

billboard Country Update

BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

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CMT Music Awards Serves Up A TV Show With Something New On The Side

Six acts will engage in a Side hustle during the CMT Music Awards on April 2 that may play a positive role in their full-time gigs.

Avery Anna, Chapel Hart, Jackson Dean, Lily Rose, Megan Moroney and Nate Smith are booked on the Ram Trucks Side Stage, a setting that sneaks a handful of newer acts into a national awards lineup dominated by major stars.

The slot is a mere 45 seconds, so the artists typically don't sing more than one verse and chorus, but in a crowded field of country performers, any exposure is valuable, particularly when it gets them on multiple CBS platforms.

"Any time you have a chance to play a song for a televised national audience, you take it," says **BRELAND**, who appeared on the side stage a year ago. "There are going to be people who have never heard that song before, or never heard of you, or who have never seen you perform, who get exposed to that."

The side stage launched 15 years ago, sponsored for the first eight years by Nationwide Insurance, whose jingle — "Nationwide is on your side" — fits the "side stage" concept. The setup features the artists on satellite flooring erected away

from the main stage, backed by a full band. The moment serves as a bumper — TV parlance for a short programming element that leads into the commercial break. Other awards shows have similarly used bumpers as a vehicle to introduce new acts, usually playing with acoustic support or reciting a script from a teleprompter. The CMT side stage has likely lasted longer than any other entry in the awards bumper pool, but the on-screen exposure is just part of the attraction for artists.

"Ram always does this show in a club, and three of the artists play that, so there's another chance for fans to see full performances from these artists," says CMT/Paramount senior vp of music strategy and talent **Leslie Fram**. "They're walking the red carpet, they're on the main show on national TV, they're sitting with [the artists]. At the end of the day, they're getting a ton of promotion."

That side stage may be a sign of things to come. Among the current country staples who were featured in that setting early in their careers are **Luke Bryan** and **Lady A** (2008), **Chris Young** (2010), **Dustin Lynch** (2013), **Thomas Rhett** (2014), **Maren Morris** (2016) and **HARDY** (2020).



FRAM



BRELAND

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BRELAND: JIMMY FONTAINE

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Not that the side stage is a career guarantor. It has also featured **James Otto, The Carter Twins, Trailer Choir, the JaneDear girls, Kree Harrison** and **Gloriana** — acts that either never fully connected with the audience or broke up.

The stage presents some unique challenges. While many of the acts that play it are making their first live TV appearance, they do it under a large amount of potential pressure. Since the performance is a truncated version of a song they sing regularly, they can't fully rely on muscle memory to deliver it. And making the appearance in the hurry-up-and-wait atmosphere of TV, they have plenty of time to overthink a very short performance. With only 45 seconds in the spotlight, coming in on the wrong beat or starting out of key may put them in a position where they don't recover until perhaps halfway through the performance.

"Chances are even if you suck on the Ram stage, it's short," BRELAND observes. The audience's memory of it "will probably be a little shorter."

But artists in 2023 are likely more comfortable with the quick appearance than artists were in 2008, thanks to the development of social media.

"We've seen so many artists be so comfortable in front of a camera when they come in," Fram says. "They're not nervous anymore. I believe that's helped out exponentially."

BRELAND, who sang "Praise the Lord" a year ago at the CMTs, cautions that artists need to look at the side stage realistically.

"People may not be paying attention at that exact moment that you're up there," he says. The performance "may come and go while they're in the bathroom, it's so quick and so short."

He saw a larger response in post-show metrics from his full-song performances at other awards shows than he did from last year's side-stage bit, but he was still pleased with the experience. His parents were in town — a definite plus — and with a local concert scheduled for the day after the CMTs, he was able to persuade **Thomas Rhett** and **Tyler Hubbard** to make surprise appearances.

"I'm the type of artist that tries to make the most out of every opportunity," BRELAND says.

The opportunity requires as much of the side-stage acts as it does the main-stage artists. In both instances, the act has to show up a day or two prior to the awards for a rehearsal that lets the act and the production crew coordinate sound and blocking. They have to arrive early on show day for a full dress rehearsal, too.

In a perfect world, it's just the start of something bigger. It helps establish a relationship with CMT and CBS that can pay off later in a career. And in some instances, it might provide a beneficial introduction to Ram Trucks, which has featured the music of former side-stage artists **Eric Church, Lainey Wilson** and **Easton Corbin** — as well as 2023 entry **Rose** — in commercials or corporate videos.

Ram has right of approval on the acts that appear on its side stage. And so far, every artist has been a winner.

"We make recommendations," Fram says, "and they've never said no." ●



Elle King (left) surprised students and a former teacher when she visited her alma mater, Chouteau High School, before a March 24 performance in Tulsa, Okla. With her: teacher Cathy Welker-Graham (center) and senior Emma Hughes.

COREY BOST



Wade Bowen won three times during the Texas Regional Radio Awards on March 27 in Arlington, Texas. From left: Payne Media Group president Will Payne; KRVN Lexington, Neb., operations manager Adam Smith; Bowen; and KITX Hugo, Okla., morning host Barry Diamond.

GREG ROACH PHOTOGRAPHY



Monument artist Alex Hall (center) played Nashville's Electric Jane on March 23, spending time during the evening with Monument vp of promotion Luke Jensen and GM Katie McCartney.

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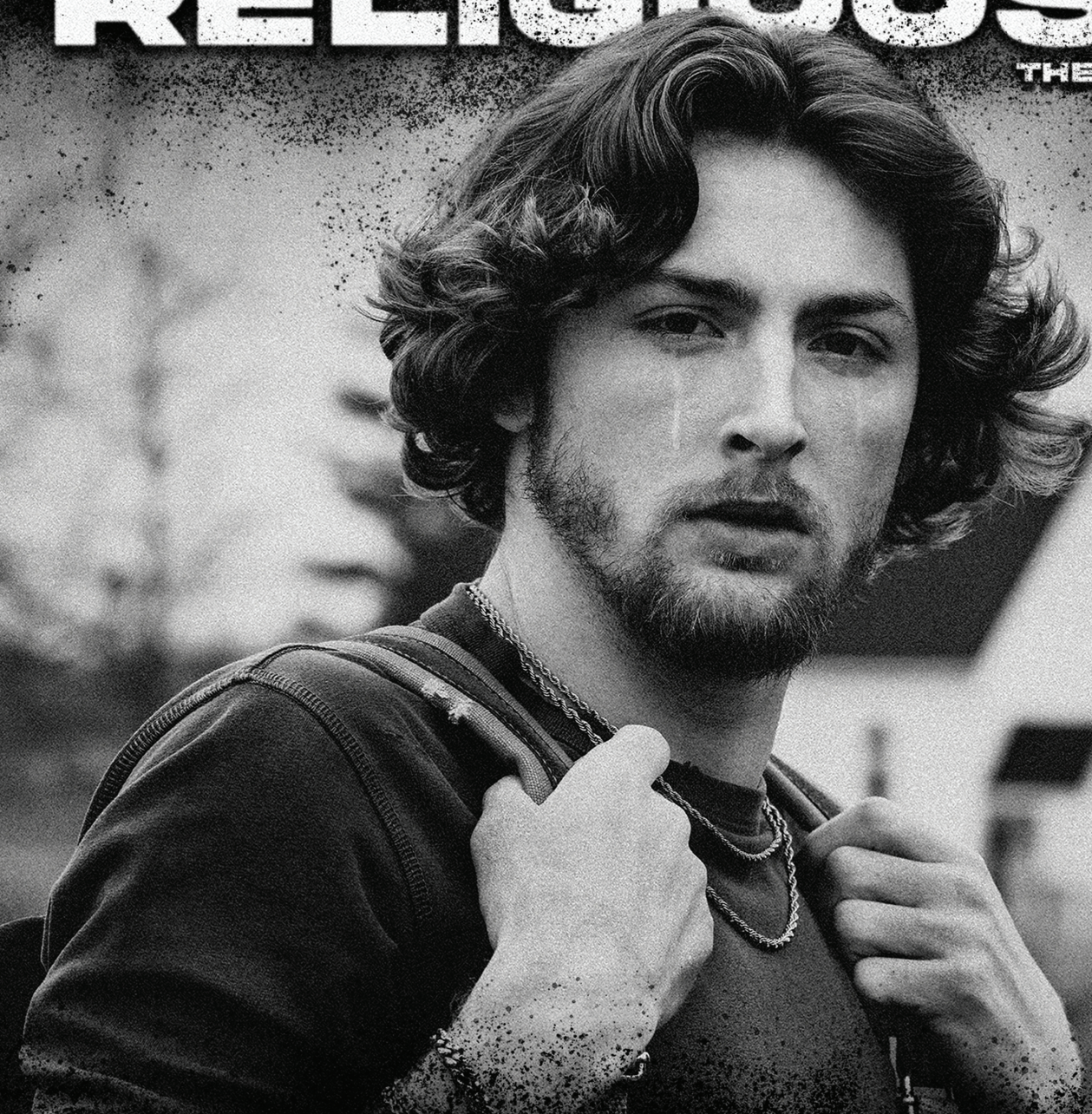
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ON THE CHARTS JIM ASKER jim.asker@billboard.com

Combs, Wallen Storm Country Airplay Chart; Hubbard Scores Second Top 10

Luke Combs, whose new LP, *Gettin' Old*, arrived March 24, places six titles from the set on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart (dated April 8).

Dating to the ranking's 1990 inception, Combs ties the record for the most titles in the top 60 by a single artist at once (excluding holiday fare). The feat has been achieved just five times — and now twice within one month, as **Morgan Wallen** logged six on the March 18 survey, concurrent with the chart launch of his album *One Thing at a Time* (Big Loud/Mercury Republic). (Before that, **Blake Shelton** last earned the honor in 2017, following **Kenny Chesney** in 2008 and **Garth Brooks** in 1997.)



JASON KEMPIN/GETTY IMAGES

Combs' 15th Country Airplay No. 1, "Going, Going, Gone" (River House/Columbia Nashville), which led for two frames in March, is at No. 4, with 23.6 million impressions March 24-30, according to Luminate. His others (all debuts): "Five Leaf Clover" (No. 48), "Love You Anyway" (No. 49), "Still" (No. 57), "Growin' Up and Gettin' Old" (No. 58) and "Hannah Ford Road" (No. 59).

Sony Music Nashville executive vp **Steve Hodges** says of the format, which is used to one single by an act taking months to climb Country Airplay, "Radio seems to realize the value of exposing more than just one song at a time from a superstar artist." Big Loud vp of promotion **Ali Matkosky** adds, "I'm excited to see radio continuing to invest in our format's core artists. In a time where listeners are pointing out daily what they want to hear [via streaming services], it makes more and more sense to lean into that data."

'COUNTRY' HIT **Tyler Hubbard** notches his second Country Airplay top 10 as a soloist as "Dancin' in the Country" (Hubbard House/EMI Nashville) twirls 12-10 (17 million, up 23%). It follows "5 Foot 9," which led last November. **Florida Georgia Line**, where Hubbard is a member with **Brian Kelley**, has posted 19 top 10s, including 16 No. 1s. ●

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)	
DANCIN' IN THE COUNTRY Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	+3.219	
HEART LIKE A TRUCK Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson	+2.965	
LAST NIGHT Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+2.213	
ONE THING AT A TIME Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+2.141	
GOLD Capitol Nashville	Dierks Bentley	+1.873	
MEMORY LANE Columbia Nashville	Old Dominion	+1.358	
HUMAN CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	+1.268	
YOU Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Dan + Shay	+1.129	
HANDLE ON YOU MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	+1.082	
LOVE YOU ANYWAY River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	+1.073	

MOST INCREASED PLAYS			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN	
HEART LIKE A TRUCK Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson	+684	
DANCIN' IN THE COUNTRY Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	+674	
ONE THING AT A TIME Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+575	
LAST NIGHT Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+484	
NEXT THING YOU KNOW MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+463	
GOLD Capitol Nashville	Dierks Bentley	+462	
STANDING ROOM ONLY McGraw/Big Machine	Tim McGraw	+439	
YOU Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Dan + Shay	+410	
WAIT IN THE TRUCK Broken Bow/Big Loud	HARDY Featuring Lainey Wilson	+360	
5 LEAF CLOVER River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	+352	

RECURRENENTS			
THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	THANK GOD Zone 4/RCA Nashville	Kane Brown With Katelyn Brown	19.901
2	SHE HAD ME AT HEADS CAROLINA Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cole Swindell	19.229
3	YOU PROOF Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	17.538
4	WHAT MY WORLD SPINS AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	16.993
5	YOU DIDN'T BMLG	Brett Young	16.446
6	THE KIND OF LOVE WE MAKE River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	14.081
7	WHISKEY ON YOU Arista Nashville	Nate Smith	11.160
8	5 FOOT 9 Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	10.095
9	SON OF A SINNER Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	9.387
10	TAKE MY NAME Stoney Creek	Parmalee	9.320



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING MARCH 23, 2023

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE (Label)	ARTIST	TW SPINS	SPINS +/-	THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE (Label)	ARTIST	TW SPINS	SPINS +/-
1	2	17	FAST CAR (Independent) ★★1 Week at 1★★	Randy Rogers Band	1826	-13	11	11	10	ANYMORE (Bill Grease Rec)	William Clark Green	1180	50
2	3	20	KEEP UP WITH A COWGIRL (Independent)	David Adam Byrnes	1788	44	12	13	20	LOCAL PARTICIPATIN' HONKY TONK (Independent)	James Robert Webb	1166	66
3	4	25	DAMN THIS HEART OF MINE (Independent)	William Beckmann	1700	97	13	18	11	LAKEVIEW GROCERY STORE (Independent)	Jamie Richards	1058	87
4	5	25	FRIDAY BEERS (Independent)	Drew Fish Band	1643	110	14	15	19	IT GOES ON (Independent)	Mark Powell	1050	32
5	6	23	MOUNTAIN SONG (Independent)	Flatland Cavalry	1598	124	15	17	22	LONELY (Independent)	The Stateline Band	1007	25
6	8	18	LOVING ALL NIGHT (Independent)	Jesse Raub Jr.	1470	32	16	19	20	VELVET CHAINS (Independent)	Ryder Grimes	934	57
7	7	19	COWBOY CONSTITUTION (Independent)	Curtis Grimes	1465	8	17	10	26	GOOD SIDE (Independent)	The Great Divide	919	-357
8	1	15	TRENCHES (Independent)	Bri Bagwell	1404	-474	18	20	9	CORAZON (Independent)	Matt Castillo	906	98
9	9	10	SUNNY AND 72 (Independent)	Kin Faux	1391	72	19	12	23	BEERS WE AIN'T DRANK YET (Fool Hearted)	Jon Wolfe	898	-230
10	14	7	HONKY TONK ROLL (Independent)	Wade Bowen	1189	118	20	21	14	THINKIN' 'BOUT CHEATIN' (Independent)	Brandi Behlen	807	31

Texas Regional Radio Report Top 100 is compiled from weekly online playlist reports from 86 radio stations located in Texas and surrounding states, including reports from specialty shows, internet and satellite radio outlets. Songs are ranked by total plays. For tracking, complete chart methodology and more information, visit www.texasregionalradio.com, or contact Dave Smith at 972-252-8777. Copyright 2023, Texas Regional Radio Report

billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY
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THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
1	1	25	ROCK AND A HARD PLACE Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	33.609	+0.725	8221	163	1
2	4	46	HEART LIKE A TRUCK Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson	30.977	+2.965	7929	684	2
3	5	22	THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	25.469	-1.978	5761	-543	5
4	3	24	GOING, GOING, GONE River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	23.620	-5.878	5294	-1573	8
5	6	34	HANDLE ON YOU MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	22.836	+1.082	6025	286	3
6	8	36	GOLD Capitol Nashville	Dierks Bentley	22.665	+1.873	5737	462	6
7	7	32	WAIT IN THE TRUCK Broken Bow/Big Loud	HARDY Featuring Lainey Wilson	22.401	+1.067	5961	360	4
8	9	35	WILD AS HER Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville	Corey Kent	20.914	+0.854	5663	198	7
9	2	41	WHAT HE DIDN'T DO Big Machine	Carly Pearce	20.706	-9.819	5217	-2659	9
10	12	18	DANCIN' IN THE COUNTRY Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	16.995	+3.219	4458	674	10
11	11	37	YOU Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Dan + Shay	15.948	+1.129	4449	410	11
12	13	43	HUMAN CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	14.850	+1.268	3944	256	12
13	18	12	ONE THING AT A TIME Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	13.762	+2.142	3446	575	17
14	14	38	BROWN EYES BABY Hit Red/Capitol Nashville	Keith Urban	13.678	+0.329	3670	54	15
15	16	29	IT MATTERS TO HER Triple Tigers	Scotty McCreery	13.108	+0.523	3862	141	13
16	15	41	WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE MCA Nashville	Sam Hunt	12.991	+0.160	3578	58	16
17	17	19	TENNESSEE ORANGE Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville	Megan Moroney	12.963	+0.842	3686	272	14
18	22	6	LAST NIGHT Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	10.181	+2.213	2490	484	21
19	21	13	MEMORY LANE Columbia Nashville	Old Dominion	9.439	+1.358	2966	309	19
20	19	30	HOW IT OUGHTA BE Harpeth 60/BMLG	Shane Profitt	9.023	+0.662	3007	24	18
21	20	53	GOOD DAY FOR LIVING Quartz Hill	Joe Nichols	8.107	-0.105	2722	-6	20
22	24	31	GIRL IN MINE Stoney Creek	Parmalee	7.347	+0.949	2340	300	22
23	23	22	HATE MY HEART Capitol Nashville	Carrie Underwood	7.164	+0.526	2220	95	23
24	25	39	SOMETHING IN THE ORANGE Belting Bronco/WAR	Zach Bryan	6.204	+0.276	2064	22	25
25	26	48	EVERYTHING SHE AIN'T Songs & Daughters/Pigasus/Big Loud	Hailey Whitters	6.048	+0.387	2161	112	24
26	27	26	YOUR HEART OR MINE Capitol Nashville	Jon Pardi	5.864	+0.363	1894	168	27
27	30	7	NEXT THING YOU KNOW MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	5.514	+0.986	1703	463	30
28	28	9	ANGELS DON'T ALWAYS HAVE WINGS Valory	Thomas Rhett	5.316	+0.247	1774	190	29
29	29	21	YOU, ME, & WHISKEY Valory	Justin Moore & Priscilla Block	5.115	+0.418	1830	154	28
30	RE-ENTRY		SON OF A Riser House	Dillon Carmichael	4.988	+0.880	1905	162	26

COUNTRY AIRPLAY CHART LEGEND

RANKINGS

Country Airplay is ranked by total audience impressions for the week ending Sunday based on monitored airplay by Mediabase of 145 stations by Luminate. Audience totals on the chart are derived, in part, using certain Nielsen Audio-copyrighted Persons 12+ audience estimates (under license © 2023, Nielsen Audio). The list of all Country Airplay chart reporters can be viewed in Luminate's online platform.

TIES

On Country Airplay, if two songs are tied in audience, the song with the larger increase in audience is placed first.

BULLETS

Awarded on Country Airplay to titles gaining audience or remaining flat from the previous week. A song will also receive a bullet if its percentage loss in audience does not exceed the percentage of monitored station downtime for the format. Titles that decline in audience but increase in detections will also receive a bullet if the total audience erosion for the week does not exceed 3%.

RECURRENTS

On Country Airplay, descending titles below No. 10 in either audience or detections are moved to recurrent after 20 weeks, provided that they are not still gaining enough audience points to bullet or if they rank below No. 10 and post a third consecutive week of (non-bulletheaded) audience decline, regardless of total chart weeks. Plus, songs that ascend to a peak between Nos. 1 and 5 will remain on the chart for one additional week even if dropping below No. 10.

HOT SHOT DEBUT

Awarded to the highest-ranking new entry on Country Airplay.

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

Most Increased Audience on Country Airplay lists the songs with the greatest week-to-week increases in total audience.

AIRPOWER

Awarded on Country Airplay to titles ranking inside top 20 in plays and audience rankings for the first time, with increases in both plays and audience.

BREAKER

Awarded on Country Airplay to titles achieving airplay (at least one detection) at 60% of reporting stations for the first time.

billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY
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THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
31	31	9	DRINKABY Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cole Swindell	4.592	+0.126	1583	157	31
32	32	11	NEED A FAVOR Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	4.564	+0.617	1503	168	32
33	33	3	STANDING ROOM ONLY McGraw/Big Machine	Tim McGraw	3.856	+0.750	1420	439	33
34	34	11	LOOKING FOR YOU RCA Nashville	Chris Young	3.599	+0.626	1090	158	35
35	35	28	CAN'T HAVE MINE Curb	Dylan Scott	2.883	+0.163	1273	-28	34
36	36	28	EXCUSES Combustion/Wheelhouse	Kolby Cooper	2.446	+0.108	1063	45	36
37	42	11	GOD GAVE ME A GIRL Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	2.147	+0.478	816	90	40
38	39	31	WORTH A SHOT RCA/Columbia Nashville	Elle King Featuring Dierks Bentley	2.103	+0.058	1026	-21	37
39	41	3	LIGHT ON IN THE KITCHEN Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Ashley McBryde	2.048	+0.369	509	138	50
40	37	10	STARS LIKE CONFETTI Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch	1.983	-0.082	713	45	46
41	38	17	WE GOT HISTORY Riser House/Columbia Nashville	Mitchell Tenpenny	1.982	-0.067	749	8	44
42	44	13	IF YOU GO DOWN (I'M GOING DOWNTOO) Black River	Kelsea Ballerini	1.776	+0.200	987	71	38
43	43	20	IF HE WANTED TO HE WOULD EMI Nashville	Kylie Morgan	1.725	+0.095	755	68	43
44	45	9	FEARLESS (THE ECHO) Big Machine	Jackson Dean	1.724	+0.224	801	77	42
45	47	6	ALL I NEED IS YOU BMLG	Chris Janson	1.687	+0.297	812	96	41
46	40	21	HEAVEN BY THEN Valory	Brantley Gilbert And Blake Shelton Featuring Vince Gill	1.656	-0.059	871	16	39
47	49	18	MIND ON YOU RECORDS Nashville	George Birge	1.629	+0.355	637	84	47
48	NEW		5 LEAF CLOVER River House/Columbia Nashville ★★ Hot Shot Debut/Breaker ★★	Luke Combs	1.555	+1.195	403	352	55
49	NEW		LOVE YOU ANYWAY River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	1.402	+1.073	227	140	-
50	46	26	SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING I'D DO Stoney Creek	Drake Milligan	1.398	-0.087	724	-1	45
51	48	23	OVER FOR YOU Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Morgan Evans	1.317	-0.064	497	0	52
52	50	8	23 19/BMG/Wheelhouse	Chayce Beckham	1.246	+0.113	530	34	48
53	51	13	UP THERE DOWN HERE Big Loud	Jake Owen	1.170	+0.112	516	4	49
54	52	6	BURY ME IN GEORGIA Zone 4/RCA Nashville	Kane Brown	1.114	+0.116	268	98	-
55	54	3	GIVING UP ON THAT Mercury Nashville	Dalton Dover	0.910	+0.124	499	50	51
56	53	12	FORWHAT IT'S WORTH Bad Realm/Atlantic	BRELAND	0.871	+0.008	395	-12	56
57	NEW		STILL River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	0.816	+0.816	172	172	-
58	NEW		GROWIN' UP AND GETTIN' OLD River House/Columbia Nashville ★★ Breaker ★★	Luke Combs	0.813	+0.701	183	132	-
59	NEW		HANNAH FORD ROAD River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	0.790	+0.790	199	199	-
60	55	10	COUNTRY CAN Curb	Hannah Ellis	0.786	+0.033	481	1	53



George Birge threw out the first pitch for a Tampa Bay Rays spring training game on March 24 at Tropicana Field. With him are WFUS Tampa-St. Petersburg, Fla., music director Sarah Jacobs (left) and PD Ashley Morrison.



Curb artist Harper Grace sang the national anthem on March 25 before the San Diego Wave's National Women's Soccer League game against the Chicago Red Stars. From left: Curb vp of marketing, communication and content John Clore; Wave director of fan engagement Erin Mooney; Grace; Wave events and engagement coordinator Kristina Perez; and Curb director of creative Chris Collins.

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- AMERICAN SONGWRITER

NASHVILLE & NATIONAL TOM ROLAND



Singer-songwriter Greylan James (center) announced his signing with BMLG Records on March 24. He's flanked by: BMLG Records president/CEO Jimmy Harnen (left) and Big Machine Label Group president/CEO Scott Borchetta.

WADE BOWEN SHINES IN TEXAS AWARDS

Wade Bowen snagged three trophies and Aaron Watson won entertainer of the year during the 13th annual Texas Regional Radio Music Awards on March 27 at Texas Live! in Arlington.

Bowen claimed single and song of the year for "Everything Has Your Memory," and he pocketed the male vocalist honor as well, capping the two-day conference. Ariel Hutchins was a double-winner, taking female vocalist and video of the year, for "Stuck."

The awards are presented by *The Texas Regional Radio Report*, which provides the weekly red-dirt chart published in the *Billboard Country Update* (see page 4).

Flatland Cavalry rode off with the group/duo award, and William Clark Green's *Baker Hotel* won album of the year.

Long a stronghold in country music, Texas has a large enough concert infrastructure to field its own club circuit, fueled by a diverse range of influences that form a raw brand of the genre. Associated through the years with the likes of George Strait, Lyle Lovett, Pat Green and Billy Joe Shaver, the red-dirt community has bred more recent successes such as Cody Johnson, Parker McCollum, Eli Young Band, Whiskey Myers and The Randy Rogers Band.

Three awards went to new acts that aspire to extend that tradition: new male vocalist Matt Castillo, new female vocalist Jordan Rainer and new duo/group/band Love & Chaos.

KQSC Colorado Springs, Colo., won a pair of trophies, claiming out-of-region station, while co-owner Dave West and morning host Johnny Joy took out-of-region personality.

Winning Texas stations included KFWR Fort Worth (super market), KORQ Abilene (large market), KAXA Kerrville (medium market) and KXOX Sweetwater (small market).

Winning personalities were Eric Raines, KOKE Austin (super market); Crowman & Nash, KRMX Waco (large market); Rudy Fernandez, KKCX San Angelo (medium market); and Melissa Kay, KYOX Comanche (small market).

RADIO & RECORDS®

Country/folk artist Charles Wesley Godwin signed a recording deal with Big Loud ... Bluegrass label Billy Blue added six-piece band Carson Peters and Iron Mountain to the roster ... Singer-songwriter Jesslee agreed to a recording contract with ONErpm ... Stephanie McCoy took over mornings for classic country WWDK Lansing, Mich., beginning March 27. The move marks a return to radio after a two-year stint in-market on WILX-TV and a run as Greater Lansing Food Bank community partner liaison ... Audacy named Jenna Weiss-Berman its executive vp of podcasts, after serving as a founding partner for Pineapple Street Studios, which Audacy acquired in 2019 ... Alex Miller launched a European online radio show, *Miller Time*, on March 22 on CMR Nashville. The show will air on the third Sunday of each month through the end of 2023 ... Cox Media/Tulsa, Okla., hired Mark Shecterle as market manager, RadioInk.com reported. The four-station cluster includes country KWEN. Shecterle previously held the same position with NRG Media/Omaha,

Neb. ... Compass Media promoted Liane Sousa to director of affiliate sales from associate director, according to RadioInsight.com.

'ROUND THE ROW

Business management firm FBMM promoted Regina A. Bassett, Fred Ford, Jeff Jones and Emily Walker to associate business manager from account manager roles ... Two O'Neil Hagaman executives, tax director Lynda Ragsdale and intellectual property co-head Sam Powers, were promoted to partner ... Jon "Ando" Andolina formed The Francis June Group, with Larry Fleet as the company's first management client. Andolina was previously a co-founder/partner at Good Company Entertainment. Reach him [here](#) ... UTA Nashville signed singer-songwriter Emily Ann Roberts ... Georgette Jones reached a management deal with Gerald Murray Music and joined the public relations roster at PLA Media ... Faith Hill will receive a Gracie Award as a Television National winner for her role in *1883*. Other country-centric winners include two Radio National victors, Apple Music's Kelleigh Bannen and *Country Gold* host Terri Clark, plus a Radio Local winner, WXTU Philadelphia's *A Mother's Day Tribute to Naomi Judd and The Judds*. The Gracies will be presented June 20 in New York ... Dolly Parton and Garth Brooks are co-hosting the 58th Academy of Country Music Awards, to be held May 11 ... The Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame and the Merle Haggard Statue Committee plan to erect a bronze Haggard statue in Muskogee, KOCO-TV Oklahoma City reported ... Sheryl Crow, Margo Price and Old Crow Medicine Show's Ketch Secor participated in a Nashville vigil on March 29 honoring the three children and three adults killed in a mass shooting at a school two days prior. Go [here](#) for an account ... At least seven acts — including Bryan White, Jeannie Seely and Janie Fricke — will raise money for the Law Enforcement Assistance Partnership with a Blue Lights & Country Nights Concert on May 9 at the Nashville Palace ... Songwriters Hillary Lindsey, Liz Rose and Lori McKenna — known collectively as the Love Junkies — will play the annual Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda concert for Music Health Alliance on April 25 at City Winery Nashville ... T.G. Sheppard and Kelly Lang are hosting Country for a Cause, a June 7 benefit at Nashville's 3rd & Lindsley. The lineup includes John Conlee, Moe Bandy, Terry McBride and Leon Everette ... Operation Song will host a songwriting retreat on April 1 at the VA Women's Clinic in Nashville ... Grand Ole Opry member Ray Pillow, 85, died March 26 in Nashville. He earned a top 10 single, "I'll Take the Dog," recorded with Jean Shepard in 1966 ... Bob "Norton" Thompson, 80, died March 24. He co-founded the Nashville rehearsal studio Soundcheck, used by Keith Urban, Reba McEntire and Brad Paisley, among others. A GoFundMe account was established [here](#) to assist his family with expenses. ●



The HBO documentary *Jason Isbell: Running With Our Eyes Closed* had its Los Angeles premiere, accompanied by a Q&A, on March 23 at the Grammy Museum. From left on the red carpet: director Sam Jones, Isbell, Amanda Shires and moderator Colin Hanks.



ON SALE | APRIL 22, 2023

2023

NEW ORLEANS SPOTLIGHT

On April 22nd, *Billboard* will spotlight and pay tribute to New Orleans- an epicenter for musical innovation which has impacted the genres of blues, soul, rock & roll, and house music, respectively.

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MAKIN' TRACKS TOM ROLAND tom.roland@billboard.com

Newcomer Jordan Harvey Finds A Melodic Lane With His Debut Single, 'Along For The Ride'

Much of country music's story is embedded in the road.

The genre is obsessed with pickup trucks, artists are necessarily reliant on tour buses, and a passel of key recordings — from **Hank Williams'** "Lost Highway" to **Willie Nelson's** "On the Road Again" — are tied up in travel.

So is **Jordan Harvey's** "Along for the Ride," a sunshiny piece of ear candy that distills a commute from Alabama to Nashville into a three-minute musical journey with inspirational debts to **Keith Urban**, **Rascal Flatts**, **Lionel Richie** and **Beyoncé**.

"I'm a very melody-driven human," says Harvey, a Scottish-born former member of **King Calaway**. "Melody makes you feel, and then it's the lyric that takes you over the line."

"Along for the Ride" is built around an ultra-hooky chorus melody that Harvey developed while driving north with his fiancée, **Madison Fendley**, from her parents' home in lower Alabama for a songwriting session on Feb. 10, 2022. The upbeat musical phrases worked in tandem with a series of "pushes" — three instrumental notes that propel the energy from one phrase to the next. Those pushes borrowed from the syncopation of Richie's "All Night Long (All Night)." And the images for Harvey's song likewise came straight out of Fendley's joy while riding in the passenger seat.

"This Beyoncé song came on, and she's singing along, and her hands are out the window, and I'm like, 'You're the most beautiful person,'" he remembers. "I was back out to the write that night, and I knew there was something there."

Songwriter-producer **Jason Massey** (**Kelsea Ballerini**, **Mickey Guyton**) hosted the appointment, which included **James McNair** ("Going, Going, Gone," "Lovin' On You"), in a studio on his property.

"There's a chicken pen with like 10 chickens — you couldn't get much more country than that, could you?" deadpans Harvey. "As you're writing a song, you hear the chickens — 'B-caw, b-caw' — which was pretty awesome, and pretty random."

Harvey introduced his musical foundation, which was quickly moved to the most prominent part of the song.

"Jordan was humming that melody maybe an octave below where it is [now], thinking it was like a verse," Massey recalls. "We're like, 'That sounds like a chorus.'"

Harvey relayed how positive and inspired the trip had been and noted that he wanted to write a song with an automotive vibe along the lines of Urban's "Days Go By" or Rascal Flatts' "Fast Cars and Freedom." McNair offered the title, and when they fished for a setup line, McNair also served the full twist: "I may have my hands on the wheel/But I'm just along for the ride." Key in making it work was to present it in a way that fans could relate to either of the song's two characters in present tense.

"I remember trying to describe her enough to make it feel good, where it puts the listener [in the role of] the guy driving, or the girl that's along for the ride," says McNair. "And we wanted to keep it very fiercely in the moment."

Harvey was conscientious about populating the song with images that fit his relationship — it recognizes her Alabama roots, for example — and he hinted at her background as a dancer with an entertainment-related phrase in the chorus.

"I've never heard anyone say, 'Paparazzi Hollywood smile' in a country

song," he says. "It phonetically matches the first line, and it felt right to put it in there when we sang it. It just pops off the tongue."

They pitched the opening lines much lower than the chorus, creating a natural arc in the song's construction, and McNair fashioned a key pre-chorus line, "Hearts burnin' hotter than the gasoline," that was so strong they reused it for a bridge.

"What really separates a great song from just an undeniable song is if you can have different parts that you can pull out of the song and they're equally as hooky — like, hooky verse, hooky pre-chorus and hooky chorus," says McNair. "That phrasing, how it goes into the pre-chorus, once we landed on that, that's when we knew we had it locked in."

Massey started lightly producing the demo during the co-write, then worked in more depth later, with keyboards, bass, guitar and programmed drums. He also included a banjo, treating it with an echo effect that transforms its clunky nature into a sound that emulates the glitter of a paparazzi-inhabited red carpet or the stars "fallin' like diamonds" in verse two.

"The verse definitely has some more reverb, and I think it's filtered out some high frequencies," he says. "So the banjo in the verse is a different treatment than the banjo on the chorus."

Massey called on several other musicians to make individual changes for the final version. **Evan Hutchings** replaced the programmed drums with a real kit, while **Justin Ostrander** fitted in a short solo that ends with twin Southern-rock inspired guitars. **Alex Wright** added extra keyboard textures, too.

Harvey cut his rangy vocals on his own back in Alabama, though after Massey got the file, he persuaded Harvey to do a second remote vocal session, where they Americanized some

of his enunciations a little more.

"When he initially sent me the vocals, I don't even remember how he pronounced 'paparazzi,' but it was really weird," recalls Massey with a laugh. "It was just not how we pronounce it here. I sat on the phone trying to coach him on that for a minute."

Harvey did a separate version of the end of verse two, changing the melody and dovetailing with his own chorus performance, and he piled up more than seven different tracks with ad-libs. Massey contributed extra harmony vocals.

Harvey heard final mixes of "Along for the Ride" during his radio promotion tour — he listened to one key version in the middle of a busy airport — and he got important feedback in those station visits.

"I had this song in my arsenal. Everyone loved the song — I really loved the song — there was no denying that this was going to be a single," Harvey says. "But when I started doing my radio tour, people at radio said, 'Oh my God, man, we're dying for tempo.' My second station, I played it and the guy was like, 'Give it to me right now, I'll play it.'"

Broken Bow released it to country radio via PlayMPE on Valentine's Day. After developing "Along for the Ride" through the pandemic, performing it for actual crowds on the road underscores his belief in the song's melodic power.

"Just seeing people like, 'Well, I love this,'" he says. "It's so rewarding when it's a pen and pencil on a desk, or in a studio with a guitar and a couple of boys. But to take it out and have a finished product that people want, that's the best feeling in the world." ●



billboard Country Airplay Index

TITLE Publishing-Licensing Org.
(Songwriter) **Chart Position**

23 Chayce Beckham Publishing Designee, BMI (C. Beckham) **52**

5 LEAF CLOVER Songs Of Universal, Inc./BMI/Bootleg Lyrics, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Damn Country Music Publishing, ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Family Farm Songs, BMI (L.Combs, J.L.Alexander, C.McGill) **48**

A

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B

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C

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E

EVERYTHING SHE AIN'T WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Pigasus, ASCAP/Cockeyed Hat Music, BMI/Harolds Purple Heart Music, BMI/Little Louder Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI (H.Whitters, B.Simpson, R.Tyndell) **25**

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GOLD EMI Blackwood Music Inc., BMI/Iris In The Sky With Diamonds, BMI/Emileon Songs, BMI/Little Louder Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Caleb S College Fund, ASCAP/DudeTunes, ASCAP/Kobalt Songs Music Publishing LLC, ASCAP (R.Copperman, C.L.Dick, A.G.Gorley, D.Bentley) **6**

GOOD DAY FOR LIVING Spirit Two Nashville, ASCAP/Spirit Vault Songs, ASCAP/YesYesYes!, BMI/Mason Gannon Music, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Reverly Music, BMI (D.Cohen, B.Hamrick, N.Mason) **21**

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WHAT HE DIDN'T DO Caleb's College Fund, ASCAP/Round Hill Songs II, ASCAP/Songs Of Yellow Room Music, BMI/For The Kids Platinum, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Redfeather Publishing, ASCAP/For The Kids Gold, ASCAP/BMG Gold Songs, ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP (C.Pearce, A.G.Gorley, E.M.Shackleton) **9**

WILD AS HER Combustion Music, BMI/Anthem Music Publishing I, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Red Creative, BMI/Downtown DMP Songs, BMI/Big Loud Brett Songs, BMI/Round Hill Compositions, BMI/Sonofgroceries Music, BMI (M.Wallen, Brett Tyler, K.Archer) **8**

WORTH A SHOT Tempo Investments-Smack Hits, GMR/Warner Geo Met Ric Music, GMR/EMI Blackwood Music Inc., BMI/Iris In The Sky With Diamonds, BMI/Smackwood Music, GMR/Sony Accent, ASCAP/Smackborne Music, ASCAP (S.McAnally, R.Copperman, J.Osborne) **38**

Y

YOU BMG Gold Songs, ASCAP/Beats And Banjos, ASCAP/Buckeye 26, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Ireynmusic, ASCAP/Lawnyangrangers, ASCAP (D.Smyers, D.M.Barnes, J.Reynolds) **11**

YOU, ME, & WHISKEY WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Where I Started Music Publishing, ASCAP/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Don't Be A Gypsy, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Anthem Coat Miming Songs, ASCAP/Randolph County Music, SESAC/Taylor Made By The Red White And Blue, ASCAP (J.L.Alexander, B.Berryhill, C.Hart) **29**

YOUR HEART OR MINE Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Hinkytankoholic Music Publishing, BMI/Universal Tunes, SESAC/Phat Racon, SESAC/Universal Music Corp., ASCAP/Brumby Cooper Otis Music, ASCAP (B.Butter, J.Ebach, J.Pierce) **26**

billboard

2023

I N T E R N A T I O N A L
P O W E R
P L A Y E R S

On April 22nd, *Billboard* will publish its annual International Power Players list. This issue will profile the leaders in the global music industry including the label executives, live entertainment execs, managers, talent agents and lawyers, and recognize their achievements. Advertise and congratulate this year's International Power Players to reach an influential audience of decision-makers worldwide.

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COUNTRY

REWINDING THE COUNTRY CHARTS

25 Years Ago Trisha Yearwood Had A Picture-Perfect No. 1

In 1998, she notched her most recent of five Hot Country Songs chart-toppers

On April 4, 1998, **Trisha Yearwood's** "Perfect Love" began a two-week run at No. 1 on *Billboard's* Hot Country Songs chart, marking her fifth of five leaders.

Sunny Russ and **Stephony Smith** wrote the song, and **Tony Brown** produced it. It was released from Yearwood's (*Songbook*) *A Collection of Hits*, which in September 1997 debuted as her first of four No. 1s on the Top

Country Albums chart.

Yearwood was born Sept. 19, 1964, in Monticello, Ga. In 1984, she graduated from Young Harris College with an associate degree in business. Prior to signing with MCA Records in 1990, she worked various jobs in Nashville, including as a receptionist at MTM Records, and attended Belmont University.

Yearwood's debut single, "She's in

Love With the Boy," ruled Hot Country Songs for two weeks starting in August 1991. In 2021, the song was ranked as the most-heard country hit by a woman since Luminare began in 1990.

Now 58 and married to superstar **Garth Brooks** since December 2005, Yearwood is active in music, TV and writing, having authored a series of cookbooks. —JIM ASKER

Yearwood in 1998.



WEEK	WEEKS ON CHART	WEEKS AT NO. 1	WEEKS AT NO. 1	ARTIST	RECORD LABEL
1	2	4	12	PERFECT LOVE T. BROWN, T. YEARWOOD (S. RUSS, S. SMITH)	◆ TRISHA YEARWOOD (V) MCA NASHVILLE 72034
2	1	1	21	NOTHIN' BUT THE TAILLIGHTS J. STROUD, C. BLACK (C. BLACK, S. WARINER)	CLINT BLACK (C) (D) (V) RCA 65350
3	4	6	18	IF I NEVER STOP LOVING YOU P. MCMARKIN (D. KEES, S. EWING)	◆ DAVID KERSH (C) (D) (V) CLFRB 73045
4	3	3	17	LITTLE RED RODEO C. RAYE, P. WORLEY, B. J. WALKER, JR. (C. BLACK, P. YASSAR, R. M. BOURKE)	GOLLIN RAYE EPIC ALBUM OUT
5	7	11	16	THEN WHAT? J. STROUD, C. WALKER (R. SHARP, J. VEZNER)	◆ CLAY WALKER (C) (D) (V) GIANT 17252/REPRISE
6	9	12	16	BYE BYE	◆ IQ DEE MESSINA