

billboard Country Update

BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

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Country Music At The Grammy Awards: The Nominees Are A Time Capsule For The Genre

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The country contingent of the Grammy Awards may be the closest that Nashville ever gets to time travel.

This year's nominees for the Feb. 4 ceremony include best new artist candidates **Jelly Roll** and **The War and Treaty**, a **Dierks Bentley** collaboration with **Billy Strings**, best country album finalists **Lainey Wilson** and **Zach Bryan**, and **Luke Combs'** remake of "Fast Car."

Each of those nominations — and most of the other country contenders, too — move in two different directions on the time continuum, pushing the genre into the future while still hanging on to something out of the past.

The Grammys, according to **John Carter Cash**, are drawn to performances that are "forward-thinking and connecting with the roots." He should know: He's nominated as an arranger on a new version of "Folsom Prison Blues" — a title closely associated with his father, **Johnny Cash** — recorded by **String Revolution** featuring **Tommy Emmanuel**. The performance is an adventurous instrumental piece that wraps "Folsom" in folk and jazz ideals, absolutely widening the footprint of the song. Yet it remains significantly old school: The original melody is intact during much of the recording, and it employs guitars that belonged to the Man in Black and his original guitarist, **Luther Perkins**.

The Grammys come under criticism every year among some

country executives and broadcasters because the nominations don't particularly line up with the biggest current projects in the genre. But that was never the intent of the awards, which are voted on by the creative class rather than marketers and managers. Those creatives — which count musicians, songwriters and producers among them — tend to reward the craft as much

as the commerce, and the slate typically recognizes performances that build on bedrock influences while making a new statement. Sometimes, as in Bryan's **Kacey Musgraves** collaboration, "I Remember Everything," that includes some of the most popular current music. But in others, such as **Brandy Clark's** twice-nominated "Buried," that means elevating music from outside the mainstream.

The nominations tend to honor artists and performances that respect the past without being bound by it. That is, to be sure, how the most original artists operate.

"If you love country music and you're trying to do it, you love the old stuff," Bentley notes. But "you can't just go back and redo the old stuff. It's already been done."

There are exceptions. Combs' revision of "Fast Car," a best country solo performance nominee, is a faithful update of a classic, though the present circumstances are different: Male singer Combs renders it from a different perspective than female originator **Tracy Chapman**, and it reemerged in country instead of



Bentley (left) and The War and Treaty's Trotter were among the attendees of a Jan. 24 Grammy Nominee Celebration at Nashville's Hutton Hotel.

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the folk/pop arena where it was introduced. Solo competitor **Dolly Parton**'s "The Last Thing on My Mind" is a reworking of a song she first cut with duet partner **Porter Wagoner** in 1967. And **Vince Gill** is a best country duo/group finalist with steel guitarist **Paul Franklin** for bringing attention to "Kissing Your Picture (Is So Cold)," an obscure **Ray Price** song rerecorded for a tribute album.

"When I first heard Vince Gill, I thought, 'Whoa, this is so cool, so new,' and it was, of course," Bentley remembers. "Listening to Vince now, that's nothing but traditional country music, but the way he did it, it felt new. It's the same thing with **Morgan Wallen** now. A lot of his songs are super country. My daughter listens to him, she goes, 'Oh my God, this is so cool and new and different.' I'm like, 'That's pretty country: dobro, and **Bryan Sutton** on the acoustic.' So you kind of trick everyone a little bit."

Carly Pearce's ability to walk the line between old and new is one of the reasons her **Chris Stapleton** collaboration, "We Don't Fight Anymore," secured a country duo/group nomination. The spare, acoustic arrangement builds on the genre's origins, as does its mature lyrical portrait of a debilitated relationship. But the melody and the phrasing are notably modern.

"They're looking for artistic expression," suggests Pearce. "That song is one of the most authentic to me, so I think it resonates, obviously, in a commercial way, but more in an artistic way, which is what I love about the Grammys. They see the whole vision of an artist and not just what's played on the radio. For it to have that marriage together is really [key]."

Even **Kelsea Ballerini**'s best country album entry, *Rolling Up the Welcome Mat*, has that forward-thinking, roots-respecting aura. Sequenced in a way that reflects her emotional journey following a divorce from **Morgan Evans**, it mostly features a boundary-testing, pop-leaning sound, though mining her inner world for her art is very much an old-school **Hank Williams** kind of approach.

"In my brain, it's like I made a movie," she says. "It's solely focusing and zooming in on the songwriting and the storytelling, and to me, that is honoring the genre that I dig my heels into every day. The sonic elements that accompany it, to me, don't hold as much weight as the story that you're telling."

Even personal history can influence the artistic time-machine effect. Songwriter of the year nominee **Jessie Jo Dillon** ("Memory Lane," "Halfway to Hell") compares Jelly Roll's rise from a prison background and drug abuse to Johnny Cash's messages about forgiveness. And Wilson sees Jelly Roll's willingness to share his experiences as a major influence on the format moving forward.

"Everybody's past and everything — none of that matters," she observes. "We've all done things, we've all messed up. It's about what's on the inside, and Jelly Roll is nothing but good."

Ultimately, the creatives who vote for the Grammys all draw from the same musical past as the nominees, and the country finalists list is a qualitative statement about how the genre can continue to evolve.

"It's very, very difficult to know where you're going if you don't know where you come from," says The War and Treaty's **Michael Trotter Jr.** "We like to pay respect, homage, pay a nod to the past because it's still our present."

At the Grammys, that past dictates how country moves into its future. ●



Charles Esten played music from his debut album, *Love Ain't Pretty*, during a Jan. 29 appearance on NBC's *The Kelly Clarkson Show*. From left: fellow guests Kevin James and Renata Notni, Esten and Clarkson.



Jordan Davis (left) served as guest host for Apple Music's *The Kelleigh Bannen Show* Jan. 29 through Feb. 1. The stint included an appearance by Mitchell Tenpenny.



Abby Anderson visited with iHeartRadio personality Bobby Bones during the Jan. 30 episode of his *Bobbycast* podcast.

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WOMEN IN MUSIC

On March 2nd, *Billboard* will publish its highly anticipated Women in Music special issue, featuring top women in the music industry who are creating excitement and making their mark across labels, publishing and touring.

Coinciding with the issue, *Billboard's* Women in Music awards ceremony will be held March 6th. This event will bring together music's most prominent female artists and the industry's top female business executives to recognize and celebrate their achievements.

Take this opportunity to congratulate the most powerful and talented women in music and wish them continued success.

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

Nate Smith's 'Fire' Still Burning, Ties For Second-Longest Country Airplay Reign

Nate Smith's "World on Fire" (Arista Nashville/RCA Nashville) tops *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart for an eighth total and consecutive week. It leads the list dated Feb. 10 with 32.1 million audience impressions (down 6%) Jan. 26-Feb. 1, according to Luminate.

The song ties three titles for the second-longest rule since Country Airplay launched in January 1990: **Morgan Wallen's** "Last Night" (beginning in May 2023), **Alan Jackson and Jimmy Buffett's** "It's Five O'Clock Somewhere" (August 2003) and **Lonestar's** "Amazed" (July 1999). Wallen's "You Proof" dominated for a record 10 weeks, starting in October 2022.

"Eight weeks at No. 1... the crazy thing about this song is that it wasn't even supposed to come out!" Smith tells *Billboard*. "It was starting to gain a lot of traction on social media, and the demand was high. I'm so lucky to have a team that knew how to strategically release it alongside my debut album by releasing the deluxe version the same day [April 28, 2023] that the debut dropped. This song completely anchored the album.

"My mind is absolutely blown hearing the news that 'World on Fire' has gone No. 1 for an eighth straight week," Smith marvels. "Thank you to the fans and thank you, country radio."

What has kept "Fire" aflame at radio? Says **Tom Oakes**, program director at Summit Media-owned **KTTS** Springfield, Mo., the hit is "a rare song — for KTTS, it has been testing at a power level since last summer and continues to. Like **Luke Combs'** "Fast Car" — which topped Country Airplay for five weeks beginning last July — "it's a song that listeners love and haven't gotten tired of.

"While it's a record company's mission to achieve No. 1s," Oakes muses, "my mission is finding the true hits [that] will become future gold library songs. This song, like 'Fast Car,' fits the criteria." ●



SMITH

MATTHEW BERINATO

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)
ALL I NEED IS YOU BMLG	Chris Janson	+5.468
MAMAW'S HOUSE Valory	Thomas Rhett Featuring Morgan Wallen	+2.484
HALFWAY TO HELL Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+2.071
THE PAINTER CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	+1.390
MAN MADE A BAR Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Eric Church	+1.382
PRETTY LITTLE POISON 717/Warner/WEA	Warren Zeiders	+1.287
TRUCK BED Big Loud	HARDY	+1.268
DIFFERENT 'ROUND HERE BMLG	Riley Green Featuring Luke Combs	+1.131
WILDFLOWERS AND WILD HORSES Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson	+1.087
BACK THEN RIGHT NOW Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	+1.003

MOST INCREASED PLAYS

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN
ALL I NEED IS YOU BMLG	Chris Janson	+1683
MAMAW'S HOUSE Valory	Thomas Rhett Featuring Morgan Wallen	+806
HALFWAY TO HELL Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+575
WHERE IT ENDS Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	+357
THE PAINTER CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	+352
TRUCK BED Big Loud	HARDY	+273
MAN MADE A BAR Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Eric Church	+247
BACK THEN RIGHT NOW Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	+242
PRETTY LITTLE POISON 717/Warner/WEA	Warren Zeiders	+239
WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	+229

RECURRENTS

THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	THINKIN' BOUT ME Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	22.120
2	FAST CAR River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	18.680
3	LAST NIGHT Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	18.104
4	MIND ON YOU RECORDS Nashville	George Birge	15.219
5	NEED A FAVOR Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	14.127
6	DANCIN' IN THE COUNTRY Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	13.449
7	ROCK AND A HARD PLACE Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	11.755
8	TRY THAT IN A SMALL TOWN Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	10.966
9	SAVE ME THE TROUBLE Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Dan + Shay	10.643
10	NEXT THING YOU KNOW MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	10.516



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 1, 2024

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	SAME PLACE TWICE (Independent) **1 Week at 1**	Chad Cooke Band (Ft. Amanda Kate Ferris)	1809	212	11	6	18	LOVIN' NOT LEAVIN' (Independent)	Wade Bowen	1166	-248
2	3	12	OKLAHOMA (Independent)	Casey Donahew	1730	183	12	16	12	A BROKEN HEART LIKE THAT (Independent)	Kyle Park	1131	188
3	5	22	BEEN THERE (Independent)	Case Hardin	1720	208	13	14	15	THE GREYS BETWEEN (Independent)	Shane Smith & The Saints	1037	23
4	4	13	OUTLAWS AND MUSTANGS (Late August Records)	Cody Jinks	1634	94	14	18	12	PROMISE YOU ME (Independent)	Grant Gilbert	929	71
5	1	22	HELL OF A STORM (Independent)	Cory Morrow	1491	-246	15	12	26	NOTHINS CHANGED (Independent)	Bart Crow Band	916	-151
6	8	15	IF I HAD A BAR (Independent)	Jon Wolfe	1448	161	16	20	12	RIGHT AT HOME (Independent)	Jamie Richards	905	68
7	7	24	SITTIN' ON A PORCH (Independent)	Jesse Raub Jr.	1446	41	17	17	20	ASK ME TO DANCE (Independent)	Catie Offerman / Hayes Carl	892	32
8	10	24	STICKS AND STONES (Independent)	Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real	1242	62	18	21	17	INTEXCICATING (Independent)	Ben McPeak	854	115
9	13	21	SET IT ALL DOWN (Independent)	The Great Divide	1215	151	19	9	21	IF I WAS YOUR COWBOY (Independent)	David Adam Byrnes	822	-416
10	11	24	SONGS OF THE FAMILY (Little Red Truck)	Deryl Dodd	1211	42	20	22	8	SOMEBODY'S BABY (Independent)	Jon Stork	815	101

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 2024, Texas Regional Radio Report

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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	34	WORLD ON FIRE Arista Nashville/RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	32.137	-2.095	7524	-658	2
2	2	28	WHITE HORSE Sound/Mercury Nashville	Chris Stapleton	26.990	-3.601	7108	-877	3
3	8	50	ALL I NEED IS YOU BMLG	Chris Janson	26.625	+5.468	7591	1683	1
4	4	39	DIFFERENT 'ROUND HERE BMLG	Riley Green Featuring Luke Combs	24.789	+1.131	6683	164	5
5	3	36	SAVE ME Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll With Lainey Wilson	24.681	-0.586	5873	-138	8
6	5	30	PRETTY LITTLE POISON 717/Warner/WEA	Warren Zeiders	24.132	+1.287	6774	239	4
7	6	25	THE PAINTER CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	23.943	+1.390	6313	352	6
8	7	17	WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	22.627	+0.599	6111	229	7
9	9	38	TRUCK BED Big Loud	HARDY	20.161	+1.268	5397	273	9
10	10	20	I CAN FEEL IT Zone 4/RCA Nashville	Kane Brown	19.645	+0.758	5208	185	10
11	12	18	MAMAW'S HOUSE Valory	Thomas Rhett Featuring Morgan Wallen	16.559	+2.484	4578	806	11
12	11	52	23 19/BMG/Wheelhouse	Chayce Beckham	14.840	+0.563	4409	103	12
13	13	35	BURN IT DOWN MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	14.190	+0.440	3975	8	14
14	14	43	CREEK WILL RISE Valory	Conner Smith	13.320	+0.217	4033	71	13
15	15	14	MAN MADE A BAR Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Eric Church	12.288	+1.382	3060	247	19
16	17	24	TUCSON TOO LATE MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	10.386	+0.788	3199	226	15
17	16	24	CAB IN A SOLO Triple Tigers	Scotty McCreery	10.310	+0.399	3145	-7	17
18	18	12	WILDFLOWERS AND WILD HORSES Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson	10.260	+1.087	3076	170	18
19	19	53	FEARLESS (THE ECHO) Big Machine	Jackson Dean	9.234	+0.566	3190	96	16
20	20	33	WE DON'T FIGHT ANYMORE Big Machine	Carly Pearce Featuring Chris Stapleton	8.530	+0.221	2753	43	21
21	22	21	BACK THEN RIGHT NOW Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	8.298	+1.003	2737	242	22
22	21	34	GLORY DAYS Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Gabby Barrett	7.784	+0.064	2885	156	20
23	23	12	TAKE HER HOME Blue Chair/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Kenny Chesney	7.217	+0.558	2299	106	23
24	24	35	OUT OF THAT TRUCK Capitol Nashville	Carrie Underwood	6.585	+0.436	2141	105	24
25	25	7	YOUR PLACE Back Blocks/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	6.397	+0.322	1889	173	25
26	27	10	LET YOUR BOYS BE COUNTRY Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	5.524	+0.366	1645	198	31
27	26	22	I REMEMBER EVERYTHING Interscope/Belting Bronco/Warner/MCA Nashville/WAR	Zach Bryan Featuring Kacey Musgraves	5.470	+0.041	1802	31	28
28	28	26	I'M NOT PRETTY Megan Moroney/Columbia/Arista Nashville	Megan Moroney	5.469	+0.527	1834	82	27
29	30	28	OUTSKIRTS MCA Nashville	Sam Hunt	5.257	+0.829	1766	187	29
30	29	19	CAN'T BREAK UP NOW Columbia Nashville	Old Dominion & Megan Moroney	5.062	+0.274	1880	42	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 © 2024, 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.

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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

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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	18	WHERE IT ENDS Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	5.002	+0.773	1692	357	30
32	36	3	HALFWAY TO HELL Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	4.603	+2.071	1269	575	33
33	33	18	WE RIDE Average Joes	Bryan Martin	4.289	+0.427	1230	81	35
34	32	36	LOVE YOU AGAIN Chase Matthew/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Chase Matthew	3.775	-0.204	1593	-20	32
35	34	21	YOUNG LOVE & SATURDAY NIGHTS RCA Nashville	Chris Young	3.597	+0.227	1123	101	37
36	35	16	COWBOYS AND PLOWBOYS Capitol Nashville	Jon Pardi & Luke Bryan	2.670	-0.039	971	12	40
37	37	20	SPIRITS AND DEMONS Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Michael Ray Featuring Meghan Patrick	2.579	+0.055	997	-9	39
38	38	30	DRINKIN' PROBLEMS Riser House	Dillon Carmichael	2.508	+0.071	1258	-19	34
39	39	13	GONNA LOVE YOU Stoney Creek	Parmalee	2.461	+0.224	1031	86	38
40	40	13	RODEO MAN Pearl/Big Machine	Garth Brooks & Ronnie Dunn	2.212	+0.107	1154	29	36
41	42	24	DANCE WITH YOU BMLG	Brett Young	2.109	+0.313	892	68	41
42	45	8	CHEVROLET Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch Featuring Jelly Roll	1.705	+0.283	631	54	45
43	43	12	THIS IS MY DIRT Valory	Justin Moore	1.646	-0.033	888	-3	42
44	47	19	IN YOUR LOVE Hickman Holler/RCA	Tyler Childers	1.523	+0.271	775	100	43
45	46	4	SOUNDS LIKE THE RADIO Leo33	Zach Top	1.518	+0.116	612	-11	46
46	44	13	PICKUP MAN Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Joe Diffie Featuring Post Malone	1.327	-0.106	309	-35	58
47	48	14	FIND ANOTHER BAR Voyager/Red Street	Chris Lane	1.290	+0.041	656	40	44
48	50	18	BROKENHEARTED Brown Sellers Brown/Quartz Hill	Joe Nichols	0.962	-0.002	597	3	47
49	49	10	LOVE YOU BACK BMLG	Lady A	0.943	-0.285	595	-64	48
50	55	2	ONE BAD HABIT McGraw/Big Machine	Tim McGraw	0.940	+0.364	521	216	51
51	51	14	SHE'S SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER (REIMAGINED) Patoka Sounds/Lyric Ridge	Drew Baldridge	0.911	+0.089	576	40	49
52	52	16	I'M IN LOVE Songs & Daughters/Pigasus/Big Loud	Hailey Whitters	0.907	+0.141	456	25	52
53	53	7	AIN'T ABOUT YOU 19/Wheelhouse	HunterGirl	0.856	+0.105	570	39	50
54	56	12	LONG LIVE COWGIRLS Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Ian Munsick & Cody Johnson	0.723	+0.151	305	-3	59
55	NEW		ITRIED A RING ON Monument ★★ Hot Shot Debut/Breaker ★★	Tigritily Gold	0.656	+0.379	291	127	-
56	54	4	BOYS BACK HOME PIA/Curb/Columbia Nashville	Dylan Marlowe & Dylan Scott	0.651	+0.000	387	17	54
57	59	5	KING OF COUNTRY MUSIC Red Street	Ryan Larkins	0.621	+0.137	330	8	56
58	NEW		SPIN YOU AROUND (1/24) Honeyhole/Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	0.611	+0.611	120	120	-
59	57	3	BREAKIN' IN BOOTS RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Matt Stell	0.586	+0.060	417	28	53
60	58	3	DIRT CHEAP CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	0.523	+0.016	73	4	-



Songwriter-artist Ashley Ray signed a publishing deal, announced Jan. 24, with Warner Chappell Nashville and Lady Fairchild Publishing, established by Little Big Town's Karen Fairchild. From left: Warner Chappell senior director of A&R and digital Jessi Stevenson, Ray, Fairchild and Warner Chappell Nashville president/CEO Ben Vaughn.



Runaway June dropped by WOGI Pittsburgh on Jan. 23 while supporting its Quartz Hill single "Make Me Wanna Smoke." From left: group member Stevie Woodward, WOGI PD Jeremy "Danger" Mulder and group members Jennifer Wayne and Natalie Stovall.

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2024

SPOTLIGHT: SPAIN

In the issue of March 9, Billboard will celebrate the explosion of "música latina" in Spain, where music in Spanish from around the world is finding new and fertile ground for touring, airplay and cross pollination. We look at Spain's booming music scene and how increasingly labels, promoters and artists are working together across international borders to further promote music in Spanish.

Advertise in this issue to position your business in front of key decision makers who are driving Spain's music industry.

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ISSUE DATE 3/9 | AD CLOSE 2/26 | MATERIALS DUE 2/28

NASHVILLE & NATIONAL TOM ROLAND tom.roland@billboard.com

Restless Road welcomed Audacy regional vp of programming **Mark Anderson** when the band played Pittsburgh's Roxian Theatre on Jan. 26. From left: group member **Colton Pack**; **Anderson**; group member **Zach Beeken**; **Anderson's wife, Marie**; and group member **Garrett Nichols**.

TEXAS MUSIC NOMS ANNOUNCED

Bri Bagwell received seven nominations and **Wade Bowen** accrued six as the Texas Radio Report announced finalists for the 14th annual Texas Music & Radio Awards.

Both are up for entertainer of the year. They will square off against five-time nominees **Aaron Watson** and **The Randy Rogers Band**, plus four-time finalist **Kim Faux**.

The awards will be presented March 25 during the T3R Texas Music Weekend at Texas Live in Arlington. Go [here](#) for convention details and [here](#) for a partial nominations list.

RADIO & RECORDS®

The Big Machine Label Group made a trio of staff promotions: **Mike Rittberg** rose to COO from executive vp of label operations, while **Clay Hunnicutt** took over the executive vp post. Hunnicutt's former role, Big Machine Records GM, was filled by **Kris Lamb**, who becomes executive vp/GM after serving previously as senior vp of promotion and digital ... Curb Records adjusted three spots in its media and promotion department. **Craig Powers** rose to senior vp of media from vp, and **Lori Hartigan** stepped up to national director of media from director of West Coast promotion. The company concurrently hired **Bailey White** as director of Southwest promotion. She arrives from Black River, where she was Northeast regional manager ... Writer-artist **Auburn McCormick** signed a recording deal with Nashville indie **Rose & Thorn**, founded in 2022 by University of Mississippi graduate **Connor Rankin** ... **Bill Tatar** starts Feb. 5 as Audacy/Houston promotions director, which includes work with country **KILT**. Tatar spent 21 years as Cox Media/Houston content manager, where the properties include country **KKBQ** ... Key Networks' *Backstage Country* will welcome **Kelly Ford** as host beginning Feb. 26, when the first-week guest is **Lady A**. She has hosted the *The Kelly Ford Show* podcast since leaving former country outlet **WNSH** New York ... Neuhoff Media announced the sale of eight Illinois radio stations and two websites to Champaign Multimedia Group as it exits the broadcast industry. Included in the deal is country **WDZQ** Decatur ... **KKAJ** Ardmore, Okla., personality **Mike Elroy** was promoted to PD after six years with the station, RadioInk.com reported ... **Stella Mars** joined Binnie Media/Portland, Maine, as regional director of operations, according to RadioInk.com. She spent the previous three years as a Maine Public announcer/producer ... **WWQM** Madison, Wis., personality **Kristina Carlyle** has parted ways with the station, RadioInsight.com reported ... **WIL** St. Louis morning talent **Zach "Remy" Hoesly** ended his association with the company, according to RadioInsight.com ... Country Radio Broadcasters announced that **Kane Brown** will receive the artist humanitarian award on Feb. 29 during the Country Radio Seminar in Nashville. Mental health expert **Jason Prinzo**, a former record executive, will be a keynote speaker on March 1 in a session titled "Your Brain Is a Liar: Recognizing and Understanding the Impact of Your Mental Health."

'ROUND THE ROW

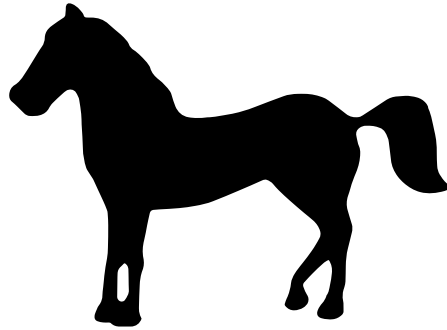
Beville Dunkerley joined Maverick Nashville as vp of marketing following a seven-year run as SiriusXM/Pandora head of country music talent and industry relations. Maverick's management roster includes **Jason Aldean**, **Brooks & Dunn** and **Darius Rucker**, among others. Reach Dunkerley [here](#) ... Artist-writer **David Lee Murphy** signed a publishing contract with peermusic ... Creative Nation sold part of its catalog to Anthem Entertainment. The volume of songs and specific titles in the transaction were not revealed. Representatives at both firms did not respond to requests for more information by press time ... Warner Chappell Nashville signed multigenre composer **Sara Bares** to a songwriting contract ... **Taylor Swift** became the second artist to finish at No. 1 on the Billboard Power 100, released Jan. 31. The list includes a healthy dose of country executives. Go [here](#) for the full rundown ... **Jeannie Seely** will receive the Jo Walker-Meador lifetime achievement award on Aug. 27 during the Source Hall of Fame Awards, which acknowledge significant women in Nashville's music industry ... The International Bluegrass Music Association is accepting applications for showcase performances during the World of Bluegrass convention Sept. 24-28 in Raleigh, N.C. Go [here](#) to enter through Feb. 29 ... **Luke Combs** will perform "Fast Car" with **Tracy Chapman** during the Grammy Awards on Feb. 4 in Los Angeles ... Combs' Downtown Nashville club, expected to open this summer, will be named Category 10 ... The Country Music Association is accepting entries for the 2024 Music Teachers of Excellence, including a \$5,000 award to each of the 30 honored instructors. Go [here](#) to apply through March 1 ... **Lainey Wilson** will be featured in a Coors Light Super Bowl ad on Feb. 11, and **Jelly Roll** will appear in a commercial during the game for Uber Eats ... NBC has ordered a pilot for a new comedy series starring **Reba McEntire**. The project is currently untitled ... **Mark Collie** has been named a series regular for the forthcoming Paramount+ title *Landman*, starring **Billy Bob Thornton** ... **Walker Hayes** headlines *Melodies for Minds*, a benefit for the Refuge Center and Change Your Brain Foundation, on Feb. 6 at Nashville's Loveless Café. Among others appearing are **Jana Kramer**, **Hilary Williams**, **Michael Tyler** and host **Chuck Wicks** ... Country and Americana acts performing during the Recording Academy's Feb. 2 MusiCares Person of the Year event honoring **Jon Bon Jovi** in Los Angeles include **Shania Twain**, **The War and Treaty**, **Jason Isbell**, **Brandy Clark**, **Jelly Roll**, **Lainey Wilson** and **Marcus King** ... Musically Fed will work with the Grammy Awards for the fourth year, repurposing surplus food from the official event for local agencies that serve struggling members of the community ... Nonprofit Hop on a Cure, founded by **Zac Brown Band's John Driscoll Hopkins** and his wife, **Jennifer**, has invested in MitoSense, a tech company developing a new treatment for ALS ... **Margo Smith**, 84, who earned two No. 1 country singles in 1978, died Jan. 23 following a stroke in Nashville, according to Legacy.com. Nicknamed the Tennessee Yodeler, Smith logged 11 top 20 singles from 1975-1981, including her two chart-toppers, "Don't Break the Heart That Loves You" and "It Only Hurts for a Little While." ●



Artist-writer **David Lee Murphy** (left) signed a publishing deal with peermusic Nashville, announced Jan. 31. With him is peermusic Nashville president **Michael Knox**.

billboard

The Stone Pony



1974 50 2024

ASBURY PARK ★ NEW JERSEY

2024

THE STONE PONY 50TH ANNIVERSARY

The Stone Pony is 50! With the support of artists, fans and the city of Asbury Park, The Pony has created a rich history and produced many unforgettable moments as the cradle for rock 'n' roll legends. The venue boasts a loyal and diverse fan base that has been visiting the venue's intimate beachside setting for half a century ... and counting.

The Stone Pony has become a symbol of the value of a musical past and the promise of what continues to be a bright and hopeful future. The 50-year milestone will add to its historical significance, highlighting all involved in this marquee year, with a dedication and commitment to music artistry and its enduring impact.

Billboard will celebrate The Stone Pony's 50th in the March 9 issue. Please join in saluting the venue on this historical milestone.

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International: Ryan O'Donnell | rodonnell@pmc.com

ISSUE DATE 3/9 | AD CLOSE 2/27 | MATERIALS DUE 2/29

billboard Country Airplay Index

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

23 (Chayne Beckham Publishing Designee, BMI (C. Beckham) **12**

A

AIN'T ABOUT YOU BMG Gold Songs, ASCAP/19
Tunes, ASCAP/Huntergrimmusic, BMI (T.H.Wolkowski) **53**

ALL I NEED IS YOU Anthem Red Vinyl Music,
BMI/Buckkilla Music, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing
Corp., BMI/Murphy The Wolf Music, BMI/Mandy's
Favorite Songs, BMI/Round Hill Songs II, ASCAP/Sony
Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain
Music, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Mitchell Marlow
Music, ASCAP/KJM Music Publishing, ASCAP/Five Miles
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Oglesby) **5**

B

BACK THEN RIGHT NOW T Tree Music, BMI/
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Big Music
Machine, BMI/Big Ass Pile Of Dimes Music, BMI/Works
by Range Music Partners, BMI/Warburger Publishing,
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Songs, ASCAP/4Ever Songs, ASCAP (T.R.Hubbard, J.J.Dillon,
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BOYS BACK HOME Warner-Tamerlane Publishing
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BREAKIN' IN BOOTS Endurance Alpha,
ASCAP/124 Records, ASCAP/Warner-Tamerlane
Publishing Corp., BMI/BRRCOFFEE, BMI/W.C.M. Music
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BROKENHEARTED Ritten By Rhettro, BMI/
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Music, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Sony Cross Keys
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BMCMCD Songs, BMI/Creative Pulse Music, BMI/Songs
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C

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Daqum Music, BMI/Songs Of Spirit II Nashville, ASCAP/
Fluid Tunes, ASCAP/Beats By Baby Brent, ASCAP/Spirit
Nashville Two Crescendo, ASCAP/Spirit Vault Songs,
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CAN'T BREAK UP NOW WC Music Corp.,
ASCAP/Bird And Bean Music, ASCAP/Razor And Tie Music
Publishing, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Tofer The
Musical, BMI/Weistride Publishing, ASCAP/Sony Cross
Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Trevor's Advocate Publishing,
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CHEVROLET Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Family
Farm Songs, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Where I
Started Music Publishing, ASCAP/Who Wants To Buy My
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Worldwide, BMI/Jacob Rice Publishing, BMI/Universal
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Akins, J.Rice, C.Taylor) **56**

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Creek Songs, BMI/Songs Of Miller Crow, BMI/Tunes By
Trailerparker, BMI/Concord Tunes, SESAC/Card Tables
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D

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Calville Publishing, ASCAP/Here Comes The Boom
Music, BMI/First Cut Is The Deepest Inc. BMI/Round Hill
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Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Weisowl, ASCAP/Sony Timber
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J.McNair, E.L.Weisband, S.Mosley) **72**

GONNA LOVE YOU Sony CountrySide, BMI/Songs
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H

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Publishing, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/
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BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Songs
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SESAC/Smack Blue, LLC, SESAC/Kobalt Group Publishing,
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Publishing, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/EMI
Blackwood Music Inc., BMI/Super Big Music, ASCAP/
Round Hill Songs BLS JV, ASCAP/Big Loud Proud Songs,
ASCAP/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI (Thomas Rhett,
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MAN MADE A BAR Warner-Tamerlane Publishing
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O

ONE BAD HABIT Smacksters Music, ASCAP/Holy
Ship Music, ASCAP/Smackville Music, ASCAP/Ice House
Tunes, ASCAP/CTM Outlander Music Publishing, ASCAP/
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Publishing Company, ASCAP/Ben There Wrote That
Publishing, BMI/Artist 101 Publishing Group, BMI/Who
Wants To Buy My Publishing, ASCAP/Nontypical Music,
ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Songs Of Kobalt Music
Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI
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ASCAP/Jordan Davis Music, ASCAP/Universal Music Corp.,
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W

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Music, SESAC/Kobalt Group Publishing, SESAC/Smack
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Music, ASCAP/Poppy's Picks, ASCAP/Warner-Tamerlane
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Tape Room, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Rudy Rocks
The USA, BMI/Nate Smith Music Publishing Company,
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Y

YOUNG LOVE & SATURDAY NIGHTS WC
Music Corp., ASCAP/EMI Music Publishing Ltd., PRS/Sony
Music Publishing UK Ltd., PRS/BMG Rights Management
(UK) Ltd., PRS/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.,
BMI/Telemetry Rhythm House Music, BMI/Sony Cross
Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Michael Scott Paper Company
Publishing Company, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/
MVZ Music, BMI/Red Bandana Publishing, BMI/Jones
Music America, ASCAP/Songs Of Roc Nation Music, BMI
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billboard



2024

LOS TEMERARIOS FAREWELL TOUR

Los Temerarios, led by brothers Adolfo and Gustavo Ángel, the band, one of the most iconic Mexican grupero/pop acts in Latin music.

Since releasing their first album in 1983, Los Temerarios helped popularize the grupero subgenre in Mexico and the United States in the late '80s, early '90s. Known for its romantic lyrics powered by electric guitars, keyboards and drums.

They have recorded more than 20 albums and been honored with multiple awards and nominations that include two Grammy nominations, one Latin Grammy Award, an Excellence Award from Premio Lo Nuestro and another Lifetime Achievement Award from the Latin Billboard Music Awards. In 2016, they were inducted into the Latin Songwriters Hall of Fame.

In The issue of Mar 30, 2024, Billboard will celebrate Los Temerarios Farewell Tour. Take this opportunity to congratulate them in their incredible tour history.

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Touring & West Coast: Cynthia Mellow | cmellow615@gmail.com

International: Ryan O'Donnell | rodonnell@pmc.com

ISSUE DATE 3/30 | AD CLOSE 3/18 | MATERIALS DUE 3/19

C
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C

REWINDING
THE
COUNTRY
CHARTS

30 Years Ago John Michael Montgomery Scored His Longest-Leading No. 1

In 1994, "I Swear" logged four weeks atop Hot Country Songs

On Feb. 5, 1994, **John Michael Montgomery** began a career-best four-week domination on *Billboard's* Hot Country Songs chart with "I Swear." The ballad marked his second of seven No. 1s on the ranking.

Authored by **Gary Baker** and **Frank J. Myers**, the love song also became a smash for then-fellow Atlantic Records act **All-4-One**, whose pop/R&B version ruled the all-genre *Billboard* Hot 100 for

11 frames beginning that May.

For Montgomery, "I Swear" was released as the lead single from his album *Kickin' It Up*, the first of his two Top Country Albums No. 1s. The set also arrived atop the *Billboard* 200 and produced two other Hot Country Songs leaders: "Be My Baby Tonight" and "If You've Got Love."

Montgomery was born Jan. 20, 1965, in Danville, Ky. His musically

inclined family includes older brother **Eddie Montgomery**, who became half of the duo **Montgomery Gentry** (with **Troy Gentry**), and son **Walker Montgomery**.

John Michael Montgomery boasts 20 Hot Country Songs top 10s, from "Life's a Dance" in 1993 through "Letters From Home" in 2004. Now 59, he is one of many venerable country hitmakers who have recently announced retirement tours.
—JIM ASKER

Montgomery at the 1994 Country Music Fanfest in Pomona, Calif.



THE WEEK	LAST WEEK	2 WK AGO	WKS ON CHART	TITLE PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	ARTIST LABEL & NUMBER/DISTRIBUTING LABEL
1	2	7	8	I SWEAR S.HENDRICKS (F.J.MYERS,G.BAKER)	★ ★ ★ NO. 1 ★ ★ ★ 1 week at No. 1 ◆ JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY (C) (V) ATLANTIC 87288
2	3	5	12	STATE OF MIND J.STROUD,C.BLACK (C.BLACK)	◆ CLINT BLACK (C) (V) RCA 62700
3	1	2	15	LIVE UNTIL I DIE J.STROUD (C.WALKER)	◆ CLAY WALKER (C) (V) GIANT 18332
4	4	9	14	SHE'D GIVE ANYTHING C.FARREN (J.STEELE,C.FARREN,V.MELAMED)	◆ BOY HOWDY CURB PROMO SINGLE
5	6	8	13	JOHN DEERE GREEN J.SLATE,B.MONTGOMERY (D.LINDE)	JOE DIFFIE (C) (V) EPIC 77235
6	8	12	13	A LITTLE LESS TALK AND A LOT MORE ACTION	◆ TOBY KEITH