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SUBMIT NEWS

Submit your event information by Monday for publication the following week (two weeks in advance is even better!).

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ADVERTISING AND  
SUBSCRIPTIONS

Baker City Herald

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# What we're into

## THE NUMBER ONES

At some point in our lives, many of us have turned on the radio and thought, "This is what passes for popular music?"

Maybe we suddenly find ourselves out of sync with modern trends or perhaps there are other contemporary artists we feel are more deserving of mass adulation. But, for better and for worse, every hit pop song is a product of its time and place, whether the song becomes an all-timer or a disposable blip in time.

That's one of the central themes of Tom Breihan's *The Number Ones*, a triweekly column that runs on the music website Stereogum. Since 2018, Breihan has been reviewing every song that's hit No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 charts since its inception in 1958.

Breihan scores every song on a 1-10 scale, but the score isn't really the point. For people with terminal trivia brain like me, he does a deep dive into every song he reviews, providing not only a history of the song and the artist, but also the songwriter, producer and countless other facts and figures.

Even if Breihan doesn't like the song he's reviewing, he attempts to figure out why the song resonated with so many people at that particular point in time. Although some years are stronger than others, reading the *Number Ones* made me realize that there's never been a golden era in popular music: every period in pop has its fair share of mediocrity and drivel.

But that's also led me to the conclusion that even something designed for mass appeal



www.stereogum.com

can be an art form. Because when you get to masterpieces like Aretha Franklin's "Respect," or Stevie Wonder's "Superstition" or TLC's "Waterfalls," they hit especially hard because they make you feel something, like all good art.

You can catch up on past *Number Ones* by visiting [stereogum.com/category/columns/](http://stereogum.com/category/columns/). At the time of this writing, Breihan has made it all the way to 1996.

— ANTONIO SIERRA, FORMER EAST OREGONIAN REPORTER

# New releases

## 'HEART ON MY SLEEVE' BY ELLA MAI

British singer, Ella Mai, is back with even more R&B bridges in her second album, "Heart on My Sleeve."

While this album radiates Mai's finger-snapping tracks and smooth melodies similar to her debut, it's also more passionate and sung by someone who's a little older and wiser. Mai's debut album released in 2018, went double platinum and her hit single "Boo'd Up" went on to win a Grammy for best R&B song. She

was 23 when her debut album was released, now at 27, this album proves who she is as an artist and that she knows love isn't clear cut.

Mai has never shied away from love songs but this sophomore album shows more sides of Mai. The tracks highlight all the sides to falling in love, the healthy sides and even the toxic relationships. "Leave U Alone" shows the uncontrollable nature of being in love, while "Hide" is a ballad finding vulnerability.

Her sound stays true to R&B but also brings in fun pop vibes. "Fallen Angel" is a true lovestruck

romantic track that stood out. "DMFU" is a lush R&B track that was another single off the album about the risk of romance and that

it might go sour. Her track "Feels Like" shows that she takes power and control back in a relationship.

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