The executive behind some of Hollywood’s biggest soundtracks

April 17, 2026



Paul Friedman (MBA/JD '96), executive vice president of Sony Pictures Entertainment's Music Affairs Group, has helped orchestrate deals for some of Hollywood's most successful soundtracks.

When the Netflix hit *KPop Demon Hunters*, produced by Sony Pictures Animation, won two Oscars at this year’s Academy Awards — for best animated feature film and best original song — Paul Friedman had to be beaming with pride.

Friedman (MBA/JD ’96) is executive vice president of Sony Pictures Entertainment’s Music Affairs Group, the unit responsible for making all the deals for the movie’s blockbuster soundtrack.

“We’ve been proud of this movie from the start, but we are blown away by its success,” Friedman says of the soundtrack, which landed four songs simultaneously

in the Billboard Top 10 and has generated more than 15 billion streams worldwide. “Keep in mind, these are fictional, animated characters. They’re not actual bands.”

From fictional girl groups to real-life superstars like Taylor Swift and Post Malone, Friedman’s group works with music creative executives and their teams at Sony Pictures Entertainment to deliver the songs and artists that help bring the productions to life. He and his group negotiate the deals to create original music, handle the clearance of existing music, oversee soundtrack albums, and run the day-to-day operations of Sony Pictures’ in-house label, Madison Gate Records. They also manage the business side of the music — tracking royalties, licensing Sony’s music catalog to filmmakers and advertisers, and projecting how much revenue a movie’s music might generate. If there’s music in a Sony Pictures production, whether it’s a theatrical film, TV series or even a video game, Friedman’s group makes the deal, clears the rights, and maintains the value of those assets.

“I just love music,” Friedman says. “I love the idea that you start with a blank piece of paper and a song is created. When I graduated from law school, I thought if I could have any role in that process — protecting it, copyrighting it, helping songwriters exploit it — that would be incredibly rewarding.”



HUNTR/X, the fictional stars of Sony Pictures Animation's *KPop Demon Hunters*, topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart for eight weeks with the international smash "Golden." Image courtesy of Netflix.

The music business was actually Friedman's second choice. He originally planned to go into sports management. After living with two football players during his undergraduate years at UCLA, Friedman enrolled in Tulane's joint MBA/JD program, pursuing a Sports Law Certificate, with his eye on becoming an agent.

"Then, I kind of did the math and realized that most of those guys were going to be out of the league by the time I was up and running," he says, laughing. "But I'd also been just as interested in music, and I really liked the depth of what's involved in intellectual property, so I pivoted to music."

Friedman launched his career on the legal side, working for another Tulane alum, Craig Gates (L '91), the son of singer and songwriter David Gates of the band Bread. He later joined Polygram Music Publishing as a financial analyst and the law firm King, Holmes, Paterno & Berliner, whose high-profile clients included Metallica, Dr. Dre and Macy Gray, before joining Sony Pictures Entertainment as director of Music Business Affairs in 2001.

One of the biggest hits Friedman has been involved with at Sony was the 2018 Sony Pictures Animation feature *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. The soundtrack album was a huge success, with the single "Sunflower," by Post Malone and Swae Lee, becoming the first RIAA double diamond-certified single, signifying more than 20 million units sold.

"It was the highest-selling digital single of all time in the United States," Friedman says. "It's exciting to have a song that successful, and if you've seen the movie, the song was used three times and three more times in the next installment, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*, so it's meaningful to have a song advance the story to that degree. We're very proud of that."

Sony Pictures is unique in the industry in that it's the only major studio without its own streaming service. Friedman says that's by design. "We want to be an independent content supplier," he says. "We produce content for every platform, so when you're watching shows like 'The Boys' on Prime Video or 'The Crown' on Netflix, those are Sony-produced shows."

While streaming is a big part of the industry today, Friedman says he’s encouraged by the public’s continued desire for connection. “As much as people are watching things at home, they’re still looking for experiences to bring them out to connect with other people and with the properties they love,” he says. “Sony is committed to the theatrical experience. We’re also starting to do more concerts where the movie is shown and the score is played live.”

With new business opportunities come new opportunities for students looking to break into the industry.

“Build your network,” Friedman advises. “You can start with people who’ve gone to Tulane. You can look for people from where you grew up. I used to buy CDs of bands that I liked and look at the credits to see if I could identify who their lawyer was and would reach out to them. If you find someone who’s doing something you like — whether it’s a producer or a director or anyone else — connect with them, stay in touch, and update them periodically on what you’re doing. It is much easier to do these days with tools like LinkedIn.

“And don’t be discouraged,” he adds. “It’s a tough road, but if you’re driven and committed, you can get there.”