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WHY MUSIC INVESTORS FLOCKED TO SOUTH FLORIDA FOR GOLDSTATE'S 'CONVERSATIONS IN MUSIC'

From AI detection to indie sector growth, here are five takeaways from Charles Goldstuck's exclusive event in Ft. Lauderdale.

By **Hannah Karp**



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(Left to Right): Yonas Aregai, GoldState Chief of Staff, Shannon Sorenson, SVP, Legal and Business Affairs, NMPA, Hannah Karp, Editorial Director of Billboard, Priyanka Khimani, Founding Partner of Khimani & Associates, Charles Goldstuck, Founder and Managing Partner of GoldState, Ghazi Shami, Founder and CEO of EMPIRE, and Kristin Robinson, Senior Correspondent at Billboard - at the GoldState Conversations in Music Conference hosted at Pier Sixty-Six in Fort Lauderdale

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Last week, GoldState Music founder and managing partner **Charles Goldstuck** gathered his investors along with a collection of music's most brilliant minds for "Conversations in Music," a three-day conference about the future of the business.

Goldstuck has been convening exclusive thought-leadership meetings for decades in his many roles: he's the founder of **The Sanctuary at Albany, a state-of-the-art recording studio and music academy in the Bahamas;** the executive chairman of **TouchTunes Interactive Networks,** and a major-

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But the South African philanthropist said that this year's event — which he hosted at the luxurious Pier Sixty-Six resort in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida — marked his first event of such scale and urgency, reflecting the speed at which industry dynamics are changing.

Each expert-moderated conversation was packed with insight, and reflected Goldstuck's own keen interest in the intersection of AI and music — he is currently funding **the AI & African Music** initiative at his alma mater, University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, to empower creatives to use AI to preserve, teach or co-create African musical traditions and sounds, and recently **published a paper** arguing that music companies ought to negotiate deals with AI companies to set precedent before courts and lawmakers weigh in.

Among the conference highlights: Water & Music's AI analyst and music producer **Yung Spielberg** demonstrated how to make songs using Suno. MIT professors showcased the cutting-edge music technology their top students are building. DAYA, a GoldState artist who shot to fame with her feature on Chainsmokers' "Don't Let Me Down," revealed how she's navigating the modern industry and shared her new music. **Dr. Tamay Aykut**, founder and CEO of Sureel, broke down the possibilities for how to determine which rights holders should get credit for music produced with AI models trained on their works.



Publishers are gaining leverage. The deal between Kobalt and ElevenLabs establishes a 50-50 split between publishers and recorded-music rights holders, a big improvement from streaming and sales, which have paid out lower rates to publishers. This sets a new precedent for future generative AI licensing deals, with publishers now in a position to secure stronger economic outcomes as the landscape evolves. Industry surveys estimate that more than half of younger creators already use AI tools in their workflows, suggesting that generative AI could make songwriters more productive.



Laurent Hubert (Left), CEO of Kobalt Music, Mary Megan Peer (Center), CEO of peermusic, and Kristin Robinson (Right), Senior Correspondent at Billboard – at the GoldState Conversations in Music Conference

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significant defaults or financial problems across these transactions in recent years, fueling the highest level of investor confidence seen in the sector since the Napster era. The market is competitive, but investors are employing more sophisticated knowledge and due diligence thanks to increased transparency from the digital music ecosystem. And yet, there are only two major players in the catalog valuation space. Is there room for more?

The indies are rising. Independent music companies claim nearly half the global market share and the majority of new releases in 2025. Improved creator tools, the proliferation of distribution options, and the ease of accessing audiences across more than 700 digital and social platforms worldwide are powering the expansion of independent distributors like Symphonic Distribution, Too Lost, Create Music Group, and Empire, all of whom are posting double-digit annual growth. Financing for independent creators is getting more sophisticated too, with leading distro platforms now offering artists advances based on real-time consumption data.

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Ghazi Shami (Left), Founder and CEO of EMPIRE, and Priyanka Khimani (Right), Founding Partner of Khimani & Associates – at the GoldState Conversations in Music Conference
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Investing in China and India is about to get easier. Historically, Western artists and rightsholders lacked clarity on Chinese consumption, but Luminate's new licensing partnership with Tencent Music promises new transparency from the world's fifth-largest music market. Luminate is also ramping up its Indian market data coverage, as **Billboard launches in India.**

AI detection and attribution technologies will be key. Only a handful of formal licenses have been announced for generative AI platforms and music, but commercial and licensing momentum is building. Landmark agreements include those between Kobalt and ElevenLabs, Merlin and ElevenLabs, and the Universal Music Group with Udio. As Goldstuck wrote in his **paper**, *Past Precedent, Future Proof: Towards a New Commercial and Legal Framework for AI-Generated Music*, generative AI platforms and rightsholders should move

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generated music. Accurate detection will help monitor the use of tracks for training, while new attribution systems will be critical for properly crediting and compensating rights holders and creators for outputs. Platforms like Deezer, which offers detection, and Sureel, which specializes in attribution, are showing early promise in moving the industry towards proactive AI music tracing and licensing, but widespread adoption will require a lot more work.



Charles Goldstuck (Left), Recording Artist Daya (Center), and David Conway (Right), President of Hard 8 Working Group and Daya's Manager – at the GoldState Conversations in Music Conference

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Next week, Harbourview Equity founder and CEO Sherrese Clarke Soares brings her investors to Miami for another series of panel conversations, as the investor-conference circuit continues.

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