this year, as well. We also get the leatherback sea turtles, which do not nest in the Mediterranean.

Their diets are significantly different: the *Carretta Carretta* is basically omnivorous, while the green sea turtles become herbivorous when they are older. Leatherbacks, despite being the biggest sea turtle and reaching up to 2 and a half meters, are exclusively medusivores, which is to say they feed on jelly fish alone.

Their migratory pathways also differ: leatherbacks come into the Mediterranean to feed but then they leave. They are big ocean travelers—all sea turtles are—but our research has shown that while our loggerheads mostly stick to the Mediterranean, the leatherbacks also venture into the Atlantic.

How is climate change affecting sea turtle populations along Greek coasts?

Climate change is already having a measurable impact on sea turtles nesting on Greek coasts. Rising sand and air temperatures affect egg incubation, often reducing hatching success. And since turtle sex is temperature-dependent, with warmer nests producing more females and colder temperatures more males, they also skew the population and could eventually destabilize it.

We are also seeing increased nest inundation and erosion due to stronger storms and rising sea levels, especially on low-lying nesting beaches. Animals are quite adaptable to climate change—after all, it’s a cycle that has been ongoing since the beginning of time, and sea turtles were here before the dinosaurs—but the anthropogenic threats we pose make it all the harder for them to survive.

Recent studies suggest climate change might alter turtle migration

routes. Could this lead to new or unexpected nesting beaches appearing in Greece or nearby regions?

Yes, this is a very real possibility. As sea temperatures rise, and temperatures and weather patterns change, turtles may adjust their migration routes and nesting choices. We are already seeing sporadic nesting events outside traditional beaches. This presents both an opportunity and a challenge. On one hand, it shows turtles’ adaptability. On the other, many of these beaches are unprotected, heavily developed, or poorly regulated.

How does seasonal human activity affect sea turtle conservation?

Seasonal human activity has a major impact. Tourism peaks exactly during the turtle nesting (late May to mid-August) and hatching season (mid-July through October).

Beach furniture, vehicles, artificial lighting, noise, and nighttime beach use can all disrupt nesting females and disorient hatchlings. It’s already hard to be a turtle, with only one or two out of every thousand hatchlings reaching adulthood, so the numbers are very low ... But the anthropogenic threats are definitely making it even harder!

While Greece does have regulations—especially within the Natura 2000 sites and Marine Protected Areas—enforcement remains inconsistent, and local implementation varies widely. MEDASSET has repeatedly highlighted gaps between legislation and reality on the ground.

How effective has national and international legislation been in protecting sea turtles?

International legislation has been essential but insufficient on its own. Instruments like the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and the EU Habitats Directive provide a strong legal framework and have helped reduce direct exploitation and improve habitat protection. And many COP decisions recognize climate change, bycatch, and habitat loss as

threats. But the translation of these commitments into effective national action remains a slow process.

Greece, too, has some very good policies and legislations—but they are not sufficient on their own. Implementation, compliance, and political will all play a huge role, but the lack of enforcement is actually a major problem. That said, regional cooperation under CMS, the Bern Convention, and the Barcelona Convention has improved regulations, data sharing, and awareness, which is a positive step forward. They put more pressure on local and national authorities.

Having experience of both South Africa and Greece, how do they compare in terms of conservation efforts?

My experience in South Africa was very positive overall. Along the South African coast, there were three main sea turtle rehabilitation organizations, and while one could say we were operating in similar spaces and sometimes competing for the same limited resources, we never viewed it that way. Instead, we saw ourselves as a family—united by a single goal: doing what was best for our “kids”, the turtles.

We shared knowledge, expertise, and resources openly, and there were even occasions when turtles were transferred between facilities/organizations to ensure they received the best possible care.

In Greece, the landscape is more complex. There are many organizations doing important and often long-standing work, sometimes with different mandates, approaches, and pressures. With a focus on both wildlife but also on environmental conservation more generally. This can understandably lead to tension at times. Still, there is growing recognition that collaboration is not only beneficial but essential for our shared goal—especially in the face of shared challenges like climate change, tourism pressure, and limited funding.

How much do you think the Greek population knows about sea turtle conservation and the threats they face?

I think public awareness has improved a lot in Greece, in the last few years, especially with the younger generation and coastal communities. Our love for sea turtles, and nature in general has definitely grown.

And that is due in part to the work of many environmental NGOs. At MEDASSET we do a lot of education outreach and capacity-build-



Bob the green turtle during a free diving enrichment session.

ing. We work with fishing communities, visit schools, and we try not to work only with fellow scientists and conservationist, but with the communities as well.

However—and I’m speaking for myself here—I haven’t seen the same level of behavioral change in Greece that is necessary, and which I’ve seen in other countries. Many people are still unaware of how everyday actions directly affect turtles.

It’s important to remember that people are not inherently bad, and that negative behaviors are often a result of a lack of knowledge and understanding. No one

“Turtles are so charismatic and strong, they encompass everything beautiful”

knows everything, we often have our areas of expertise, and unless someone brings other aspects and perspectives to our attention, we won’t find out about them for ourselves. So it’s very cool to see how most people are very open and receptive to making changes.

A lot of the fishers we have worked with have become very proactive after being informed about sea turtles and the threats they face. If they catch turtles accidentally as bycatch, they learn how to release them properly and how to share important data with us. They’re often open to using safer fishing equipment, too,

to reduce bycatch. Similarly in the schools we visit, children are asking what they can do for turtles—to make a difference.

Greece is such a big tourist destination, right? We see issues with ethical wildlife engagement in areas such as Zakynthos. People want to lie on a beach, go on a boat ride, and don’t spare a thought for the turtles for whom it’s time to nest, or the hatchlings who have to make it into the water. And Greeks and tourists alike are responsible—which is why it’s important to work both nationally and internationally.

How can people get

more involved in sea turtle conservation efforts?

There are many ways people can help: supporting conservation organizations like MEDASSET, volunteering responsibly, respecting nesting beaches, reducing plastic use, and advocating for better coastal management.

Equally important is holding decision-makers accountable—demanding for sustainable tourism practices and the proper enforcement of environmental laws.

Conservation is not just for scientists; it’s a shared responsibility.

If you could snap your fingers, what would you change from the current situation in Greece?

If I could change one thing, it would be the mindset that nature is an obstacle to development rather than its foundation. Greece’s natural heritage is its greatest asset. We are one of the most biodiverse, if not the most biodiverse, country in Europe, and we need to protect that.

We need stronger enforcement, long-term planning beyond election cycles, and the genuine integration of environmental protection into economic decisions, those need to become one—we can’t keep on considering them as separate things.

Have things changed in sea turtle conservation since you started? What gives you hope?

Yes, things have changed. There is more scientific knowledge, stronger international cooperation, and greater public awareness than ever before. Also, a big win in the conservation community was that as of October 2025, the green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) has been re-classified from Endangered to Least Concern on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. There are few species at least in my lifetime, that have been re-classified positively, so that’s incredible news and gives us a lot of hope that what we are doing is working.

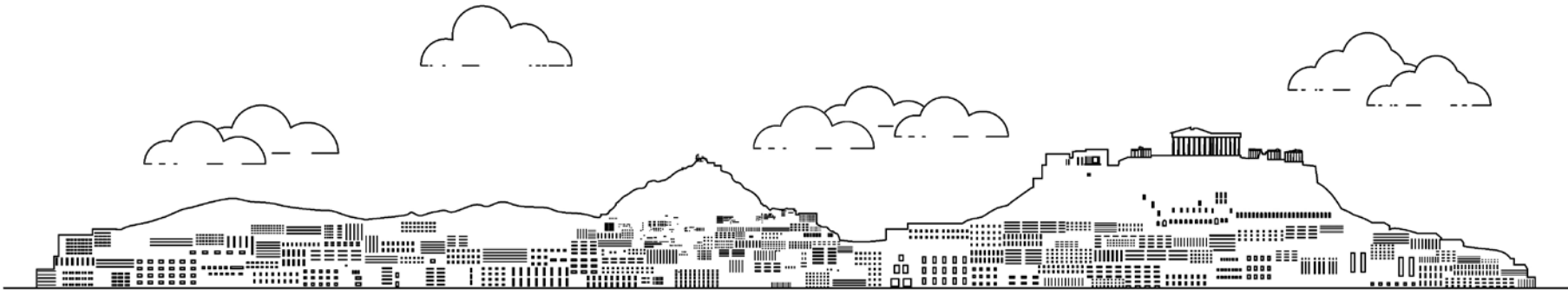
Still, they remain conservation dependent, meaning that they will continue to rely on targeted conservation efforts—such as habitat protection, nesting projects, or management programs—to prevent them from becoming endangered or vulnerable again.

What gives me hope is the dedication of local communities, young scientists, volunteers, and organizations who continue to fight for these species despite growing pressures. Sea turtles have survived for millions of years—if we give them space and protection, they can continue to do so!



Talitha Noble, Alexandra Panagiotou and Kevin Spiby of Two Oceans Aquarium watch on as Bob starts his journey to freedom after eight long years.

Meet the Athenians



If you've spent time in Athens as a visitor or a resident, you'll know how chaotic, charming, exasperating and irresistible the city can be—often all at once

Where do Athenians spend their time? Where do they unwind, meet friends, or enjoy their daily coffee? Where does work end and the city begin? In *Meet the Athenians*, we talk to the people of Athens about the places and moments that make them love the city they call home.

- 1

How does your work interconnect with the city and its people?
- 2

If you had only 24 hours in Athens, which three essential stops would be on your list?
- 3

What's one thing you really love about Athens, and something else you wish was different?

1 I'm Senior Communications Manager at the Child Mind Institute in New York, where I work on the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Initiative (CAMHI). The Initiative is implemented in Greece, Brazil, and South Africa with exclusive support from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), as part of its SNF Global Health Initiative. My work is directly connected to the city and its people because it focuses on strengthening local communities. Through CAMHI, and its Athens hub in particular, we work with educators, health professionals and families to help create a more supportive environment for young people in the city. Our work becomes meaningful when it translates into real changes in people's daily lives: better access to knowledge, stronger professional capacities, more understanding, less stigma. My work is mostly about that last part: how clear information, open dialogue and communication on an accessible human level can reduce the fear, misconceptions, and prejudice that surround mental health. In that way, my work becomes part of the city's life and influences how we learn to listen to children, recognize their needs, and support them effectively. And when you support a child or a family, you support an entire community.



Melina Spathari
Senior Communications Manager at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Initiative

2 My first stop would be an oasis of green, a sanctuary for rare flora, lying hidden and untapped in Nea Chalkidona, a suburb I visit often which is now under threat from cement. I'm referring to the Podoniftis stream, a tributary of the Kifissos: species of fish, freshwater turtles, rare reptiles, endemic birds and a wide variety of plants still survive there, along with kingfishers, tortoises, wagtails, chaffinches, goldfinches, towering plane trees, wild tulips, and orchids. The fact that all of this coexists with garbage, debris and the stench from sewer outlets is the perfect metaphor for what Athens is today. My second stop would be the Gouva neighborhood in Agios Artemios, on the fringes of Pangrati. We should enjoy it while we still can, because my urban instinct tells me it will be the next target of gentrification: just outside the center but still really close, with a colorful past packed with larger-than-life underworld characters that plays well in the bourgeois imagination. There's the wonderful Plyta Square, where a café-grill house of the same name recently opened which manages to be both friendly and simple, despite being run by celebrity chefs! It's the sort of place where you could find old guys who've been coming here for decades sitting alongside actors, suits and people in flip-flops. The third stop would be Pan-

ormou and the "Maggie Cassidy" bar recently opened by Armelina, Michaela and Spyros of the iconic 7 Jokers, right behind the Danaos cinema. Its stunning, horseshoe-shaped second bar that wraps around you like an embrace, and the fact it takes its name from a Jack Kerouac novel, are reason enough to love it. 3 I love the Athens of the idlers as much as the Athens of the strivers—the hard-working poor who sell lottery tickets, the barbers, the cleaners from Eastern Europe, and all the minorities scrambling to get by and find their place. I mainly mean the city's underbelly: the Roma encampments and the undocumented homeless migrants from Asia and Africa. My Athens, the one I encountered at 18, when I arrived as a "student migrant" from a Greek island, is the Athens of the writer Giorgos Brounias, the poet Nikos Panagiotopoulos, and the bohemian poet and actor Giannis Polychronopoulos—friends who sadly left us too soon. It's the Athens where, on a Saturday noon stroll in Plateia Elpidos under Filopappou Hill, you might find someone sitting on a bench singing Chiotis' "Iliovasilēmata" to an audience of no one. What I would change is the people in positions of power who treat the city's inhabitants, its flora and fauna, with such uncaring brutality.

1 Athens has always been the epicenter and the heart of Greek publishing, so the stimuli and choices are countless. For me, publishing remains a collective undertaking. I work with writers, researchers, translators, editors, printers, graphic designers and booksellers who live and work in the city, to create books for people who live and work in the same streets, with whom I share common references and memories. For me, the book isn't only the end product of my work; it's also a reason to meet and talk with others. Which makes sociability and communication integral to the work as elements that enhance and feed into my relationship with Athens and its narratives.

2 First stop: Exarchia Morning, the street market in Odos Kallidromiou So I'd set off in the morning from the market. Where the city comes alive here with the aromas and colors of fruits, vegetables and other local produce. It is a meeting point where you can enjoy an authentic form of everyday Athenian life. Then I'd take



Katia Koutsafti
Graphic Designer at Aiolos Publications

a stroll around the bookshops in the area. Exarchia has always been Athens' printing, publishing and literary quarter, and new and used book shops, specialized or otherwise, continue to breathe life into narrow streets steeped in history. Second stop Noon, Psyri Then I'd head down to Psyri. And having windowed-shopped in the junk-antique shops and wandered through the busy narrow streets and past the throngs of people in the cafes and eateries, I'd grab a souvlaki—a pit-stop that's almost a ritual for me. Of course, as the traditional food of the city, enjoying a souvlaki is also very much part of the Athenian experience. After Psyri, it would be time for Plaka and a stroll to the Stoa of Attalus. As you leave the bustle of the narrow streets behind, the tempo shifts and the city reveals its historical depth. Your route unites the city's present with its rich past. Third stop Evening, fun, downtown The city lights are on, my

time in Athens is running out and I can't miss the Athens-by-night experience. I'd head downtown for a bar hop. I'd definitely pop into "Paraskinio" on Kallidromiou and "Lulu" on Ippokratous, and I'd end up propping up the bar at "Santarosa" on Asklipiou or a little further down on Stadiou, at the historic "Galaxy". 3 like the energy of the city, its combination of history and contemporary life, the markets, the cafes and bars where the everyday is spiked with the unpredictable. Athens is full of stories, sounds, smells and images that inspire my every day. I would like the city's public spaces and transport to be better organized and cleaner, with wider sidewalks, less noise and chaos in the streets. And for people to be more respectful of one another. Because that would make for a more friendly and comfortable Athens for its residents and visitors alike, without the need to sacrifice any of its vibrancy or authenticity.