

# billboard Country Update

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**Louis Glaser, AAMS®, PPM**  
Managing Director – Financial Advisor  
Office: (615) 928-9530  
Mobile: (615) 474-1993  
louis.glaser@rbc.com



**Jeff Jones, CRPC®**  
First Vice President – Financial Advisor  
Office: (615) 928-9533  
Mobile: (615) 924-3048  
jeff.p.jones@rbc.com



**Zach Glaser**  
First Vice President – Financial Advisor  
Office: (615) 928-9531  
Mobile: (615) 924-1670  
zach.glaser@rbc.com



**Nate Glaser, MA**  
First Vice President – Financial Advisor  
Office: (615) 928-9532  
Mobile: (443) 752-0288  
nate.glaser@rbc.com



**Thomas Moonshower, PPM, MBA**  
Senior Financial Associate  
Senior Portfolio Manager  
Office: (615) 928-9534  
Mobile: (615) 474-5809  
thomas.moonshower@rbc.com

**The Glaser Group**  
818 18th Avenue S., Suite 100  
Nashville, TN 37203  
[www.theglasergrouprbc.com](http://www.theglasergrouprbc.com)



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# billboard Country Update

BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

[Tom.Roland@billboard.com](mailto:Tom.Roland@billboard.com)



## Country's Diverse Artists Increasingly Insert Their Identities Into Their Music

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When independent country singer **Chris Housman** attended high school in a rural Kansas town of just 200 people, he bought a copy of the gay cowboy movie *Brokeback Mountain*, smuggled it to a friend's house under his shirt and viewed it at a later date.

"I just bawled watching that," he remembers over coffee in East Nashville.

In April, Housman issued a video for his song "Guilty As Sin" that features him wrapped in shirtless passion with another man. He's no longer hiding, instead proclaiming his identity in his debut album — *Blueneck*, due May 31 — which features songs such as

"Drag Queen" and "Bible Belt," owning his God-given traits with the same fervor that more traditional country artists might apply to their Southern roots or small-town heritage.

It happens at a time when minority country artists are more frequently demanding a place at the table and increasingly embracing their differences in their music, not just their marketing. In addition to Housman, **Tiera Kennedy** — fresh off her appearance on "Blackbird," from the **Beyoncé** album *Carter Country* — released "I Ain't a Cowgirl," an aspirational ballad that lays out through thinly veiled Western metaphors

her plan to succeed as a Black female country singer. And Stoney Creek artist **Frank Ray** released "Uh-Huh (Ajá)," his first radio single to sonically feature his racial heritage, employing Spanish lyrics alongside the English phrases in a production that sounds a bit like "Despacito" without the hip-hop elements.

"I embrace it in every other sense of my artistry," Ray says.

"Whether it's on social media platforms, or whether it's in a live performance, or whether it's with merch, you see the Latin influence there. And then for some reason, when we're going to pick a new single, it's anything but the Latin vibe, and I was like, 'What are we



HOUSMAN



RAY



KENNEDY

doing? Why are we missing that?'"

These three assertive works all arrived in the last two months, around the same time that Beyoncé became the first Black woman to rule both Top Country Albums and Hot Country Songs, followed at the summit on the latter chart by **Shaboozey's** "A Bar Song (Topsy)." The tracks had already been completed — Kennedy penned "Cowgirl" in late 2022 or 2023, and Housman authored "Guilty As Sin" in November 2020 — but the success of Beyoncé and Shaboozey more strongly established that an audience exists for a brand of country with a progressive

HOUSMAN: FORD FAIRCHILD; RAY: JOSEPH LLANES; KENNEDY: KAMREN KENNEDY

AIN'T NO LOVE IN OKLAHOMA

# LUKE COMBS

#1 MOST ADDED

152 FIRST WEEK STATIONS  
24\* BB 25\* CA/MB

THANK YOU COUNTRY RADIO

TWISTERS  
THE ALBUM

sound by artists with a nontraditional bio.

“Beyoncé has sort of allowed the voiceless to have a voice through that one album and the publicity that surrounds it,” says director-producer **Francis Whately**, whose independent movie *Rebel Country* will make its world premiere on June 10 during the Tribeca Festival in New York. “She’s made it acceptable and given permission to all those artists who didn’t really have a voice to now have a voice and say, ‘I’m country too.’”

*Rebel Country* examines the modern version of the genre’s rabble rousers who are pushing against the established sounds and systems that have guided the format.

“The rebels of the past were the hard-drinking, womanizing, drug-taking, prison-visiting rebel males,” notes Whately. “The new rebels are people who are challenging the conservative system inherent within country music by dint of simply being gay, or bisexual, or African American, or Mexican, or whatever it is.”

There is, to be sure, a greater interest in promoting them among Nashville’s music industry. Diversity programs have been enacted by the Country Music Association, the Academy of Country Music and CMT. Labels have actively sought Latin American voices and Black (though mostly male) artists, with **Darius Rucker, Blanco Brown, Kane Brown** and **BRELAND** among the handful who’ve generated actual country hits.

That difference seems to be enticing to many of the format’s decision-makers, who recognize the demographic changes taking place in America, particularly among youth, who are traditionally the most active music consumers. But there’s likewise a tendency to conform to what’s already working — particularly at radio — and that has made for more caution when it comes to singles.

Kennedy lost her deal with Valory after a pair of pop-country singles failed to light up the marketplace. After some initial hurt, she sees it as a lesson learned and intends to be more forceful in releasing music that reflects her creative spirit instead of letting the business culture dictate that.

“I’ve listened to stories of **Shania [Twain]** and **Dolly [Parton]**, and I think at some point every artist goes through that,” Kennedy reasons. “They always come out on the other end of like, ‘Man, I should have just listened to my heart from the very beginning.’ And so I decided to do that.”

It is easy for nontraditional artists to let the market lead. They have, after all, been conditioned to believe that a large segment of the audience will reject them. Ray remembers a particular radio programmer who denigrated his Latin-flavored material, making him gun-shy about issuing it to broadcasters, even though it gives him an instant brand of his own.

“I didn’t realize how much that would hinder my creativity,” says Ray. “Why am I going to take this one person’s curmudgeon remark and shelve this whole Latin country idea that I’ve been hoping for? And it wasn’t until recently where I decided to say — pardon my French — ‘Forget my fucking insecurity. Let’s go all the way.’”

The advent of the internet, social media and digital platforms has made it easier for these artists to find their audiences. Housman, for example, anticipated he would be flooded with hate-filled public comments or — maybe worse — no reaction at all. Instead, he has discovered that with the rare exception, consumers have reacted positively. One YouTube respondent from his native Kansas wrote that Housman is “saving lives with your music.”

Modern technology has made it easier for country fans who think of themselves as isolated to discover expansive artists and music. It has also made consumers in other genres more open to country. That, in turn, creates more possibility for artists who are outside the genre’s historic box.

“The way I’ve been looking at it,” Housman says, “is a little like a house of country music as a foundation. It’s already there, already established. I’m not trying to knock that house down and start from scratch necessarily, but I think we can add a nice little back sunroom with a little tiki bar for the gays and a little pool. But I think you can build [upon] the foundation that’s already there, and that just makes the value of the property go up.”

The artists remain aware of the potential hostilities. Country is stereotypically considered a conservative genre, and campaign efforts by the presumed Republican presidential nominee have referenced concentration camps, dictatorship, a “unified Reich” and revenge. Given the climate, their willingness to not just pursue their music, but to also proclaim their differences is an act of bravery. But also one of faith.

“There’s a lot of hate in this world, and there will always be hate in this world,” Kennedy says. “But I think the best way to counteract that is to love other people. Love always wins — always wins — at the end of the day.” ●



Tyler Hubbard met up with West Coast broadcasters when he appeared May 19 at a Boots in the Park festival in Tempe, Ariz. From left: KNIX Phoenix host Lois Lewis, Hubbard, EMI manager of West Coast promotion Briarman Whitfield and KUPL Portland, Ore., content director Tim Richards.



Mtheory CEO Cameo Carlson (center) received the Music Business Association’s presidential award on May 15 during the Bizzy Awards at the JW Marriott Nashville at the Music Biz 2024 conference. She’s flanked by MBA president Portia Sabin (left) and MNRK Music Group GM Gina Miller.



Parker McCollum (right) toured the Dallas area headquarters of tour sponsor Raising Cane’s on May 16 with Raising Cane’s owner Todd Graves.



Heartland received RIAA-certified platinum plaques for the 2006 chart-topper “I Loved Her First.” From left: band member Keith West, Graham Artist Management founder Herb Graham and band members Jason Albert and Chuck Crawford.

JASON MALLORY/EVERETT COVERAGE NASHVILLE

JEREMY WESTBY/2011 MEDIA

# FALL OF SUMMER

**IMPACTING  
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**SCOTTY  
McCREERY**

# billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY  
MONITORED BY  
**LUMINATE**

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

## Bailey Zimmerman Scores Fourth Straight Career-Opening Country Airplay No. 1 With 'Where It Ends'

**Bailey Zimmerman** notches his fourth career-opening leader in a row on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart as "Where It Ends" (Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA) elevates 3-1 on the ranking dated June 1. It advanced by 18% to 33.3 million audience impressions May 17-23, according to Luminate.

The 24-year-old from Louisville, Ill., co-authored the single with **Grant Averill** and **Joe Spargur**. It's from Zimmerman's LP *Religiously. The Album.*, which opened at its No. 3 high on Top Country Albums in May 2023.

"'Where It Ends' was one of the first songs I wrote when I moved to Nashville," Zimmerman says. "Some days it feels like I still have no idea what I'm doing, but man, the dreams just keep coming true. Four No. 1s... Let's keep it going. Chase your dreams!"

The track follows Zimmerman's "Religiously," which ruled Country Airplay for one week in September 2023. Before that, "Rock and a Hard Place" dominated for six frames beginning that April, and his rookie single, "Fall in Love," reigned for one week in December 2022.

Zimmerman, who worked at a meat processing plant and on a gas pipeline prior to his music career, made history on the streaming-, airplay- and sales-based Hot Country Songs survey dated Sept. 3, 2022. He became the first artist to simultaneously place three career-starting entries in the top 10 — "Rock and a Hard Place," "Where It Ends" and "Fall in Love" — since the list transitioned to an all-encompassing genre ranking in October 1958.

Zimmerman's streak of four consecutive Country Airplay No. 1s is the chart's longest active run. **Jelly Roll** follows with three straight dating to January 2023: "Son of a Sinner," "Need a Favor," and "Save Me," with **Lainey Wilson**. Since the list launched in January 1990, **Luke Combs** has the overall record streak: 14 consecutive leaders, from his debut hit, "Hurricane," in May 2017 through "Doin' This" in May 2022. ●



ZIMMERMAN

CHRIS ASHLEE

## MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)
WHERE IT ENDS Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	+5.100
I HAD SOME HELP Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen	+3.659
COWGIRLS Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring ERNEST	+3.191
BULLETPROOF RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	+2.262
WE RIDE Average Joes	Bryan Martin	+2.155
YOUR PLACE Back Blocks/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	+1.930
HALFWAY TO HELL Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+1.723
YOUNG LOVE & SATURDAY NIGHTS RCA Nashville	Chris Young	+1.533
DIRT CHEAP CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	+1.378
LET YOUR BOYS BE COUNTRY Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+1.312

## MOST INCREASED PLAYS

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN
I HAD SOME HELP Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen	+1298
WHERE IT ENDS Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	+1119
COWGIRLS Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring ERNEST	+716
WE RIDE Average Joes	Bryan Martin	+579
DIRT CHEAP CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	+526
BULLETPROOF RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	+515
LET YOUR BOYS BE COUNTRY Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+444
AIN'T NO LOVE IN OKLAHOMA Universal Studios/Atlantic/Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	+425
YOUR PLACE Back Blocks/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	+358
A BAR SONG (TIPSY) American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	+318

## RECURRENTS

THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	PRETTY LITTLE POISON 717/Warner/WEA	Warren Zeiders	17.340
2	WORLD ON FIRE RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	16.174
3	FAST CAR River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	15.471
4	THINKIN' BOUT ME Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	14.484
5	TRUCK BED Big Loud	HARDY	14.311
6	LAST NIGHT Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	14.185
7	SAVE ME Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll With Lainey Wilson	13.332
8	DANCIN' IN THE COUNTRY Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	8.519
9	SHE HAD ME AT HEADS CAROLINA Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cole Swindell	8.380
10	FEARLESS (THE ECHO) Big Machine	Jackson Dean	8.303



# TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING MAY 23, 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	16	MILWAUKEE (Island IDJMG) ★★ 1 Week at 1 ★★	Wyatt Flores	1561	132	11	11	18	NEON (Independent)	Mikayla Lane	1076	25
2	3	13	THE RESCUE (Independent)	Bri Bagwell	1380	107	12	13	10	DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS LIKE THAT (Flatland Cavalry/Interscope Records)	Flatland Cavalry	1063	64
3	4	22	HELLO TEXAS (Flying C)	Brooke Graham	1290	40	13	12	17	BLUE SKY GOODBYE (Independent)	Drew Fish Band	1039	19
4	1	12	RUNNING OUT OF TIME (Almost Country) Casey Donahew ft. Pat Green, Randy Rogers & Wade Bowen		1279	-193	14	16	8	HURRY UP WHISKEY (Independent)	Ben McPeak	915	116
5	6	17	SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING (Independent)	James Robert Webb	1243	77	15	14	11	HUNT YOU DOWN (Independent)	Kaitin Butts	898	24
6	7	15	TE NECESITO (Independent)	Matt Castillo	1218	74	16	20	10	UNDOMESTICATED ME (Independent)	Mark Powell	820	57
7	5	19	ALL THE ANGELENOS (Boo Clap/Thirty Tigers)	Uncle Lucius	1210	-12	17	22	14	THIS AIN'T MY FIRST RODEO (Independent)	Olivia Harms	792	61
8	9	19	8 SECONDS AT A TIME (Independent)	Ryder Grimes	1179	43	18	19	18	FIRE IN YOUR EYES (Independent)	Chuck Wimer	770	5
9	10	8	RAININ ON ME (Independent)	Wade Bowen	1153	100	19	23	14	DAMN GOOD FRIENDS (Independent)	Keller Cox	740	40
10	8	16	\$10 COWBOY (Son of Davy/Thirty Tigers)	Charley Crockett	1086	-53	20	21	17	5 FT AND BULLETPROOF (Soundly Music)	Kyle Nix & The 38's	728	-23

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](http://www.texasregionalradio.com), or contact Dave Smith at 972-252-8777. Copyright 2024, Texas Regional Radio Report

# billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY  
MONITORED BY  
**LUMINATE**

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
1	3	34	WHERE IT ENDS Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA ★★ No. 1 (1 Week)/Most Increased Audience ★★	Bailey Zimmerman	33.326	+5.100	8593	1119	1
2	5	19	HALFWAY TO HELL Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	26.967	+1.723	7200	301	2
3	1	37	BACK THEN RIGHT NOW Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	25.895	-3.587	6926	-1113	3
4	6	28	TAKE HER HOME Blue Chair/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Kenny Chesney	25.404	+1.186	6783	235	4
5	4	44	OUTSKIRTS MCA Nashville	Sam Hunt	25.207	-0.677	6071	-158	6
6	2	40	TUCSON TOO LATE MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	23.923	-4.487	6110	-1218	5
7	7	23	YOUR PLACE Back Blocks/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	21.289	+1.930	5997	358	7
8	9	3	I HAD SOME HELP Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen	19.426	+3.659	4901	1298	10
9	8	26	LET YOUR BOYS BE COUNTRY Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	17.672	+1.312	5013	444	9
10	10	34	WE RIDE Average Joes	Bryan Martin	17.635	+2.155	5034	579	8
11	12	15	BULLETPROOF RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	17.407	+2.262	4728	515	11
12	13	37	YOUNG LOVE & SATURDAY NIGHTS RCA Nashville	Chris Young	16.260	+1.533	4439	286	12
13	14	19	DIRT CHEAP CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	15.277	+1.378	4169	526	14
14	16	7	COWGIRLS Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring ERNEST	14.859	+3.191	3750	716	16
15	15	49	WE DON'T FIGHT ANYMORE Big Machine	Carly Pearce Featuring Chris Stapleton	13.541	-0.100	4258	1	13
16	17	52	LOVE YOU AGAIN Chase Matthew/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Chase Matthew	12.077	+0.827	3846	180	15
17	19	24	CHEVROLET Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch Featuring Jelly Roll	10.904	+0.849	3060	54	19
18	20	30	SHE'S SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER (REIMAGINED) Patoka Sounds/Lyric Ridge	Drew Baldridge	10.631	+0.781	3232	198	18
19	18	42	I'M NOT PRETTY Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville	Megan Moroney	10.528	+0.296	3313	77	17
20	22	35	CAN'T BREAK UP NOW Columbia Nashville	Old Dominion & Megan Moroney	7.652	-0.788	2654	-218	20
21	25	18	ONE BAD HABIT McGraw/Big Machine	Tim McGraw	7.421	+0.580	2631	98	21
22	24	2	AIN'T NO LOVE IN OKLAHOMA Universal Studios/Atlantic/Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	7.389	+0.540	1767	425	29
23	26	28	THIS IS MY DIRT Valory	Justin Moore	6.379	+0.591	2102	99	22
24	28	12	MESSED UP AS ME Hit Red/Capitol Nashville	Keith Urban	5.508	+0.473	1892	74	24
25	27	40	DANCE WITH YOU Nashville Harbor	Brett Young	5.343	+0.124	1850	35	26
26	23	2	HANGTIGHT HONEY Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson	5.312	-1.717	1341	-184	34
27	32	7	LOVE YOU, MISS YOU, MEAN IT Row Crop/Capitol Nashville	Luke Bryan	5.176	+0.599	1593	97	30
28	30	29	GONNA LOVE YOU Stoney Creek	Pamalee	5.085	+0.257	1851	-11	25
29	29	29	RODEO MAN Pearl/Big Machine	Garth Brooks & Ronnie Dunn	4.917	+0.033	2062	-82	23
30	31	9	AUSTIN VERSION III/Warner	Dasha	4.883	+0.255	1466	172	32

## 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.

### 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  
MONITORED BY  
**LUMINATE**

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
31	38	4	A BAR SONG (TIPSY) American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	4.539	+0.985	1358	318	33
32	36	16	BIGGER HOUSES Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Dan + Shay	4.432	+0.630	1819	266	28
33	33	46	DRINKIN' PROBLEMS Riser House	Dillon Carmichael	4.286	+0.132	1822	143	27
34	34	20	SOUNDS LIKE THE RADIO Leo33	Zach Top	4.079	+0.075	1564	21	31
35	35	9	TIE UP Home Grown/Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Zac Brown Band	3.987	+0.075	1004	28	40
36	21	2	BEAUTIFUL AS YOU Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	3.559	-5.540	1120	-958	38
37	37	13	AMERICAN GIRL Tom Petty Legacy/Capitol Nashville/Valory	Dierks Bentley	3.552	-0.071	1238	-65	36
38	39	12	COWBOY SONGS RECORDS Nashville	George Birge	3.532	+0.499	1284	179	35
39	40	9	CALLED CRAZY Interscope/MCA Nashville	Kassi Ashton	3.040	+0.059	677	10	50
40	44	3	MILES ON IT Joytime Collective/RCA Nashville	Marshmello & Kane Brown	2.899	+0.770	975	136	41
41	43	10	DAMN GOOD DAY TO LEAVE Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	2.637	+0.341	875	61	45
42	42	20	BOYS BACK HOME PIA/Curb/Columbia Nashville	Dylan Marlowe & Dylan Scott	2.495	+0.080	974	41	42
43	41	30	FIND ANOTHER BAR Voyager/Red Street	Chris Lane	2.425	-0.011	1135	-47	37
44	46	19	BREAKIN' IN BOOTS RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Matt Stell	2.266	+0.213	1043	49	39
45	49	14	THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU Sound/Mercury Nashville <b>★★ Breaker ★★</b>	Chris Stapleton	2.180	+0.391	767	113	48
46	45	11	THIS TOWN'S BEEN TOO GOOD TO US Curb	Dylan Scott	2.044	-0.047	828	-1	46
47	48	11	WHATCHA SEE IS WHATCHA GET Nashville Harbor	Chris Janson	1.982	+0.166	899	49	44
48	47	6	FOREVER TO ME Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cole Swindell	1.893	+0.071	593	-14	53
49	50	4	DRINKIN' BUDDIES Curb	Lee Brice, Nate Smith & Hailey Whitters	1.750	+0.016	537	12	55
50	54	16	I TRIED A RING ON Monument	Tigritily Gold	1.577	+0.197	899	62	43
51	55	3	WRANGLERS Vanner/Republic/Big Loud	Miranda Lambert	1.555	+0.218	618	79	52
52	51	26	LOVE YOU BACK Nashville Harbor	Lady A	1.482	-0.220	729	-94	49
53	53	5	FRIENDS LIKE THAT Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan Featuring Jason Aldean	1.473	+0.070	623	28	51
54	52	8	LIFE WITH YOU Curb	Kelsey Hart	1.412	-0.031	793	2	47
55	56	32	I'M IN LOVE Songs & Daughters/Pegasus/Big Loud	Hailey Whitters	1.202	-0.059	592	-16	54
56	59	5	COUNTRY BACK Magnolia Music	Randy Houser	0.938	+0.158	522	21	56
57	58	18	KING OF COUNTRY MUSIC Red Street	Ryan Larkins	0.892	+0.104	431	29	58
58	57	8	SINGLE AGAIN The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	0.758	-0.075	467	10	57
59	RE-ENTRY		MAKE ME WANNA SMOKE Quartz Hill	Runaway June	0.745	-0.018	406	-8	60
60	NEW		THIS HEART Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville <b>★★ Hot Shot Debut ★★</b>	Corey Kent	0.716	+0.192	425	53	59



Reba McEntire (left) surprised Lainey Wilson with an invitation to join the Grand Ole Opry during the May 21 telecast of NBC's *The Voice*.



Billy Currington received RIAA-certified plaques recognizing multiplatinum status for his album *Doin' Somethin' Right* and the tracks "Must Be Doin' Somethin' Right" and "Good Directions." From left: Dennis Entertainment founder John Dennis, Mercury Nashville senior vp of promotion Damon Moberly, Currington and Universal Music Group Nashville executive vp of business and legal affairs Rob Femia.

COURTESY NBC UNIVERSAL

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# billboard

2024

# INDIE

## LABEL POWER PLAYERS

On June 8th, *Billboard* will publish its annual Indie Label Power Players List. This special feature in advance of A2IM Indie Week (6/10–6/14) and the 14th Annual Libera Awards will profile leading executives at top independent record labels, publishing companies and distribution companies. Positioning themselves as the driving force behind the success of independent music, these executives contribute to the independent music sector and to the world of music at large.

Take this opportunity to advertise and congratulate this year's 2024 Indie Label Power Players.

### CONTACTS

**East Coast/Midwest: Joe Maimone** | [joe.maimone@billboard.com](mailto:joe.maimone@billboard.com)

**Southeast: Lee Ann Photoglo** | [laphotoglo@gmail.com](mailto:laphotoglo@gmail.com)

**Latin: Marcia Olival** | [marciaolival29@gmail.com](mailto:marciaolival29@gmail.com)

**Touring & West Coast: Cynthia Mellow** | [cmellow615@gmail.com](mailto:cmellow615@gmail.com)

**International: Ryan O'Donnell** | [rodonnell@pmc.com](mailto:rodonnell@pmc.com)

ISSUE DATE 6/8 | AD CLOSE 5/28 | MATERIALS DUE 5/30



NASHVILLE & NATIONAL TOM ROLAND [tom.roland@billboard.com](mailto:tom.roland@billboard.com)

JILL TRUNNELL



Kenny Chesney (left) and crew member Jeff Snider surprised tour mate Megan Moroney with a cake commemorating her Academy of Country Music Award as new female artist of the year during a May 16 appearance at the Hard Rock Live in Hollywood, Fla.

## CMA FEST PLANS CRYSTALLIZING

A bundle of CMA Fest-related events are unveiling plans as the June 6-9 Downtown Nashville gathering nears.

Among the additions and details announced since May 20:

- **Ty Herndon's** annual Concert for Love & Acceptance will take place June 5 at Margaritaville with **Chris Housman**, **Pilbox Patti**, **Fancy Hagood** and **Shelly Fairchild**, among others.
- Spotify House takes over Ole Red for 14 hours daily June 6-8. Expected talent includes **Old Dominion**, **Dustin Lynch**, **Jordan Davis** and **Mickey Guyton**.
- The BMI Block Party occupies the Ryman Auditorium's outdoor stage during afternoons June 6-8, with appearances by **Grant Gilbert**, **Graham Barham**, **Struggle Jennings** and **The Castellows**.
- "Country Goes Global," a showcase of international talent, is open for free for four hours during daytimes June 6-8 at Chief's On Broadway. The attractions include Canadian **Aaron Goodvin**, Cuban American **Sammy Arriaga** and the United Kingdom's **Twinnie**.
- Celebrity trainer **Erin Oprea** holds her fourth Fitness at Fest with morning workouts June 7-9 at the Bridgestone Arena Plaza.
- **Carly Pearce** holds a June 9 auction, Carly's Closet, at Music City Center with proceeds benefiting the CMA Foundation.

## 'ROUND THE ROW

Management company Range Music promoted **Jared Cotter** to partner from vp of A&R. He co-manages **Shaboozey** ... Opry Entertainment Group upped **Anna Lemme** to Opry marketing manager from artist and label strategy manager. The company is seeking a replacement for her vacant position. See a job description [here](#) ... Group Projects hired **Emma Kiefer** as director of A&R. She shifts from Boom Music Group, where she was A&R manager. Reach her [here](#) ... PLA Media added publicity and social media coordinator **Abby Turner**, a 2023 graduate of Trevecca Nazarene University who interned with Neon Coast and Average Joes ... Red Street artist **Ryan Larkins** signed a publishing deal with Sony Music Publishing Nashville and CAM Creative ... Songwriter **Chris August** ("God Whispered Your Name") inked a joint-venture agreement with Cornman Music and Warner Chappell Nashville ... Big Machine Music added artist-writer-producer **Jordan Witzigreuter** to its West Coast roster ... **Anderson East** signed a songwriting deal with Prescription Songs Nashville and Kobalt Music Group ... Fender opened a facility with an exclusive artist showroom in East Nashville on May 21. The evening's finale included a jam session with **Brad Paisley** and **Brent Mason** trading vocals on a blistering version of "Workin' Man Blues" and indie act **Devon Gilfillian** singing a verse and chorus of "Use Me" with Paisley, Mason and **Keith Urban** among a makeshift support band. Also milling about: **Jack White**, **Chris Stapleton**, **Jon Pardi** and **ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons** ... The Country Music Association (CMA) presented its Rob Potts international live music advancement award to Live Nation U.K. vp of touring **Anna-Sophie Mertens** ... The Academy of Country Music will host the 17th annual ACM Honors on Aug. 21 at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium ... The Recording Academy will present the 67th annual Grammy Awards on Feb. 2 at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles. Final nominees will be announced Nov. 8 ... Folk Alliance International is accepting showcase applications for the 2025 conference [here](#) through June 28. The event is slated

for Feb. 19-23 in Montreal ... The Mechanical Licensing Collective received the Music Business Association's impact award for technological excellence during the Bizzy Awards on May 15 in Nashville ... **Jamey Johnson** and **Gary LeVox** participate in this year's National Memorial Day Concert, airing May 26 on PBS from the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol ... The third season of the *Shady Ladies of Music City* podcast, hosted by former label/PR executives **Evelyn Shriver** and **Susan Nadler**, launched May 23 ... The YNOT Wednesday songwriters concert series, established by River House vp/GM **Zebb Luster**, moves to the Tin Roof on Demonbreun Street on May 29 following eight years at Live Oak ... The CMA and ABC donated \$60,000 to three music education programs during the *American Idol* finale on May 19. The CMA Foundation also released "Face the Music: A Case Study for Expanding Music and Arts Education in Schools," focusing on the success of music education in Tennessee ... A **GoFundMe** page was established for Music Row veteran **Preshias Harris** with a \$10,000 goal to cover medical expenses. Harris, who has a renal bone disease, recently suffered two heart attacks and a serious fall, and has endured more than 90 surgeries, including her most recent bypass operation. Additionally, a June 25 benefit is set for 3rd & Lindsley featuring **Elvie Shane**, **Brady Seals**, **Dave Gibson** and more ... Record producer **Ira "Bud" Logan**, 83, (**John Conlee**, **T. Graham Brown**) died May 13. A bassist with **Jim Reeves'** band **The Blue Boys**, he became the group's leader after Reeves' fatal 1964 plane crash and eventually shifted into production work. A celebration of life, officiated by Conlee, will be held at 2 p.m. on May 28 at Nashville's Forest Lawn Funeral Home. Go [here](#) for more info.

## RADIO & RECORDS®

**LOCASH's** Galaxy Label Group unveiled its radio promotion team on May 20, three months after the company was originally announced. The team includes vp of promotion **Kerry Wolfe**, head of national field promotion **Cheryl Broz**, national promotion strategies lead **Kristen Brust** and national promotion and touring executive **John Lessard**. Wolfe spent two years as Stone Country director of promotion, Broz was most recently an independent radio consultant, Brust is a former radio talent who hosted her own podcast, and Lessard is LOCASH tour manager. Reach Wolfe [here](#), Broz [here](#), Brust [here](#) and Lessard [here](#) ... BBR Music Group/BMG Nashville signed duo **Ryan and Rory** to a recording deal. The tandem includes former solo artist **Ryan Follesè** and North Carolina native **Rory John Zak**. The label released a track, "Pour Decisions," on May 24 and plans an EP for July 26 ... Pinecastle signed bluegrass writer-artist **Ashleigh Graham** ... SiriusXM launched Chris Stapleton Radio on May 23 ... Townsquare/Victoria, Texas, recruited **Melissa Rivera** as market president, overseeing a four-station group that includes country **KIXS**. It returns her to the cluster after a departure that most recently included a stop as Urban One/Houston local sales manager ... **WSIX** Nashville will feature **Brady Broski** on the night shift, RadioInk.com reported. The gig is in addition to his work at top 40 **WKSC** Chicago, where he's assistant PD/afternoon host ... **KOLC** Carson City-Reno, Nev., promoted morning co-host **Robbie Owens** to PD, according to RadioInsight.com. He takes over from **Mike Bushey**, who will continue to program three sister stations ... **WBCT** Grand Rapids, Mich., is adding **Mike Aguilar** as morning co-host in a realignment of his duties, according to RadioInsight.com. He remains as midday personality for top 40 sister **WSNX**, where he is assistant PD/music director. He'll relinquish a morning role at top 40 **WKQI** Detroit. ●



Lee Brice was among the artists who greeted military veterans and their families prior to a May 21 "Salute the Troops" edition of the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville.

CHRIS HOLLOWAY

NEW

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11,000+ GRAMMY® Voters  
will be mailed a copy of this  
special issue

billboard

# GRAMMY FIRST LOOK

On July 13, *Billboard* will publish a GRAMMY First Look special feature showcasing the artists, producers and other creative professionals whose music was released from September 16, 2023 – August 30, 2024 and look at the early contenders for the 67th GRAMMY Awards® in the categories of Record Of The Year, Song Of The Year, Album Of The Year and Best New Artist.

**7/17/24: Online Entry Process (OEP) Opens**  
**8/30/24: Online Entry Process (OEP) Closes**

Take advantage of this early opportunity during this eligibility period to showcase accomplished work to the music industry as they prepare to cast their entries for Music's Biggest Night®.

ISSUE DATE 7/13 AD CLOSE 7/1 MATERIALS DUE 7/3

#### CONTACTS

Joe Maimone | [joe.maimone@billboard.com](mailto:joe.maimone@billboard.com) Lee Ann Photoglo | [laphotoglo@gmail.com](mailto:laphotoglo@gmail.com)

Cynthia Mellow | [cmellow615@gmail.com](mailto:cmellow615@gmail.com) Marcia Olival | [marciaolival29@gmail.com](mailto:marciaolival29@gmail.com)

Ryan O'Donnell | [rodonnell@pmc.com](mailto:rodonnell@pmc.com)



# COUNTRY

35 Years Ago

## Rodney Crowell Kept On Shining

In 1989, the singer-songwriter earned his fourth of five Hot Country Songs leaders from his album *Diamonds & Dirt*

On May 27, 1989, **Rodney Crowell's** "After All This Time" hit No. 1 on *Billboard's* Hot Country Songs chart.

The track, which Crowell authored solo and produced with **Tony Brown**, was released as the fourth of five singles from his LP *Diamonds & Dirt* — with all crowning Hot Country Songs, encompassing his five career leaders. In his previous decade on

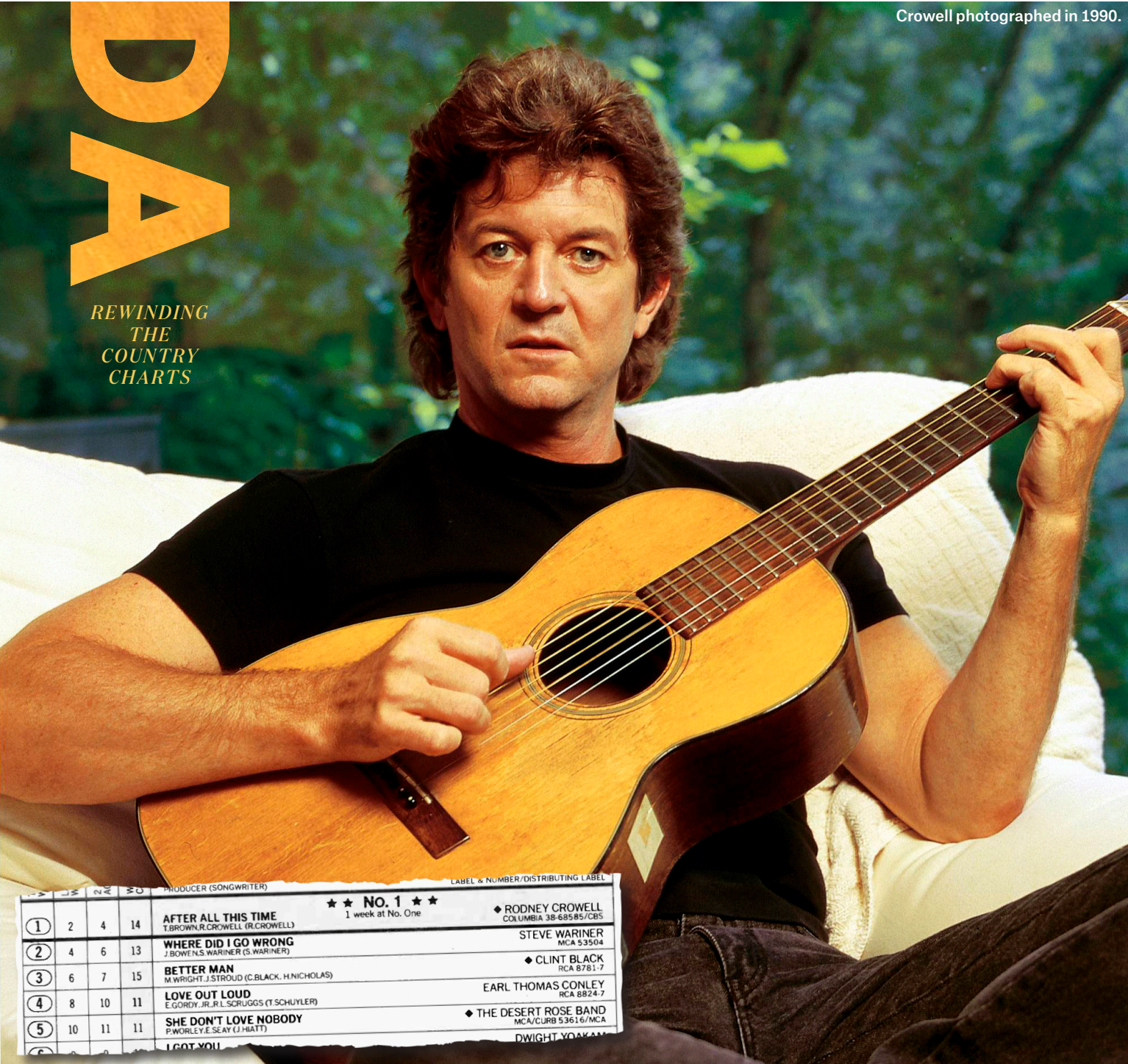
the chart as a recording artist, he had hit a No. 30 high, although the Houston native first led the list as a writer in 1980, with the **Oak Ridge Boys'** "Leaving Louisiana in the Broad Daylight" and, three weeks later, **Waylon Jennings'** "I Ain't Living Long Like This."

Crowell, who has since upped his count to eight Hot Country Songs top 10s that

he has recorded, performed "After All This Time" at the 32nd annual Grammy Awards, where it won for best country song.

In February, Crowell, 73, was one of numerous artists who participated in a tribute to **Paul Simon** at the Troubadour in Los Angeles, presented by the Americana Music Association. He sang Simon's 1986 classic "Graceland." —JIMASKER

Crowell photographed in 1990.



# COUNTRY

REWINDING THE COUNTRY CHARTS

	W	TU	W	TH	FR	SA	SU	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	LABEL & NUMBER/DISTRIBUTING LABEL
1	2	4	14	★ ★ NO. 1 ★ ★ 1 week at No. One				◆ RODNEY CROWELL COLUMBIA 38 68585/CBS	
2	4	6	13	WHERE DID I GO WRONG J. BOWEN/S. WARINER (S. WARINER)				STEVE WARINER MCA 53504	
3	6	7	15	BETTER MAN M. WRIGHT, J. STROUD (C. BLACK, H. NICHOLAS)				◆ CLINT BLACK RCA 8781-7	
4	8	10	11	LOVE OUT LOUD E. GORDY, JR./R. L. SCRUGGS (T. SCHUYLER)				EARL THOMAS CONLEY RCA 8824-7	
5	10	11	11	SHE DON'T LOVE NOBODY P. WORLEY, E. SEAY (J. HIATT)				◆ THE DESERT ROSE BAND MCA/CURB 53616/MCA	
6				I GOT YOU				DWIGHT YOAKAM	

BETH GWINN/REDFERNS