

billboard Country Update

BILLBOARD.COM/NEWSLETTERS

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BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

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Chris Stapleton Hands Off Hardware In A New, All-American Road-Show Tradition

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When **Luke Combs**' team won road crew of the year at the CMA Touring Awards on March 3, it marked a passing of the baton — or, more accurately, a passing of the road case — as Combs' crew took control of a trophy that **Chris Stapleton** had carted around the country and across the Atlantic during 2024.

Last year marked the first time that the Country Music Association honored an entire crew, and Team Stapleton decided during a post-awards celebration to take the award out where it had been won: on the stages, on the highways and in the back of semi-trucks that took the All-American Road Show from Nashville to the people.

The trophy was unloaded at every venue and placed somewhere on, or near, the stage as a reminder to all of Stapleton's employees of the reputation they had created. The crew of the year hardware visited the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, The O2 in London and the set of NBC's *Saturday Night Live* in New York, just to pick out a few spots on its itinerary.

"They can never change that," tour manager **Jason Hecht** says. "We're always the first name on the trophy. For us, that's a very cool thing, and to get to carry

it around, and hopefully set a little bit of a precedent, that was definitely a really big sense of pride for us."



Stapleton's team had pride in the gig before there was ever a trophy to recognize it. The team had to have been working hard to get that first crew award in a line of work that's grueling at its very foundation.

"A lot of these people are up at 6 a.m., 7 a.m. — first people in the door, and they're not walking out until you've got doors closing, sometimes in the morning with trucks rolling away," says Stapleton's manager, Red Light Management's **Clay Hunt**. "There's ebbs and flows throughout the day, but this is really long, hard work."

If they do that work correctly, most of the concertgoers won't give a thought to the quasi-miracle that took place in the venue, as a stage was constructed and complicated sound and lighting was installed all on the day of that particular show.

"I always kind of look at it like a sports official, a referee," Hecht says. "If somebody's saying your name, then something's gone wrong. By definition, your job is to be in the shadows and to stay out of the way."

The work is likely appreciated most by Stapleton who, along

COURTESY CMA



THE BRAND NEW SINGLE FROM
RUSSELL DICKERSON

TRIPLE TIGERS RECORDS

HAPPEN TO ME

6.5 MILLION STREAMS

20 MILLION+ IMPRESSIONS

IMMEDIATE AIRPLAY

"IF 2025 NEEDED A FEEL-GOOD ANTHEM,
RUSSELL DICKERSON JUST DELIVERED IT."

- ALL COUNTRY NEWS



with his wife/band member, **Morgane Stapleton**, makes it a point to look after their team. She insisted on having a women's bus for the female members of the crew, they remember employees' birthdays with gifts and celebrations, and when several on the team came down with an illness during their recent Australian tour, they didn't even ask about what kind of expenses might be involved in their recovery. They made sure the employees got medical attention, a place to recuperate and plane tickets to catch up to the tour once they had rebounded.

That kind of attentiveness is not surprising for Stapleton. When he left the 2023 Academy of Country Music Awards in Frisco, Texas, he saw the roadies hard at work and picked up a blower to help clean up confetti. He is known, according to his team, to greet the local crew at the end of a show and recognize their role in his success as they prepare to tear it all down.

"I like to play music," Stapleton said when his team won the crew of the year honor. "Everybody [involved] helps me do that every night in ways that would not be possible in any way, shape or form if everybody wasn't at the top of their game."

The CMA rules around the crew of the year trophy don't allow consecutive wins, though individual members of a team can still collect honors. Two Stapleton employees — tour videographer/photographer of the year **Andy Barron** and backline technician of the year **Derek Benitez** — were with Stapleton in Australia and unable to claim their awards in person this year. But the team watched a CMA livestream of the event from Down Under and saw the owner of Stapleton's PR firm, Sacks & Co.'s **Carla Sacks** (who also reps Combs), win publicist of the year. Sacks was visibly emotional.

"I really was very overcome in a way I didn't expect in that room," she allows. "To look out at that community of people that rarely wants, or gets, the spotlight, and then to be recognized by those peers, hit me in a way I wasn't really prepared for."

In the days after his win, Barron kept at the job in Australia and New Zealand, a camera in his hands every day, constantly looking for new angles on the same songs and the same people as he documents Stapleton's work for social media and for posterity. Even as he moves about the arenas and amphitheatres, he's cognizant that after the artist and crew head for the next city, they leave an impression behind them.

"We want every person who's working at the venue — the promoter, everyone involved at the place that is opening their doors up to us — we want them to be excited when we're coming back," Barron says. "We've just always treated every show like that, and everyone on our team has the same mentality."

Mirroring the one-nighters that it represents, the crew of the year trophy moves on after one year to its next recipient, though it will still carry a plaque with Stapleton's name — and the names of each of his team members — as Combs takes it back on the road. In some cases, the award will revisit concert halls where Stapleton carted it in 2024. But it's certain to expand its travels with Combs' entourage.

"We're excited for the Luke Combs team and for them to continue on," Hunt says. "It sounds like they're going to try to carry on the tradition." ●



HUNTER HART

Morris Higham president/partner Clint Higham celebrated his March 4 win as manager of the year at the CMA Touring Awards with a post-event dinner party at Giovanni's in Nashville. From left: Kenny Chesney, Higham, Barbara Mandrell and Louise Mandrell.



Tyler Hubbard (center) performed Feb. 26 at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in a members-only concert. He's flanked by Museum executive vp of external affairs Lisa Purcell and Museum vp of development Ben Hall.



JASON KEMPIN/GETTY IMAGES

Ella Langley met with Randy Travis at a Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum event on March 4 celebrating the latest edition of its exhibition "American Currents: State of the Music."

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Expert insight and commentary by Tom Roland and Jim Asker



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60TH ACM AWARDS PROGRAM GUIDE

The Academy of Country Music is a leading association for the country music industry that serves as a powerful advocate for country fans, artists and all facets of the business, as well as provides philanthropic aid through charitable partner ACM Lifting Lives. 2025 is a landmark year for the academy as it celebrates the 60th ACM Awards, which will be hosted by entertainment icon Reba McEntire. The May 8 awards return to the world headquarters of the Dallas Cowboys in Frisco, Texas, for a third consecutive year and stream live to a global audience on Prime Video.

Get your brand in front of 5,000-plus academy members, voters and music industry professionals in the ACM Awards program guide, produced by Billboard. The guide will be distributed at the ceremony at the culmination of ACM Awards Week.

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ISSUE DATE 5/8 | AD CLOSE 4/3 | MATERIALS DUE 4/8

billboardCountry Airplay

AIRPLAY
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LUMINATE

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

John Morgan Earns First Country Airplay Top 10 With Jason Aldean Collab ‘Friends Like That’

John Morgan’s “Friends Like That” (Night Train/Broken Bow), featuring Jason Aldean, hits the top 10 of *Billboard*’s Country Airplay chart (dated March 15), rising two spots to No. 10.

During the Feb. 28-March 6 tracking week, the single advanced by 6% to 16.8 million audience impressions, according to Luminate.

The 29-year-old Morgan, from Sylva, N.C., reaches the Country Airplay top 10 with his first entry as a billed recording artist. He co-wrote it—with Brent Anderson, Will Bundy and Lydia Vaughn—and all six songs on his project *Remember Us?*, released in October 2023.

Morgan has co-penned four other Country Airplay hits, all recorded by Aldean. Two led for three weeks each — “If I Didn’t Love You,” with Carrie Underwood, in 2021, and “Trouble With a Heartbreak,” in 2022 — and “That’s What Tequila Does” reached No. 5 in 2023. Fellow current single “Whiskey Drink” (Macon/Broken Bow) jumps 17-14 (12.7 million, up 12%).

Aldean adds his 39th top 10, and first since “Let Your Boys Be Country,” which hit No. 3 in July. He first reached the region with the No. 10-peaking “Hick-town” in 2005 and followed with his first of 25 chart-toppers, “Why,” in 2006.



MATTHEW BERINATO

JELLY ROLL TIES LONGEST REIGN Jelly Roll’s “Liar” (Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek) dominates Country Airplay for a fourth frame, up 4% to a new weekly best 32.5 million in audience. He matches his longest command, among seven consecutive No. 1s, encompassing all his entries dating to his first in 2022 — “Need a Favor” led for four weeks in 2023. “Liar” is the first song by an artist with no other billed acts to rule for at least four weeks since Shaboozey’s “A Bar Song (Topsy)” ran up a seven-week tab at No. 1 last August-September. 🍷

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)	
HOMETOWN HOME	BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	+1.738
I'M THE PROBLEM	Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+1.582
THIS TOWN'S BEEN TOO GOOD TO US	Curb	Dylan Scott	+1.520
WHISKEY DRINK	Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+1.376
WORST WAY	Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	+1.322
LIAR	Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+1.173
HOLY SMOKES	Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	+1.083
FRIENDS LIKE THAT	Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan Featuring Jason Aldean	+0.992
I NEVER LIE	Leo33	Zach Top	+0.981
FOREVER TO ME	Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cole Swindell	+0.968

MOST INCREASED PLAYS			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN	
LIAR	Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+554
I'M THE PROBLEM	Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+511
HOMETOWN HOME	BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	+459
WORST WAY	Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	+403
THIS TOWN'S BEEN TOO GOOD TO US	Curb	Dylan Scott	+359
SHE HATES ME	Capitol Nashville	Dierks Bentley	+298
WHISKEY DRINK	Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+294
BACKSEAT DRIVER	Zone 4/RCA Nashville	Kane Brown	+274
COMING HOME	Three Up Three Down/Columbia Nashville	Old Dominion	+273
FOREVER FROM HERE	Monument	Tigirlily Gold	+268

RECURRENTS			
THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	A BAR SONG (TIPSY) American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	19.434
2	POUR ME A DRINK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Post Malone Featuring Blake Shelton	17.241
3	I HAD SOME HELP Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen	14.885
4	BOYS BACK HOME PIA/Curb/Columbia Nashville	Dylan Marlowe & Dylan Scott	14.519
5	I AM NOT OKAY Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	13.461
6	GUY FOR THAT Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Post Malone Featuring Luke Combs	11.333
7	MILES ON IT Joytime Collective/RCA Nashville	Marshmello & Kane Brown	9.203
8	AUSTIN VERSION III/Warner/WMN	Dasha	9.140
9	COWGIRLS Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring ERNEST	9.136
10	WORLD ON FIRE RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	8.416



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING MARCH 6, 2025

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	3	17	WHOSE TEQUILA ARE YOU DRINKIN' (Get Joe) ★★ 1 Week at 1 ★★	Billie Jo Jones	1720	110	11	12	23	STAINED YOUR CROWN (Independent)	Bart Crow Band	1168	-50
2	2	19	ARE YOU WITH ME (Independent)	Case Hardin	1714	78	12	13	8	WEST OF FT WORTH (Independent)	Grant Gilbert	1166	75
3	4	16	BORDERLINE CRAZY (Independent)	William Beckmann	1583	29	13	16	8	SOMEWHERE IN TEXAS (Independent)	Tristan Roberson	1116	125
4	5	15	LUBBOCK (Independent)	Flatland Cavalry	1476	20	14	15	7	DRIVE (Independent)	Jason Boland & The Stragglers	1107	106
5	8	9	SHE GOES GOOD WITH TEQUILA (Independent)	Brian Mars	1403	104	15	1	25	HILL COUNTRY HOME (Independent)	Kyle Park	1082	-603
6	7	24	HER WAY AIN'T THE HIGHWAY (Independent)	Jake Bush	1396	77	16	14	19	AUSTIN ANYMORE (Independent)	Brandi Behlen	1004	1
7	6	25	ONE MORE FOR THE RIDE (Independent)	Ryder Grimes	1385	-19	17	18	15	WHAT'S LEFT OF MY HEART (No Big Deal)	Reckless Kelly	967	36
8	10	9	ABILENE (LuckySky Music)	Tori Martin	1310	57	18	25	5	DAMN BABY (Independent)	Bubba Westly	945	169
9	9	19	GOOD AGAIN, AMEN (Independent)	Keller Cox	1299	8	19	20	7	THE WORKING MAN (Independent)	Cody Jinks	944	68
10	11	9	5 TO 9 (Independent)	Hudson Westbrook	1267	28	20	21	9	BUCKLE OR THE BRIDE (Independent)	Caleb Young	888	43

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 2025, Texas Regional Radio Report

billboardCountry 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	17	LIAR Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	32.543	+1.173	9177	554	1
2	3	20	LOVE SOMEBODY Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	25.681	-1.457	6681	-276	4
3	2	33	I AIN'T SAYIN' MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	25.472	-2.202	7531	-688	2
4	4	34	HIGH ROAD YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel & Jessie Murph	24.207	-0.725	6355	-192	6
5	5	40	HOMETOWN HOME BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	24.092	+1.738	7138	459	3
6	6	23	I'M GONNA LOVE YOU CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/Capitol Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson & Carrie Underwood	20.891	+0.540	6428	244	5
7	8	52	THIS TOWN'S BEEN TOO GOOD TO US Curb	Dylan Scott	19.676	+1.520	5719	359	7
8	9	47	FOREVER TO ME Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cole Swindell	18.647	+0.968	5346	177	8
9	10	21	I NEVER LIE Leo33	Zach Top	18.024	+0.981	5249	193	9
10	12	46	FRIENDS LIKE THAT Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan Featuring Jason Aldean	16.838	+0.992	5248	177	10
11	11	16	TEXAS Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	16.024	+0.102	5043	89	11
12	13	5	I'M THE PROBLEM Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	15.952	+1.582	4717	511	12
13	14	38	HOLY SMOKES Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	13.547	+1.083	4175	252	13
14	17	32	WHISKEY DRINK Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	12.686	+1.376	3815	294	15
15	15	29	AM I OKAY? Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville	Megan Moroney	12.232	+0.162	4015	190	14
16	16	18	TOUGH PEOPLE Patoka Sounds/Lyric Ridge/Stoney Creek	Drew Baldridge	11.961	+0.063	3668	-6	16
17	18	34	JUST TO SAY WE DID Blue Chair/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Kenny Chesney	10.274	-0.228	3464	-98	17
18	19	18	BACKSEAT DRIVER Zone 4/RCA Nashville	Kane Brown	9.917	+0.893	3385	274	19
19	20	36	COMING HOME Three Up Three Down/Columbia Nashville	Old Dominion	9.378	+0.500	3419	273	18
20	21	10	WEREN'T FOR THE WIND SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	8.148	+0.412	2569	52	20
21	22	32	TRUCK ON FIRE Big Machine	Carly Pearce	6.893	+0.666	2384	100	23
22	23	26	PARK Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	6.479	+0.566	2195	21	24
23	24	49	SINGLE AGAIN The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	6.343	+0.817	2483	158	21
24	26	13	WORST WAY Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	6.078	+1.322	1861	403	27
25	25	37	COWBOYS CRY TOO Black River	Kelsea Ballerini & Noah Kahan	5.734	+0.253	2413	93	22
26	28	37	THIS HEART Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville	Corey Kent	5.131	+0.763	1711	222	30
27	29	39	FALL OF SUMMER Triple Tigers	Scotty McCreery	4.803	+0.465	1970	83	26
28	27	49	LIFE WITH YOU Curb	Kelsey Hart	4.791	+0.317	2080	80	25
29	30	29	COUNTRY HOUSE MCA Nashville	Sam Hunt	4.500	+0.381	1817	112	28
30	32	26	FRIDAY NIGHT HEARTBREAKER Capitol Nashville	Jon Pardi	3.977	+0.283	1690	71	31

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 © 2025, 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-bulleted) 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.

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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	31	17	FIX WHAT YOU DIDN'T BREAK RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	3.921	+0.171	1517	92	32
32	34	24	HEAVENS TO BETSY Big Machine	Jackson Dean	3.510	+0.131	1723	136	29
33	33	8	STRAIGHT LINE Hit Red/Capitol Nashville	Keith Urban	3.382	-0.031	961	2	40
34	35	16	COUNTRY SONG CAME ON Capitol Nashville	Luke Bryan	3.246	+0.041	1424	121	33
35	36	25	WHAT KINDA MAN MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	3.200	+0.101	1355	57	35
36	38	39	EVERYTHING I NEED 19/Wheelhouse	Chayce Beckham	3.066	+0.358	1393	47	34
37	37	5	I DARE YOU Big Machine	Rascal Flatts & Jonas Brothers	2.971	+0.127	1335	10	36
38	39	6	GOOD NEWS American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	2.929	+0.313	1188	144	37
39	41	3	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	2.621	+0.575	1040	188	38
40	44	3	SHE HATES ME Capitol Nashville	Dierks Bentley	2.476	+0.851	973	298	39
41	42	19	RELAPSE 717/Warner/WEA	Warren Zeiders	1.944	-0.052	899	-31	42
42	40	27	BONES Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	1.918	-0.282	825	-195	45
43	43	16	WOULD IF I COULD Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	ERNEST	1.636	-0.008	894	54	43
44	45	6	IT WON'T BE LONG RECORDS Nashville	George Birge	1.580	-0.040	922	-39	41
45	47	8	10-90 Stancaster/Thirty Tigers/Big Machine	Muscadine Bloodline	1.542	+0.152	586	47	53
46	46	16	BETTER THAN YOU Quartz Hill/Stone Country	Joe Nichols / Annie Bosko	1.479	-0.039	853	-12	44
47	53	6	INDIGO Lockeland Springs/Atlantic/Magnolia Music	Sam Barber Featuring Avery Anna	1.322	+0.374	598	118	52
48	48	23	TRUCK STILL WORKS Loaded Goat/EMI Nashville	Brad Paisley	1.273	-0.027	662	19	49
49	49	11	TIME'S TICKING Valory	Justin Moore	1.254	+0.065	822	42	46
50	51	9	COWGIRL Stoney Creek	Parmalee	1.171	+0.095	717	21	48
51	50	14	DARLIN' Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	1.109	-0.054	625	2	50
52	52	13	GOLDEN CHILD Riser House	Meghan Patrick	0.946	-0.060	778	-7	47
53	55	9	WOLVES CRY Average Joes	Bryan Martin	0.935	+0.209	501	32	55
54	56	4	BETTER ME FOR YOU (BROWN EYES) Fugitive Recordings/Magnolia Music	Max McNown	0.812	+0.114	610	113	51
55	59	3	ENDS OF THE EARTH RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Ty Myers	0.720	+0.185	174	18	-
56	57	5	HUNG UP ON YOU Republic Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Bryce Leatherwood	0.658	-0.008	403	4	60
57	54	15	I COULD BE THAT RAIN Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Randall King	0.656	-0.078	448	-60	58
58	NEW		RUN Vanner/Republic/Big Loud ★★ Hot Shot Debut ★★	Miranda Lambert	0.651	+0.222	456	180	57
59	NEW		WISH YOU WELL Music Soup/Interscope/MCA Nashville	Vincent Mason	0.638	+0.277	411	222	59
60	NEW		FOREVER FROM HERE Monument ★★ Breaker ★★	Tigirlily Gold	0.578	+0.305	544	268	54



Trace Adkins performed new single "What Color's Your Wild" in a March 5 appearance on NBC's *Today*. From left: NBC personality Craig Melvin, Adkins and NBC personalities Dylan Dreyer and Al Roker.



Chase Matthew was the subject of a Feb. 26 screening of the six-part MAVTV docuseries *Chase'n*. From left: Ignition Management co-founder Ken Madson, Warner Music Nashville co-chair/co-president Gregg Nadel, Matthew, WMN co-chair/co-president Cris Lacy and Ignition Management co-founder Loyd Potts.

DAVID BRADLEY



WOMEN IN MUSIC

On March 22, *Billboard* will publish its highly anticipated Women in Music special issue, featuring top women in the music business who are creating excitement and making their mark across labels and in publishing and touring.

Coinciding with this issue will be the Women in Music awards ceremony on March 29. The event will bring together music's most prominent women artists and the industry's top women 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 SALE 3/22 | **AD CLOSE** 3/11 | **MATERIALS DUE** 3/13

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

Jordan Davis was the subject of the Feb. 27 edition of the *Amazon Presents: Country Heat* podcast. He's joined by hosts Kelly Sutton (left) and Amber Anderson.

RANDY TRAVIS BIOPIC DUE

Country Music Hall of Famer **Randy Travis**' life and career will be spotlighted in the upcoming biopic *Forever and Ever, Amen*, which will also star his fellow country singer **Clay Walker**.

Travis announced the project on March 5 during an appearance at the Grand Ole Opry.

The film is currently being cast by **Anne McCarthy**, **Kellie Roy** and **Morgan Robbins** at Engine Casting; the role of Travis will be portrayed by three actors. Walker will play Travis in his 40s and 50s, while casting is underway for actors to portray him as a child (around 9-12 years old) and at 20-30 years old, according to the press release.

Writer-director **Andrew Hyatt** will direct from his own script, while Travis and his wife, **Mary Travis**, will serve as executive producers alongside Walker.

"We've been approached many times through the years about doing a movie ... but the timing or team has never felt quite as good as it feels right now," Randy Travis said in a statement. "With Clay on our side and the creative direction he and the producers have, I feel good about telling my story through this medium."

Walker added: "Randy Travis is the voice of a generation and one of the greatest country singers of all time. I am truly honored to be a part of this project and cannot believe I get to play one of my heroes."

—Jessica Nicholson

RADIO & RECORDS®

Sony Music Nashville and Provident Entertainment hired senior vp of business and legal affairs **Lauren Kilgore**. She was previously a shareholder at the Buchalter law firm ... Indie label Leo33 added marketing coordinator **Joseph Manzo** and director of business intelligence **Ana Shabeer**. Manzo was previously a WMA marketing strategy manager; Shabeer consulted Audio Chateau for six months in Nashville after moving from New York, where she was a Def Jam senior director of promotion analytics. Reach Manzo [here](#) and Shabeer [here](#) ... Cumulus/Des Moines, Iowa, welcomed vp/market manager **Adam Dobbins**, who was formerly Walnut Media/Omaha, Neb., director of sales. The Des Moines cluster includes country **KHKI** and **KJJY** ... SiriusXM hired **Scott Walker** as its chief advertising revenue officer, Adweek.com reported. Walker replaces retiring **John Trimble** after working previously as AdsWizz senior vp ... **Joe Bell** joined SummitMedia as senior vp of sales, according to RadioInk.com, after serving as Beasley/Philadelphia vp/market manager ... CBS News launched a one-minute morning-drive platform, *The*

CBS Country Daily Dirt, on March 3, RadioInk.com reported. The program is hosted by **KFGE** Lincoln, Neb., personality **Brooke Summers** ... A round of cuts at numerous Audacy stations led to the departures of **WPBW** Greensboro, N.C., morning host **Dale O'Brian** and **KWJJ** Portland, Ore., afternoon talent **Jaime "JT" Tanchyk**, according to RadioInsight.com ... Bonneville/Sacramento, Calif., senior vp/market manager **Steve Cottingham** will retire in April after 45 years in broadcasting, RadioInsight.com reported. Affected stations include country **KNCL**.

'ROUND THE ROW

Black River Publishing promoted **Sarah Hudspeth** to creative manager from coordinator. Reach her [here](#) ... Jody Williams Songs upped **Nina Jenkins Fisher** to vp/GM from senior director of creative and boosted **Tenasie Courtright** to creative director from manager ... Peachtree Entertainment added two executives: **Marty Elliott** joins as vp of university relations following a run as Ready Room Collective talent buyer, and **Andrew Goldberg** takes over as vp of strategic partnerships following his work as Danny Wimmer Presents senior director of strategic partnerships ... Kinkead Entertainment added all-male burlesque outfit **RanchHands Cowboylesque** to its booking roster ... Americana artist **Connor Daly** tapped Burning Ground Entertainment for management ... **Alan Jackson**, **Keith Urban**, **Alison Krauss & Union Station**, **Ricky Skaggs**, **Post Malone** and **Jamey Johnson** are among the acts added to the lineup for *Opry 100: A Live Celebration*, a three-hour NBC special that will air live March 19 from the Grand Ole Opry House ... **Luke Combs** will be inducted into the Music City Walk of Fame on March 20. A scheduling issue prevented his induction last fall ... CMT unveiled the 2025 class in its Next Women of Country program: **Alexandra Kay**, **Dasha**, **Kaitlin Butts**, **Kat Luna**, **Lanie Gardner**, **Meghan Patrick** and **MORIAH**. Each of them will be featured in an interview with **Lauren Alaina** on the *CMT Hot 20 Countdown* March 8-9 ... **Garth Brooks**' *The Anthology Part V: The Comeback, The First Five Years* will be published April 4. The book is a multimedia project that includes six CDs featuring 66 songs, alongside the text and more than 150 previously unpublished photos ... Folds of Honor hosts its annual Rock 'n' Jock Celebrity Softball Game on June 2 at Nashville's First Horizon Park ... **Bobby Bones & The Raging Idiots** raised \$221,000 for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital with their eighth Million Dollar Show at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium on March 4. The lineup included **Miranda Lambert**, **Bailey Zimmerman**, **George Birge**, **Tracy Lawrence** and **Clint Black**, among others ... Former Grand Ole Opry promotions manager/publicist **Jerry Strobel**, 84, died Feb. 24 in Nashville. He spent 30 years with the Opry and radio station **WSM-AM**, becoming the Opry House manager and playing a role in the development of Fan Fair. Go [here](#) for a complete obituary. ●



George Birge (center) celebrated his No. 1 Country Airplay single "Cowboy Songs" with radio supporters during a Feb. 18 party at Legends Corner in Nashville. Joining him are RECORDS Nashville executive vp of promotion and commercial strategy Josh Easler (left) and Sony Music Canada director of national radio promotion Warren Copnick.

billboard



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TOP MUSIC LAWYERS

Behind every artist, songwriter and music producer is a trusted group of advisers who provide guidance, advice and negotiate deals. *Billboard's* 10th annual Top Music Lawyers list will recognize the biggest names and most prominent legal minds in the world of music and entertainment law. They are the deal-makers behind the major contracts and lawsuits in the music industry.

This feature will also include a round-up of top law schools attended by the notable alumni on the premier Music Lawyers list.

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ISSUE DATE 4/19 | AD CLOSE 4/8 | MATERIALS DUE 4/10

billboard Country Airplay Index

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

10-90 Azalea Bloom Publishing, BMI/Summit Drive Publishing, BMI/Kendell Marvel Publishing Designee, SESAC (G.S.Stanton, C.Muncaster, K.Marvel) **45**

A

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COUNTRY

25 Years Ago Lonestar Flashed A Big ‘Smile’

In 2000, the group notched its fourth of nine No. 1s on Hot Country Songs

On March 11, 2000, **Lonestar**’s “Smile” beamed atop *Billboard*’s Hot Country Songs chart. It became the band’s fourth of nine No. 1 singles.

Keith Follese and **Chris Lindsey** wrote the song, which **Dann Huff** produced. It was released from Lonestar’s LP *Lonely Grill*, the group’s first of six top 10s on Top Country Albums. The set yielded three other No. 1 songs: “Amazed,” “What About Now” and “Tell Her.”

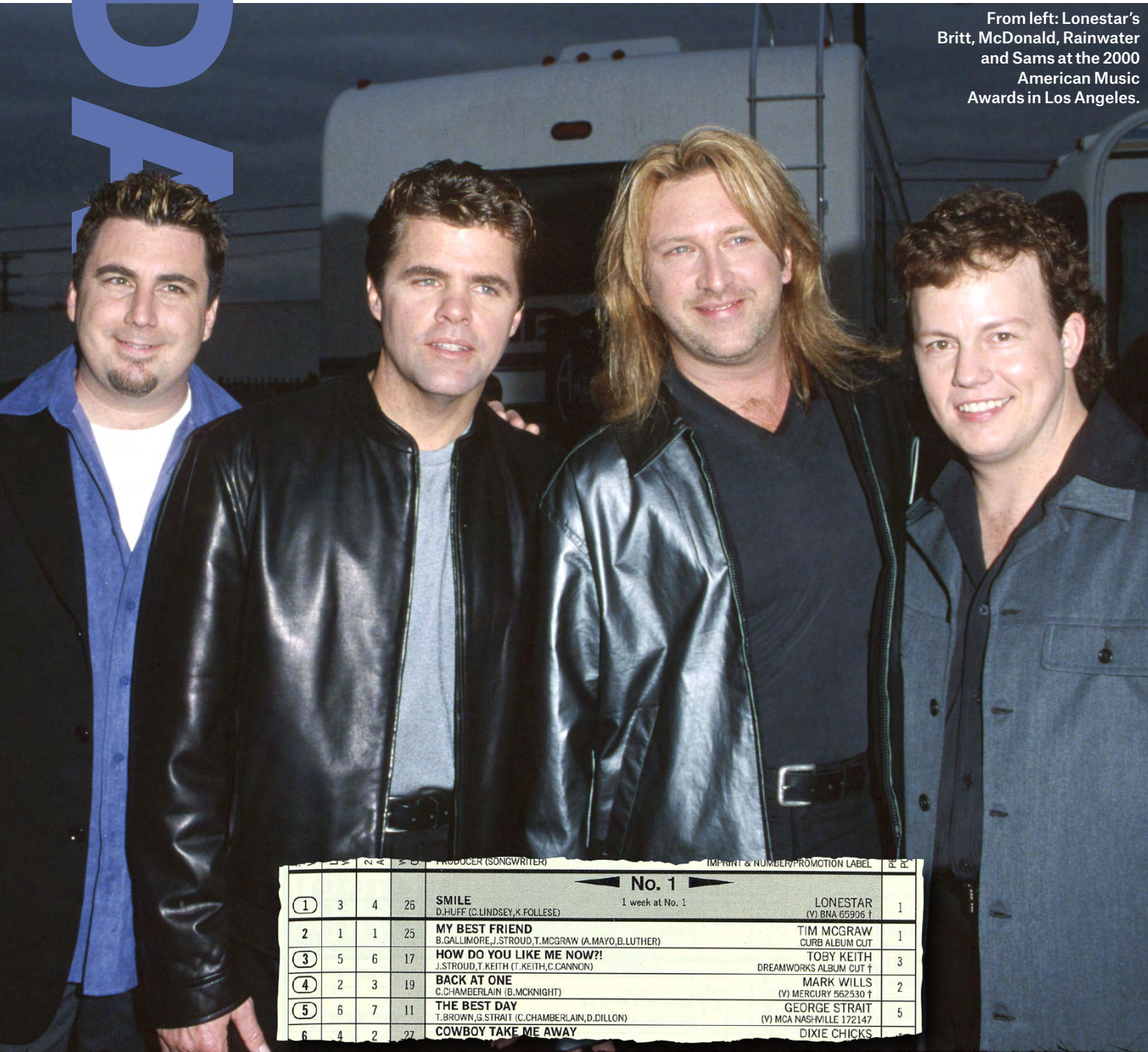
With “Amazed,” Lonestar achieved its biggest crossover success, as the ballad crowned the all-genre *Billboard* Hot 100. It also marked the first country leader on

the list since **Kenny Rogers** and **Dolly Parton**’s “Islands in the Stream” in 1983.

Lonestar formed in 1992 with its original lineup of **Michael Britt**, **Richie McDonald**, **Randy “Keech” Rainwater**, **John Rich** and **Dean Sams**. Rich left in 1998 and re-emerged in 2004 as half of **Big & Rich** (with **Big Kenny Alphin**).

Lonestar is still active as a four-man unit, featuring Britt, Rainwater, Sams and lead vocalist **Drew Womack** (formerly of **Sons of the Desert**). Currently touring, the band will next perform on March 12 in North Tonawanda, N.Y. —JIM ASKER

From left: Lonestar’s Britt, McDonald, Rainwater and Sams at the 2000 American Music Awards in Los Angeles.



				PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	IMP/INT & NUMBER/PROMOTION LABEL	
				No. 1		
				1 week at No. 1		
1	3	4	25	SMILE D. HUFF (C. LINDSEY, K. FOLLESE)	LONESTAR (V) BNA 65906 †	1
2	1	1	25	MY BEST FRIEND B. GALLIMORE, J. STROUD, T. MCGRAW (A. MAYO, B. LUTHER)	TIM MCGRAW CURB ALBUM CUT	1
3	5	6	17	HOW DO YOU LIKE ME NOW? J. STROUD, T. KEITH (T. KEITH, C. CANNON)	TOBY KEITH DREAMWORKS ALBUM CUT †	3
4	2	3	19	BACK AT ONE C. CHAMBERLAIN (B. MCKNIGHT)	MARK WILLS (V) MERCURY 562530 †	2
5	6	7	11	THE BEST DAY T. BROWN, G. STRAIT (C. CHAMBERLAIN, D. DILLON)	GEORGE STRAIT (V) MCA NASHVILLE 172147	5
6	4	2	27	COWBOY TAKE ME AWAY	DIXIE CHICKS	