

# A.R.I. Highlights OVO Financing as Drake's Triple-Album Release Spotlights Celebrity-Led Brands

*Applied Real Intelligence provided a senior secured loan to October's Very Own (OVO) and later served as lead investor in its convertible note financing*

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, May 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Applied Real Intelligence \("A.R.I."\)](#), a U.S.-based investment firm led by [Dr. Zack Ellison](#), today highlighted its financing role in October's Very Own ("OVO"), the lifestyle brand founded by Aubrey "Drake" Graham, Oliver El-Khatib, and Noah "40" Shebib, following the May 15 release of Drake's three-album project — *Iceman*, *Maid of Honour*, and *Habibti*.

The rollout marked Drake's first solo release campaign since 2023 and generated substantial global attention across streaming, social media, and entertainment platforms. The Los Angeles Times described it as a "shock-and-awe campaign," while Billboard reported that it produced three Spotify single-day records for 2026: Drake became the platform's most-streamed artist, *Iceman* became its most-streamed album, and "Make Them Cry" became its most-streamed song.

The campaign renewed attention on October's Very Own as a global consumer and cultural ecosystem spanning music, fashion, lifestyle, sports, entertainment, and consumer engagement.



Dr. Zack Ellison, Founder and Managing General Partner, Applied Real Intelligence (A.R.I.)





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*Dr. Zack Ellison, Founder & Managing Partner of A.R.I.*

A.R.I., through the A.R.I. Senior Secured Growth Credit Fund, previously provided a senior secured term loan facility to OVO. A.R.I. subsequently served as lead investor in OVO's convertible note financing. Together, the financings reflect A.R.I.'s strategy of pairing flexible growth capital for borrowers with structured protections and equity-linked upside for investors.

A.R.I.'S STRATEGY: STRUCTURE IS THE ASSET

"The mistake many investors make is treating growth as

the asset," said Dr. Zack Ellison, Founder and Managing General Partner of A.R.I. "At A.R.I., we believe thoughtful structure is a major source of value creation. We seek to create investments where legal architecture, economic terms, collateral, and negotiated rights matter as much as the growth story itself."

For borrowers, A.R.I.'s structured capital can facilitate growth without immediately forcing common equity dilution. For investors, these investments offer a differentiated risk-return profile built around contractual income, downside protection, and upside participation in enterprise value creation.

## ABOUT OCTOBER'S VERY OWN

Originally founded in Toronto in 2008 as a music collective, OVO has evolved into a globally recognized consumer and lifestyle brand known for its distinctive owl logo and black-and-gold aesthetic.

OVO's platform spans apparel, streetwear, entertainment, sports, and consumer products, supported by a global e-commerce business and flagship retail locations in Toronto, Los Angeles, New York, Las Vegas, and London.

The brand is well known for its high-profile collaborations involving Nike's Jordan Brand, Canada Goose, Timberland, the NBA, NFL, MLB, NHL, Fanatics, Disney, Warner Bros.' Looney Tunes, The Simpsons, PlayStation, Chelsea Football Club, and Red Bull Racing, among many others.

## CELEBRITY-LED BRANDS ARE BECOMING INSTITUTIONAL INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

OVO is an example of the growing institutionalization of celebrity-led consumer platforms, alongside brands such as Kim Kardashian's SKIMS, Rihanna's Fenty, and Hailey Bieber's Rhode. These businesses demonstrate how cultural relevance, audience reach, and disciplined brand execution can evolve into scalable consumer ecosystems with substantial enterprise value.

Recent market activity highlights the scale of institutional and strategic interest in celebrity-led consumer brands. SKIMS announced a \$225 million capital raise in November 2025 at a \$5 billion valuation, led by Goldman Sachs Alternatives with participation from funds affiliated with BDT & MSD Partners.

In another high-profile transaction, e.l.f. Beauty announced an agreement to acquire Rhode for up to \$1 billion, representing approximately 5x trailing revenue. Fenty has also been widely valued in the billions by multiple industry sources.

Drake's Iceman, Maid of Honour, and Habibti rollout demonstrated the extraordinary scale of attention that can surround globally recognized artists and the broader business ecosystems built around them.

"Cultural influence can create extraordinary investment opportunities when paired with disciplined structure, enforceable rights, and rigorous risk management," said Dr. Ellison.

#### ABOUT APPLIED REAL INTELLIGENCE (A.R.I.)

Applied Real Intelligence is a Florida-based investment manager providing senior secured loans, structured equity, and flexible capital solutions to innovation-driven and category-defining companies in sectors including AI, software, technology, energy, consumer brands, sports, media, and entertainment. A.R.I.'s disciplined, safety-first approach helps companies scale efficiently while protecting investor capital. Learn more at [www.arivc.com](http://www.arivc.com).

Dr. Zack Ellison, DBA, MBA, MS, CFA, CAIA, Founder & Managing General Partner of A.R.I., has over 20 years of cross-border credit and investment experience at firms such as Deutsche Bank, Scotiabank, Thomson Reuters, and Sun Life Financial. He holds BA in Economics from Swarthmore College, an MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, an MS in Risk Management from NYU Stern, and a Doctorate in Business Administration from the University of Florida.

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