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Kings of Leon Will Be the First Band to Release an Album as an NFT

The band's revolutionary tokens will unlock special perks like limited-edition vinyl and front row seats to future concerts

By **SAMANTHA HISSONG** 



Matthew Followill*

On Friday, **Kings of Leon** will release their new album, titled ***When You See Yourself***, in the form of a non-fungible token (**NFT**) — becoming the first band to ever do so.

The band is actually dropping three types of tokens as part of a series called “NFT

and a third type is just for exclusive audiovisual art. All three types of tokens offer art designed by the band's longtime creative partner Night After Night; the smart contracts and intelligence within the tokens were developed by YellowHeart, a company that wants to use blockchain technology to bring value back to music and better direct-to-fan relationships.

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A quick rundown: NFTs are a type of **cryptocurrency**, but instead of holding money, they can hold assets like art, tickets, and music. NFTs operate on a blockchain, which is a publicly accessible and transparent network — meaning anyone can see the details of any NFT transaction. Computers involved in the transactions become part of the network, which keeps updating and can't be hacked due its nature as many-headed hydra. In the case of NFTs, their value becomes subjective and therefore fluctuates, kind of like stocks. (To learn more about the subject, read *Rolling Stone's guide to crypto in music.*)

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NFTs previously had a relatively underground following made up of DJs and producers. But these digital tokens have gone mainstream in the last year, as many musicians sought out additional revenue streams in the concertless era of the pandemic. The likes of **Portugal. The Man**, **Shawn Mendes**, **Grimes**, and Linkin Park's Mike Shinoda have gotten on board in recent weeks.

Shortly after YellowHeart first formed in 2018, the company garnered industry

Katz offers consulting services through YellowHeart to educate artists about blockchain and create their NFTs.

Kings of Leon's album will be released everywhere albums are released — Spotify, iTunes, Apple Music, Amazon — but the NFT version available **on YellowHeart** will be the only product with special perks. The token, priced at \$50, includes enhanced media — kind of like an alternate, moving album cover — as well as a digital download of the music, and limited-edition vinyl. The sale of the album NFTs opens on Friday at 12 p.m. E.T. and continues for two weeks. After that time, no more will be made, and the NFT becomes a tradable collectible.

“Over the last 20 years — two lost decades — we've seen the devaluation of music,” Katz tells *Rolling Stone*. “Music has become great at selling everything except music. There's been a race to the bottom where, for as little money as possible, you have access to all of it. Previously, it cost \$20 to go get one song.” He believes streaming's subscription-based pro rata model irreparably hurts artists, and NFTs will make modern fans want to own music again: “It's early stages, but in the future, I think this will be how people release their tracks: When they sell a 100,000 at a dollar each, then they just made \$100,000.”

YellowHeart is minting 18 unique-looking “golden tickets” as part of the Kings of Leon NFT release. Out of the 18, the band will auction six and vault the other 12 like a painter would do with a rare piece from a series of art. “Each one of those is a unique NFT with the most incredible Kings of Leon art you've ever seen,” explains Katz.

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Each “golden ticket” also unlocks an actual concert ticket — marking the first time a music ticket has been officially sold as an NFT. Whoever owns the token is guaranteed four front-row seats to any Kings of Leon concert during each tour for life. The token owner also gets a VIP experience that includes a personal driver, a

bags filled with every item from the merch booth.

Katz points out this is an “extreme example to prove a point.” YellowHeart wants to show people how much control can be put into the ticket with smart contracts. Going forward, he says this same tech can be used for general tickets, which could be a huge advancement in the secondary market. Every time an NFT is resold, a percentage of money earned could go to the artist — or whoever is included in the contract, perhaps even a charity. (In such instances, YellowHeart can also set a maximum price that the NFT can be resold at, eradicating scalpers.)

In Kings of Leon’s final option, there are another six unique-looking tokens that are standard NFTs with elaborate audiovisual art. Starting on Thursday, fans will be able to preview them on YellowHeart’s website. Prices range from \$95 to \$2,500. YellowHeart will mint however many are sold before Sunday at 8 p.m. E.T., which is also when the “golden ticket” NFT auction will end. (However, if someone bids in the last 10 minutes of the auction, it resets for another 10 minutes.)

Over time, all of these NFTs are expected to increase in value. Thanks to those aforementioned smart contracts, proceeds generated from future reselling will go where the artists want them to go. Kings of Leon decided to donate all proceeds from two of the offerings — the \$50 album NFTs and the highest-priced “golden ticket,” named Bandit Wave #2 — to Live Nation’s **Crew Nation fund** for out-of-work touring professionals.

Katz says NFTs allow for maximum creativity around the release of content, which he believes is a huge draw in an age when artists are taking a more DIY approach. He plans on YellowHeart becoming an entertainment wallet that holds fans’ music, tickets, and collectible content.

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As crypto bursts into the **music industry**, Kings of Leon’s project this week is by far

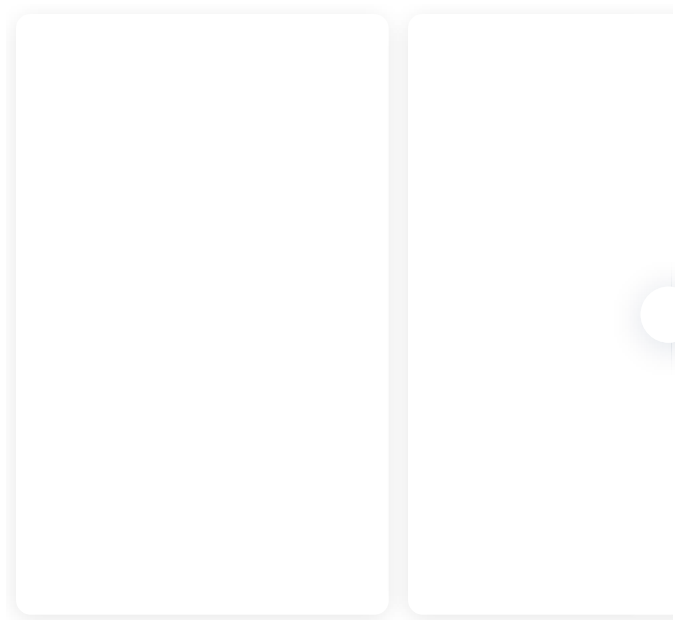
wrote in a press release that will go wide later today (March 3rd). “The result is a stunning reimagination of this legendary band’s body of work. Using no outside material, every source photograph was taken by either [Kings of Leon creative director and Night After Night CCO] Casey McGrath or band member Matthew Followill.”

“We approached the release of *When You See Yourself* in such an analog way, from the band’s approach in the studio to shooting everything on film and went as far as literally pulling out the scotch tape and glue sticks, and dry transfer lettering,” McGrath says in the release. “To approach ‘NFT YOURSELF’ with a digital art mindset sent electricity through the work. For those in the space that understand, they’ll appreciate the techniques of audio-generated imaging, pose detection, and pixel morphing that we used to create this collectible art. For those that don’t, we hope they’ll appreciate the undeniable power and emotion that results from the collision of analog and digital.”

In This Article: cryptocurrency, Kings Of Leon, music industry, NFT



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3 March, 2021

Big Boys NYC already released their album on Rarible, Kings of Leon are not the first.

<https://app.rarible.com/token>

[/0x60f80121c31a0d46b5279700f9df786054aa5ee5:218013:0x7bedc62cf844fd46e9c91115dbf1172155b763e3](https://app.rarible.com/token/0x60f80121c31a0d46b5279700f9df786054aa5ee5:218013:0x7bedc62cf844fd46e9c91115dbf1172155b763e3)

**Big Boys Forever - NFT Edition**

app.rarible.com

Reply 👍 7 🗨️

↩️ 1 reply

SP Savage Preebz ⋮

4 March, 2021

Rolling Stone needs to do their research because musicians are already releasing albums as NFTs. 3LAU dropped an NFT album last week. Look at all the NFTs being released through DAOrecords. Do your research.

Reply 👍 3 🗨️

J jairusmusic ⋮

4 March, 2021

what a complicated way to enjoy music. Managing all of the logistics for the "golden ticket" winner sounds like a pain --> Spotify for now. *(Edited)*

Reply 👍 9 🗨️ 6

↩️ 1 reply

K KbillySuper70s ⋮

3 March, 2021

\$50 for moving artwork. Sounds like something LOTS of people will be interested in buying. *(Edited)*

Reply 👍 6 🗨️ 5

Other bands have already done this... but nonestly Rolling Stone is so out of touch that they rarely get anything right. Millennials for the staff = impending failure.

Reply  8  9

so **sanity outAcone** > sanity inAcone 

4 March, 2021

Oh yes all industry's should stop employing 25-40 year old's immediately stick with nothing but 40+ year old people. Don't even offer jobs to anyone younger then 45 just to be safe.

Reply  15  1

JD **just a dude** 

3 March, 2021

So apparently they're also releasing the album on streaming services as well... seriously what value does the NFT provide here???

Reply  6  2

B **Bbqbob** > just a dude 

4 March, 2021

Scarcity and collectability just to name 2.

Reply  9 

J **Jobless** > just a dude 

16 March, 2021

You get a rare vinyl. They are only selling them for 2 weeks. No idea how much it'll be worth next year. Also if you have the NFT, the website says the band will probably drop free stuff on it. It's not simple to get the NFT so it looks like there won't be many sold. It might be worth looking into.

Reply  2 

C **CyanSeahorse** 

3 March, 2021

I like my fungus to be fungible.

Reply  5 

D **Don'tc** 

3 March, 2021

This sounds terrible. I'll stick to Spotify for here on out... no way this takes off for the mainstream. and if it does I just will go to free listening on YouTube or just stop caring about new music.

Reply  10  7

It sounds like you don't deserve good music then, if you aren't willing to pay proper value for it. When you find a band you love and want them to thrive, consider paying them a reasonable price for their work and talent (like any other goods or services that provide you real value), rather than stealing it practically for free.

Reply  18  8

 2 replies

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G **GreenPopsicle** 

3 March, 2021

Crypto art is an ecological nightmare and must be destroyed. I don't think the artists realize the harm. One NFT uses as much energy as a European citizen uses in a month. Look up "The Unreasonable Ecological Cost of #CryptoArt (Part 1)".

Reply  16  24

c **ConcernedFriend** > GreenPopsicle 

3 March, 2021

This is a short term concern in the context of NFTs minted on the ethereum blockchain. Proof of stake (no miners) will put an end to large energy costs once the network transitions. Plenty of other networks now that you can make NFTs for fractions of a penny (and their network doesn't require huge amounts of energy to secure it). Cheers.

Reply  21  3

 1 reply

 Show 1 more reply

B **Bobbaboosh** 

5 March, 2021

Wrong. The first album released as an NFT was Clarian.

Reply  1 

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