

billboard Country Update

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BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

Tom.Roland@billboard.com



D.I. Why? The Pleasures And Pain Of Chasing The Country Dream Alone

On April 16, artist-writer **Brett Sheroky** headed into Nashville on a T-shirt run.

With the release of his debut album, *Rock Paper Scissors*, looming on April 18, he delivered shirts to a handful of songwriters who had donated to a Kickstarter crowd-funding campaign that raised nearly \$33,000, surpassing his \$30,000 goal and allowing him to hire the musicians and book the studio time to record the project. The results are impressive — there's not a single piece of filler among its 15 tracks — and yet Sheroky has no idea what to expect.

He went into the project with no label, no manager, no booking agent and no publicist, requiring him to juggle every aspect of creating and marketing the album as a one-man shop.

"There's a hundred little different things constantly," he says.

And no artist is an expert at all of them. Sheroky, who moved to Nashville 16 years ago, was also working on 8-second videos for Spotify Canvas, a tool that enhances the on-screen background when a song plays on the platform. He wasn't entirely confident about making them, but he was pushing through the process on his own as a do-it-yourself artist, a common occupation in modern Nashville. The challenges

those artists face can be deflating, but those who keep pushing forward frequently find the creative rewards outweigh the more mundane aspects of their lives.

"Making the art itself, and the feeling you get of being part of something that was created out of nothing, and to be passionate about it still — the victory really is in the making of it," he says.

Billboard Country Update talked with DIY artists Sheroky, **Maggie Baugh** and **Gina Venier** about their efforts in Nashville's music business. In a previous era, their prospects would

have been more narrow. There was no internet, so radio and the clubs were the only means of building a fan base. There was little or no home recording equipment, so artists had to amass enough cash to pay for expensive studio time, which record labels typically funded.

But with streaming, home studios and social media, artists have more tools available than ever to create and market their own music. That ease of entry, however, has increased competition. Thus, more artists are vying for the kind of viral audience that leads to record deals and booking agents. And until they land those kinds of team members, they operate as lone



VENIER



SHEROKY



BAUGH

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wolves, battling the inner voices as they plot how to advance.

“The highs and lows are crazy because there’s no sense of security,” says Venier, who has been in Nashville 11 years. “There’s no stability unless you’re seeking it out, unless you’re connecting with people and basically keeping your lifelines for the industry nearby.”

That’s one of the odd benefits of making music in Nashville. Outside of solo acoustic gigs, artists typically need bands to back them; thus, the creators form bonds with one another: trading their services, supporting the same people they’re competing with and doing their best to lift all boats in their friend group. They learn the hard way — through business relationships that don’t work out or by making mistakes as they tackle unfamiliar tasks outside their skill sets while trying to minimize their costs.

“I call it ‘bougie on a budget,’” Baugh says.

Baugh’s skills are impressive. In addition to her musical talents as a singer, songwriter and guitarist, she spent part of 2024 playing in **Keith Urban**’s band. She booked her own 60-date tour for 2025, including two trips to the United Kingdom, building on seven years’ experience in Music City.

“When I booked them, I already knew how to talk to booking agents and promoters,” she says. “I already knew how to put together an EPK — what they were looking for, put the [statistics] first, keep it short and sweet. If they wanted to open the links, they would. I negotiated all the contracts on my behalf by myself, and it’s just from learning from my mistakes along the way.”

To the outside world, Nashville’s honky-tonk district looks like the most obvious developmental breeding ground. And artists such as **Terri Clark**, **Kenny Chesney** and **Tigirlily Gold** have indeed cut their teeth on Lower Broadway, learning how to work a crowd by playing familiar cover songs for tourists. Those gigs can generate income, but it’s the shows on the songwriter circuit — including The Bluebird Cafe, The Listening Room and Jane’s Hideaway — where artists have a chance to build an actual following.

“That’s where I play the originals,” Venier notes. “That’s where I get the fans.”

One of the most difficult hurdles for DIY artists is learning how to pitch themselves. For most, that doesn’t come naturally, and the rejections or unreturned calls can generate significant second-guessing. But a successful pitch sometimes becomes a breakthrough moment. Venier improbably landed a song on SiriusXM’s The Highway by working her contacts, Sheroky battled self-consciousness for weeks before he finally posted his successful Kickstarter campaign, and Baugh emailed an unsolicited recording to a Spotify executive and ended up getting playlisted.

“I’m really bad at promoting myself and talking about myself,” Baugh says. “I’ve just learned the hard way that if you don’t open your mouth, somebody else who’s opening their mouth will get the opportunity.”

The three independent artists are all making the most of their opportunities. Baugh is working on an album with producer **Rob McNelley** and prepping for an April 22 Grand Ole Opry appearance. Venier will open for **Fancy Ha-**

good at Nashville’s historic Exit/In on April 23. And Sheroky, just days before *Rock Paper Scissors*’ release, received messages from a booking agent and a manager who both expressed interest in potentially representing him, which would take him off the DIY rolls.

The right partners could help him reach a wider audience, though it’s the one-on-one impact with fans that Sheroky values most. He recalls a woman who traveled from Austin to Dallas to see a show and to tell him that one of his songs pulled her out of an emotional pit.

“She sounded like she was thinking about killing herself,” he remembers, “and she’s like, ‘Man, that song saved my life.’ The numbers — they’re whatever. But that part’s real.”

Meanwhile, as challenging as the DIY life might be, making a living playing music in a crowded pool of country talent is an accomplishment in itself.

“We’re in Nashville,” Venier says. “I’m among beautiful talent and art, and all of us are successful by simply sticking this shit out. Period.” ●



CHESNEY



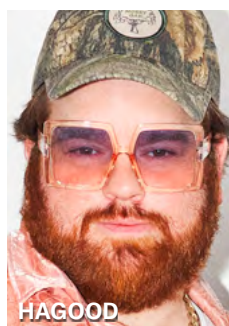
Keith Urban (left) visited with several KMLE Phoenix personalities, including afternoon co-hosts Gabe Mercer (center) and Matt McAllister, when he played the Country Thunder festival on April 11 in Florence, Ariz.



Gretchen Wilson attended an April 10 album release party for Ira Dean’s *I Got Roads* at Nashville’s Blueprint Underground Cocktail Club, where they performed “Everything,” a duet featured on the album.



Pedal steel guitarist Jay Dee Maness (right) chatted with Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum writer-editor Dave Paulson on April 12 for the museum’s *Nashville Cats* series.



HAGOOD



Kane Brown received plaques honoring 10 RIAA-certified titles during a two-night stand at Nashville’s Bridgestone Arena April 11-12. With him are Neon Coast owner Martha Earls (left) and Sony Music Nashville chair/CEO Taylor Lindsey.

MATT PASKERT

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

Morgan Wallen Has No ‘Problem’ Notching 17th Country Airplay No. 1

Morgan Wallen banks his 17th No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Country Airplay chart as “I’m the Problem” (Mercury/Republic/Big Loud) ascends a spot to the top of the list dated April 26. The song increased by 7% to 28.8 million audience impressions April 11-17, according to Luminate.

The co-write by the 31-year-old from Sneedville, Tenn., reaches the penthouse in 11 weeks. It completes the quickest trip to No. 1 since **Post Malone**’s “I Had Some Help,” featuring Wallen, needed just seven frames to reign last June.

“I’m the Problem” is Wallen’s third Country Airplay No. 1 from his album of the same name ahead of its **May 16 arrival**. “Love Somebody” dominated for three weeks in February, after “Lies Lies Lies” led for one week in November. He scored his initial No. 1 in June 2018 as featured on **Florida Georgia Line**’s “Up Down.”

Wallen’s new LP bulges with 37 tracks, which is one more than on his 2023 blockbuster, *One Thing at a Time*. That set has ruled the Top Country Albums chart for 82 weeks, the second-most in the chart’s history, after his own *Dangerous: The Double Album*, which ran up a record 97 weeks at No. 1 beginning in January 2021.

‘HOLY’ LANDS IN TOP 10 **Bailey Zimmerman** nets his fifth consecutive career-opening Country Airplay top 10 as “Holy Smokes” (Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA) lifts 11-10, up 2% to 15.9 million in reach. His first four entries all hit No. 1: “Where It Ends” (October, for two weeks), “Religiously” (September 2023, one), “Rock and a Hard Place” (beginning in April 2023, six), and “Fall in Love” (December 2022, one).

Zimmerman earned his first No. 1 on the multimetric Hot Country Songs chart (dated April 19) as featured on rapper **BigXthaPlug**’s “All the Way,” which **soared in at the summit**. (The single is not currently being promoted to country radio.)




SPIDEY SMITH

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)	
FRIENDS LIKE THAT Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan Featuring Jason Aldean	+3.305	
WHISKEY DRINK Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+2.814	
JUST IN CASE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+2.275	
BACKSEAT DRIVER Zone 4/RCA Nashville	Kane Brown	+2.219	
I'M THE PROBLEM Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+1.831	
FIX WHAT YOU DIDN'T BREAK RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	+1.631	
THIS HEART Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville	Corey Kent	+1.128	
PARK Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	+1.099	
HOUSE AGAIN River House/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Hudson Westbrook	+1.030	
WORST WAY Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	+0.966	

MOST INCREASED PLAYS			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN	
FRIENDS LIKE THAT Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan Featuring Jason Aldean	+985	
FAVORITE COUNTRY SONG Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	HARDY	+660	
I'M THE PROBLEM Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+647	
WHISKEY DRINK Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+638	
BACKSEAT DRIVER Zone 4/RCA Nashville	Kane Brown	+607	
JUST IN CASE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+502	
FIX WHAT YOU DIDN'T BREAK RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	+490	
THIS HEART Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville	Corey Kent	+400	
LIFE WITH YOU Curb	Kelsey Hart	+399	
WEREN'T FOR THE WIND SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	+371	

RECURRENTS			
THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	LOVE SOMEBODY Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	18.945
2	HIGH ROAD YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel & Jessie Murph	18.410
3	THIS TOWN'S BEEN TOO GOOD TO US Curb	Dylan Scott	15.245
4	A BAR SONG (TIPSY) American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	14.986
5	POUR ME A DRINK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Post Malone Featuring Blake Shelton	14.729
6	I HAD SOME HELP Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen	14.312
7	I AIN'T SAYIN' MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	10.660
8	I AM NOT OKAY Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	9.765
9	BOYS BACK HOME PIA/Curb/Columbia Nashville	Dylan Marlowe & Dylan Scott	8.770
10	AUSTIN VERSION III/Warner/WMN	Dasha	8.246



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING APRIL 17, 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	2	15	ABILENE (LuckySky Music) ★★ 1 Week at 1 ★★	Tori Martin	1724	103	11	13	16	PUT IT IN REVERSE (Independent)	Ben McPeak	1170	36
2	4	21	LUBBOCK (Independent)	Flatland Cavalry	1670	108	12	14	13	THE WORKING MAN (Independent)	Cody Jinks	1148	55
3	3	15	5 TO 9 (Independent)	Hudson Westbrook	1653	85	13	19	8	GREEN IN COLORADO (Independent)	Casey Donahew	1103	161
4	5	14	WEST OF FT WORTH (Independent)	Grant Gilbert	1561	39	14	15	7	NOTHIN' BUT TEXAS (Bowen Sounds/Thirty Tigers)	Wade Bowen	1064	9
5	6	14	SOMEWHERE IN TEXAS (Independent)	Tristan Roberson	1540	118	15	16	15	AIN'T THAT LOVE (Independent)	Bri Bagwell & Timber Wilde	1061	22
6	7	11	DAMN BABY (Independent)	Bubba Westly	1499	146	16	18	9	HURRICANE (CDX)	Sandee June	1052	90
7	8	13	DRIVE (Independent)	Jason Boland & The Stragglers	1462	122	17	17	13	WHAT I CAME TO DO (Independent)	Jesse Raub Jr.	1049	40
8	10	25	AUSTIN ANYMORE (Independent)	Brandi Behlen	1219	18	18	22	6	BREAK ITSELF (Tommy Jackson/Thirty Tigers)	Randy Rogers Band	994	104
9	11	10	ROLLIN' ON (Flying C)	Brooke Graham	1197	35	19	9	25	GOOD AGAIN, AMEN (Independent)	Keller Cox	910	-392
10	12	15	BUCKLE OR THE BRIDE (Independent)	Caleb Young	1181	28	20	23	10	WHO'S HANGING THE MOON (Independent)	Josh Weathers	905	83

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	2	11	I'M THE PROBLEM Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	★★ No. 1 (1 Week) ★★ Morgan Wallen	28.842	+1.831	8391	647	1
2	4	52	FRIENDS LIKE THAT Night Train/Broken Bow	★★ Most Increased Audience ★★ John Morgan Featuring Jason Aldean	27.577	+3.305	8344	985	2
3	1	46	HOMETOWN HOME BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	26.161	-3.691	7291	-1396	3
4	3	23	LIAR Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	23.253	-1.654	6092	-485	7
5	5	53	FOREVER TO ME Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cole Swindell	22.282	+0.425	6761	359	4
6	8	38	WHISKEY DRINK Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	21.457	+2.814	6191	638	6
7	7	27	I NEVER LIE Leo33	Zach Top	20.407	-0.088	6202	90	5
8	9	22	TEXAS Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	18.348	+0.393	5794	175	8
9	10	35	AM I OKAY? Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville	Megan Moroney	17.323	+0.845	5391	249	9
10	11	44	HOLY SMOKES Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	15.891	+0.321	4984	43	10
11	12	24	BACKSEAT DRIVER Zone 4/RCA Nashville	Kane Brown	15.378	+2.219	4820	607	11
12	13	24	TOUGH PEOPLE Patoka Sounds/Lyric Ridge/Stoney Creek	Drew Baldridge	12.562	-0.389	4246	15	12
13	14	16	WEREN'T FOR THE WIND SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	12.446	+0.938	4051	371	13
14	15	19	WORST WAY Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	12.165	+0.966	3790	364	15
15	17	32	PARK Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	11.477	+1.099	3519	260	18
16	19	43	THIS HEART Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville	Corey Kent	11.244	+1.128	3632	400	16
17	18	55	SINGLE AGAIN The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	10.944	+0.738	3619	77	17
18	16	42	COMING HOME Three Up Three Down/Columbia Nashville	Old Dominion	10.562	-0.072	3940	289	14
19	20	35	COUNTRY HOUSE MCA Nashville	★★ Airpower ★★ Sam Hunt	10.009	+0.198	3109	203	19
20	23	23	FIX WHAT YOU DIDN'T BREAK RCA Nashville	★★ Airpower ★★ Nate Smith	8.662	+1.631	2829	490	20
21	22	38	TRUCK ON FIRE Big Machine	Carly Pearce	7.520	-0.436	2740	-154	21
22	30	4	JUST IN CASE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	6.589	+2.275	1710	502	30
23	24	32	FRIDAY NIGHT HEARTBREAKER Capitol Nashville	Jon Pardi	5.900	+0.528	2281	157	22
24	26	9	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	5.813	+0.921	2236	338	24
25	25	12	GOOD NEWS American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	5.467	+0.167	2106	150	25
26	27	55	LIFE WITH YOU Curb	Kelsey Hart	5.362	+0.605	2271	399	23
27	29	22	COUNTRY SONG CAME ON Capitol Nashville	Luke Bryan	5.320	+0.821	2005	176	26
28	28	30	HEAVENS TO BETSY Big Machine	Jackson Dean	4.507	-0.239	1898	-60	27
29	31	5	HANDS OF TIME BigEC/EMI Nashville	Eric Church	4.236	+0.118	1713	161	29
30	33	11	I DARE YOU Big Machine	Rascal Flatts & Jonas Brothers	4.198	+0.363	1807	168	28

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	32	31	WHAT KINDA MAN MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	4.021	+0.105	1598	-56	31
32	35	5	HAPPENTO ME Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	3.940	+0.663	1350	213	32
33	37	4	BAR NONE MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	3.430	+0.440	1274	174	35
34	34	14	STRAIGHT LINE Hit Red/Capitol Nashville	Keith Urban	3.342	+0.011	1325	14	33
35	36	9	SHE HATES ME Capitol Nashville	Dierks Bentley	3.279	+0.077	1314	76	34
36	38	6	RUN Vanner/Republic/Big Loud	Miranda Lambert	2.974	+0.166	913	21	44
37	39	6	3,2,1 Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Republic/EMI Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	2.565	+0.056	1027	23	38
38	42	3	HEART OF STONE Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	2.336	+0.250	945	97	42
39	40	25	RELAPSE 717/Warner/WEA	Warren Zeiders	2.324	+0.039	1052	30	37
40	51	4	HOUSE AGAIN River House/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Hudson Westbrook	2.149	+1.030	684	226	50
41	46	12	INDIGO Lockeland Springs/Atlantic/Magnolia Music	Sam Barber Featuring Avery Anna	2.019	+0.261	858	71	47
42	45	12	IT WON'T BE LONG RECORDS Nashville	George Birge	2.003	+0.063	1137	52	36
43	44	15	COWGIRL Stoney Creek	Parmalee	1.907	-0.054	909	-16	45
44	43	22	WOULD IF I COULD Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	ERNEST	1.866	-0.206	989	-48	39
45	47	20	DARLIN' Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	1.781	+0.147	877	-2	46
46	NEW		FAVORITE COUNTRY SONG Mercury/Republic/Big Loud ★★ Hot Shot Debut/Breaker ★★	HARDY	1.674	+1.669	662	660	51
47	48	22	BETTER THAN YOU Quartz Hill/Stone Country	Joe Nichols / Annie Bosko	1.616	+0.033	950	41	40
48	49	17	TIME'S TICKING Valory	Justin Moore	1.436	-0.045	924	-11	43
49	50	19	GOLDEN CHILD Riser House	Meghan Patrick	1.425	+0.098	946	85	41
50	60	7	ENDS OF THE EARTH RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Ty Myers	1.181	+0.439	247	38	-
51	52	3	NOT AT THIS PARTY VERSION III/Warner/WMN	Dasha	1.049	-0.032	645	-13	52
52	55	14	10-90 Stancaster/Thirty Tigers/Big Machine ★★ Breaker ★★	Muscadine Bloodline	0.952	+0.055	640	15	53
53	54	5	CRY Curb	Lee Brice	0.929	+0.023	437	-4	59
54	58	10	BETTER ME FOR YOU (BROWN EYES) Fugitive Recordings/Magnolia Music	Max McNown	0.881	+0.062	720	19	49
55	RE-ENTRY		TIL THE LAST ONE DIES Boss Moves/Black River ★★ Breaker ★★	Chris Young	0.878	+0.312	559	222	55
56	56	6	WISH YOU WELL Music Soup/Interscope/MCA Nashville	Vincent Mason	0.844	+0.000	604	-28	54
57	57	6	FOREVER FROM HERE Monument/Sony Music Nashville	Tigirlily Gold	0.831	-0.002	781	5	48
58	59	3	IF I DIE BEFORE YOU Red Street	Chris Lane	0.810	+0.011	515	-7	56
59	53	15	WOLVES CRY Average Joes	Bryan Martin	0.798	-0.119	470	-13	57
60	NEW		HARD FOUGHT HALLELUJAH Brandon Lake/Essential/Lyric Ridge	Brandon Lake X Jelly Roll	0.730	+0.085	264	7	-



Vincent Mason took part in a WHKO Dayton, Ohio, Concert for a Cause on April 15 at JD Legends. From left: WHKO morning personality Nancy Wilson, Mason, MCA Nashville director of Midwest promotion Donna Passuntino and WHKO morning co-host Aaron "Woody" Woods.



Tyler Hubbard (center) posed with KOLC Reno, Nev., PD Robbie Owens and morning personality Cat Bellah when he performed April 11 at the Reno Ballroom.



7th Annual

Songwriter's Night

Benefiting Gilda's Club Middle Tennessee

Chris Young | Chris DeStefano

April 26, 2025 | 6:00 - 8:00 PM

The Reserve at Fat Bottom Brewing

Free of charge to everyone, Gilda's Club Middle Tennessee uplifts and strengthens people impacted by cancer by providing support, fostering compassionate communities, and breaking down barriers to care.

Learn More and Buy Tickets:

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

Nate Smith (center) was among the attractions when Activated Events' Boots in the Park Las Vegas kicked off April 11 at Desert Breeze Park. He's joined by Activated CEO Steve Thacher (left) and KWNR PD/midday host MoJoe Roberts.

ACM DISHES OUT RADIO HONORS

The Academy of Country Music announced 10 Radio Award winners and set plans for a **Brooks & Dunn** tribute in conjunction with the 60th annual ACM Awards on May 8 in Frisco, Texas.

Radio station of the year winners, announced April 17, included **KYGO** Denver (major market); **WQDR** Raleigh, N.C. (large market); **WIVK** Knoxville, Tenn. (medium market); and **WXBQ** Bristol, Va. (small market).

On-air personality winners included teams from the national shows *Big D & Bubba* and *The Crook & Chase Countdown*, plus local talent from WIVK, **WYCD** Detroit, **WUBE** Cincinnati and **WYCT** Pensacola, Fla.

Play Something Country, the Brooks & Dunn event benefiting ACM Lifting Lives, will feature **Eric Church**, **Cody Johnson**, **Keith Urban**, **Lainey Wilson** and **Megan Moroney** at the Omni PGA Frisco on May 7.

RADIO & RECORDS®

Warner Music Nashville promoted two members of its commercial partnerships team: **Katherine Firsching** shifted to partnerships director from manager of video strategy, and **Blair Poirier** stepped up to division manager from coordinator. Reach Firsching [here](#) and Poirier [here](#) ... Big Machine Label Group hired executive vp of finance **Chris Koon**, who was Capitol Christian Music Group CFO in his most recent on-staff role ... Los Angeles-based Interscope Geffen established leadership for the reactivated Lost Highway imprint in Nashville, with former Thirty Tigers vp of distribution **Robert Knotts** joining **Jake Gear** as co-heads/executive vps. Gear spent the last year as Universal Music Group Nashville vp of A&R ... **Chris Janson** returned to Warner Music, bringing his Harpeth 60 imprint with him. **Clay Hunnicutt** will head the Harpeth 60 promotion team, segueing from Big Machine Label Group executive vp of label operations. The team will also include former Magnolia Music Group national director of radio and streaming **Ray Vaughn** and ex-Columbia Nashville senior director of promotion **Lauren Bartlett** ... ONErpm and Huff Co. signed **Callum Kerr** to a recording deal ... **Braden Hull** joined the artist roster at Melody Place ... **WGKX** Memphis parted ways with morning co-host **Andrew "Latty" Latimer**, RadioInsight.com reported ... **WOKQ** Portsmouth, N.H., brand manager/midday host **Ginny Brophay** announced plans to retire in August, according to RadioInsight.com ... **Nate Smith**, **Megan Moroney**, **Matt Stell**, **Tucker Wetmore** and **Dasha** will perform at the iHeartCountry Festival's Daytime Village on May 3 in Austin ... **Runaway June** hosts a Mother's Day radio special, *A Nashville Tribute to Moms*, available for airing May 11 through CDX Nashville and PlayMPE ... Former radio personality, game show host and TV producer **Wink Martindale**, 91, died April 15 in Rancho Mirage, Calif. He reached No. 11 on the *Billboard* country chart with his 1959 recitation "Deck of Cards."

'ROUND THE ROW

Opryland Entertainment Group hired **Tim Jorgensen** as vp of operations for its Austin office. He was previously ASM Global regional vp of arenas, stadiums and theaters ... Electric Feel Entertainment named **Chandler Nicole Sherrill** senior director of creative in Nashville. She was most recently

MV2 Entertainment creative director ... Americana artist-writer **Ryan Necci** signed a joint-venture publishing deal with Warner Chappell Nashville and Southern Pacific Music ... The Nashville Songwriters Association International presented awards to more than a dozen supporters on March 26. Among the recipients were Big Machine Music senior creative manager **Preston Berger**, Z Music Room founders **Terry** and **Wanda Seay**, and songwriter **Brian White** ("Watching You," "Billy's Got His Beer Goggles On"). Go [here](#) for the full list of honorees ... **Johnny Horton** and **Asleep at the Wheel** will be inducted into the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame in Carthage on Aug. 9, **KYTX-TV** Tyler, Texas, reported ... **Willie Nelson** announced plans for the April 20 release of his second THC-infused social tonic, Willie's Remedy+ ... Ten Speed Press will publish **Dolly Parton's** *Star of the Show: My Life on Stage*, the third in a trio of coffee table books, on Nov. 11 ... Programming for three nights of CMA Fest concerts at Nashville's Ascend Amphitheater will include Whiskey Jam (June 5), **Jake Owen** and Friends (June 6) and **Wynonna Judd's** Girls Night Out (June 7) ... Despite skipping the June Jam concert for 2025, **Alabama** still plans six events for a Fan Appreciation Week June 26-28 in Fort Payne, Ala. ... Fretless Films will release a video on-demand documentary, *Don't Get Troubled in Your Mind: The Carolina Chocolate Drops' Story*, on April 22. Streaming options will follow May 30 ... The Grand Ole Opry's annual Salute the Troops show takes place May 20 with performances by **Craig Morgan**, **Steven Curtis Chapman**, **Rhonda Vincent** and the **100th Army Band** ... Songwriter **Jim Dowell** ("Headed for a Heartache") published a new children's book, *Benny the Bunny: Bullying — Casting the First Stone*, expanding a series of books based on the bunny character ... **Riley Green** was added to the lineup for the **Jelly Roll**-hosted Opry NextStage Live concert from Plano, Texas, on May 7, the night before the Academy of Country Music Awards in nearby Frisco. Meanwhile, ACM CEO **Damon Whiteside** and GABB Wireless head of entertainment **Kerri Fox-Metoyer** will be featured in WHO KNEW's *The Smartest People in the Room* web series at 1 p.m. CT on April 24. Go [here](#) to register for free ... The Country Music Association (CMA) established a member ambassador program to encourage recruitment, with **Haley Hansen** (Girllila Marketing), **Corey Jones** (Origins Music Group) and **Jack Jones** (Tin Roof) among the initial ambassadors. Go [here](#) for the full list ... **Brad Paisley** will headline an NFL Draft Concert in Green Bay, Wis., on April 26 at the close of the three-day event ... **Darius Rucker** was named an ambassador for the Carolinas Golf Foundation ... **Brandi Carlile's** Looking Out Foundation is teaming with the Elton John AIDS Foundation to raise \$1 million for global HIV care in the wake of recent funding cuts by the U.S. government ... Nashville's **Mac Gayden**, 83, died April 16. A founding member of the seminal country/rock hybrid group **Area Code 615**, Gayden co-wrote "Everlasting Love," an oft-recorded pop standard that rose to No. 14 on the *Billboard* country chart through a 1979 remake by **Narvel Felts**. Gayden also participated as a session musician on recordings by **Elvis Presley**, **J.J. Cale**, **Roger Miller** and **David Houston** ... Powerhouse entertainment attorney **Joel Katz**, 80, died April 18 at his home in Atlanta. His work in music spanned more than 50 years, including representation for the CMA and the Recording Academy, artists **James Brown** and **Willie Nelson**, and Nashville record executives **Mike Dungan** and **Randy Goodman**. **O**



Riser House recording artist **Dillon Carmichael** (left) checked in with **Cumulus/Ventura-Oxnard**, Calif., operations manager **Dave Daniels** on April 12 during the KHAY Fest in Camarillo, Calif.

billboard



2025

COUNTRY POWER PLAYERS

Billboard's 12th annual Country Power Players issue will profile the people who have driven another solid year for country music in sales, streaming and publishing. This special feature will highlight those who have had the greatest impact in the genre, including recorded music, live entertainment and publishing, in the past year.

Advertise in *Billboard's* Country Power Players issue to congratulate this year's honorees while reaching key decision-makers who are driving the music business.

BONUS DISTRIBUTION

Billboard Country Power Players Cocktail Party & Awards on June 4, TBD in Nashville

CONTACTS

East Coast/Midwest Joe Maimone | joe.maimone@billboard.com

Southeast Lee Ann Photoglo | laphotoglo@gmail.com

Los Angeles Aki Kaneko | moishekaneko@gmail.com

Latin Marcia Olival | marciaolival29@gmail.com

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

International Ryan O'Donnell | rodonnell@pmc.com

ISSUE DATE 5/31 | AD CLOSE 5/20 | MATERIALS DUE 5/22

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) **52**

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Dan Seals Entered At No. 1 For A 10th Time

Dan was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2008. Following treatment, including a stem cell transplant, he died in 2009 at age 61.

—JIM ASKER

—JIM ASKER

REWINDING THE COUNTRY CHARTS

RANK				PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	★ ★ No. 1 ★ ★ 1 week at No. 1	LABEL & NUMBER/DISTRIBUTING LABEL
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
①	4	6	10	LOVE ON ARRIVAL KLEINING (D.S.EALS)		DAN SEALS CAPITOL 44435
②	5	7	11	STRANGER THINGS HAVE HAPPENED R.MILSAP,R.GALBRAITH,T.COLLINS (K.STEGALL, R.MURRAH)		RONNIE MILSAP RCA 9120-7
③	6	5	15	HERE IN THE REAL WORLD K.STEGALL,S.HENDRICKS (A.JACKSON, M.IRWIN)	◆	ALAN JACKSON ARISTA 9922
4	7	8	13	JUST AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU D.WILLIAMS,G.FUNDIS (D.LOGGINS, J.D.MARTIN)		DON WILLIAMS RCA 91119-7
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6	3	2	16	NOT COUNTING YOU		GARTH BROOKS