

billboard Country Update

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BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

Tom.Roland@billboard.com



CMA's Music Teachers Of Excellence: 'Doing What's Right For The Kids'

Successful recording artists often require years to develop their unique talents and find their space in the marketplace.

When they finally arrive, they usually discover that they make the most enduring connection with their fan base by simply being their authentic selves.

As it turns out, what works for people on the concert stage also works for adults at the head of a classroom.

"When you teach, you don't turn into a teacher," says **Carolyn Hankins**, band director for Page Middle School in Franklin, Tenn. "The reason that you're teaching is because you're you, and you share your heart and your strengths and your weaknesses with your kids. If you genuinely can be you, then it's not a struggle."

Hankins is one of 30 instructors from 11 states who will be honored Sept. 10 during the Country Music Association's annual Music Teachers of Excellence event at Nashville's Schermerhorn Symphony Center.

Had her life gone the way she anticipated, Hankins would have been — like the staff at the CMA — a professional in the music business. But she ultimately found teaching was her best way to make a difference, just as country music's creatives typically aspire to bring positivity into their fans' lives. The effusive Hankins has certainly done that — in 24 years as a music teacher, she counts numerous former students among her success stories. Some have gone on to become band directors themselves, others have gone into the music business, and one is even per-

forming in a Broadway production in New York.

Hankins and her fellow music instructors are clearly assisting the next generation in finding its way, but the CMA's investment isn't just altruistic. The more that music finds its way into curricula around the country, the better prepared future music pros will be when they take the industry's reins.

"The more that we can uplift and inspire teachers, the more students they will impact over time and the better society will be," says CMA senior vp of industry relations and philanthropy **Tiffany Kerns**. "But it's also [ensuring] a pipeline for our future."

Hailing from the coal-mining town of Hazard, Ky., Hankins had a better view of the music business than most. Her father, **Bernard Faulkner**, was a founding member of **Exile**, playing with the band in the 1960s and early '70s prior to its breakout with "Kiss You All Over."

"My dad had perfect pitch," Hankins says. "He could go into a room and say, 'Oh, the air conditioner is in F-sharp.'"

Billy Ray Cyrus and **Montgomery Gentry's Troy Gentry** were among the artists who showed up at the Faulkner house during their developmental years, and Hankins expected to join them in Nashville after high school. She enrolled in Belmont University's entertainment program and landed a job with producer-publisher **Rob Galbraith**, who'd worked with **Ronnie Milsap** and **Elvis Presley**. She was discouraged by the disillusioned hopefuls who showed up with demo tapes and desperate



HANKINS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Shaboozey Gets "Good News"
>page 4

Spotify Makes Studley Move
>page 8

Country Coda: Brad Paisley's "Time" Capsule
>page 11



dreams, only to grow angry when she was unable to secure them a meeting.

Galbraith ultimately supported her when she decided to segue into education. “He persuaded me to follow my heart and to follow the gifts that I had — not what I thought my dad expected or to make more money,” she recalls.

It turned out that Hankins was a natural in the classroom. She found inventive ways to encourage the kids’ creativity, and her boundless enthusiasm bolstered the students’ self-confidence. After teaching initially back in Kentucky, she joined the staff at a series of Middle Tennessee schools, introducing instruction on wind instruments first at a school in Leiper’s Fork, which had previously been limited to guitar, piano and the like.

“I never really asked permission,” Hankins says. “I just brought the instruments I had from my house or whatever, and before you knew it, we had a little concert band. And so then that program grew.”

When the principal was recruited to Sunset Middle School in Franklin, he brought Hankins along to establish a program at the brand-new learning center. Between 60% and 70% of students ultimately joined the band, an impressive figure given that only 11% of kids join a school band nationwide, according to the U.S. Department of Education. She’s also taught at Brentwood Middle School and Page Middle School in Franklin, where the seventh grade band swelled to 140 musicians. A former drum major, Hankins also works with the Page High School marching band, a role she particularly relishes.

“Marching band is actually what made me fall in love with band,” she says. “I love the physicality of it. I love the intensity of it. I also really value the discipline and the strictness, and I just love the uniformity and to see kids work together. It is hard to do marching band. It is very hard to sit still and play an instrument, let alone run around on a field with a wool uniform on, while playing in tune and watching left to right and not running into somebody and remembering what step you’re on.”

The coordination of mind, body and soul involved in learning music leads to stronger students, setting the stage for them to become capable adults. The Music Teachers of Excellence event supports that mission, with artists and Music Row executives — most of whom benefited from music classes as kids — showing their own appreciation.

“We ask their principal to attend, and we typically ask their superintendent to attend, because we want those key decision-makers to understand the value that that teacher has in their community,” CMA’s Kerns says. “If they allow it, music will bring people together. It will build community.”

The music business is about building fan bases and revenue. It has the ability to influence, even change, lives. But teaching music is arguably a more noble cause, directly making a difference in future generations by helping students learn a discipline that incorporates multiple skills and personal traits. Hankins’ high school instructor, **Pauletta Smith**, gave her a simple tool to evaluate her progress as a teacher.

“If you ever wonder if you’re making the right decision, you just say, ‘Am I doing what’s right for the kids?’” Hankins recalls, “and you will not falter in your career.” ●



MARY CAROLINE RUSSELL

Dwight Yoakam and Chris Hillman participated in an Aug. 23 panel discussion at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville in support of the exhibit “Western Edge: The Roots and Reverberations of Los Angeles Country-Rock.” From left: Yoakam, Hillman, museum writer-editor Erin Osmon and museum CEO Kyle Young.



KATIE KAUSS

Ashley McBryde held a soft opening for her nonalcoholic-forward Redemption Bar ahead of its formal Aug. 28 launch on the fifth floor of Eric Church’s Nashville club Chief’s. From left: Caylee Hammack, Shelly Fairchild, Tenille Townes and McBryde.



Craig Campbell (center) took a spin as WGKX Memphis guest DJ before he performed Aug. 21 at Lafayette’s Music Room. With him are afternoon host Beth Argo and PD/afternoon personality Darrill Argo.

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CONTACTS

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

Southeast: Lee Ann Photoglo | laphotoglo@gmail.com

Latin: Marcia Olival | marciaolival29@gmail.com

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

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



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

‘Good News’! Shaboozey Scores His Second Country Airplay No. 1

Shaboozey notches his second No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Country Airplay chart as “Good News” (American Dogwood/Empire/Magnolia Music) ascends a spot to the top of the Sept. 6-dated list. It increased by 4% to 31.1 million audience impressions Aug. 22-28, according to Luminate.

Shaboozey co-wrote the song with **Sean Cook, Michael Pollack, Sam Roman, Nevin Sastry** and **Jake Torrey**. It’s from his album *Where I’ve Been, Isn’t Where I’m Going*, which arrived at its No. 2 high on Top Country Albums and its No. 5 best on the all-genre *Billboard* 200 in June 2024.

The Northern Virginia native (born **Collins Obinna Chibueze**) sent his first Country Airplay entry, the multigenre smash “A Bar Song (Tipsy),” to No. 1 for seven weeks beginning last August. In the process, the track surpasses **Carrie Underwood**’s “Jesus, Take the Wheel” in 2006 as the longest-leading hit on the chart ever to establish a country career (counting acts’ first titles on the chart as a lead artist or their initial songs promoted to country radio).

“A Bar Song (Tipsy)” also ran up 45 weeks atop the multimetric Hot Country Songs chart starting in May 2024, the longest command for a song by a single artist; overall, it trails only **Bebe Rexha** and **Florida Georgia Line**’s “Meant To Be.” Plus, it ruled the all-genre *Billboard* Hot 100 for a record-tying 19 weeks.

Shaboozey has charted two other songs on Country Airplay: “Highway” reached No. 49 in January and “Amen,” with **Jelly Roll**, hit a No. 54 high in July.

‘**FRIDAY NIGHT**’ **PARDI Jon Pardi** notches his 11th Country Airplay top 10 as “Friday Night Heartbreaker” (Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville) lifts 11-10 (16.7 million, up 6%). It marks his first top 10 since “Your Heart or Mine,” which rose to No. 4 in September 2023. He has earned five No. 1s, beginning with “Head Over Boots” in August 2016. ●



DANIEL PRAKOPCZYK

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)	
BACKUP PLAN Atlantic/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Bailey Zimmerman & Luke Combs	+5.449	
I GOT BETTER Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+2.046	
HEART OF STONE Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+1.883	
DARLIN' Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	+1.651	
HAPPEN TO ME Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	+1.612	
BOTTLE ROCKETS Triple Tigers	Scotty McCreery & Hootie & The Blowfish	+1.289	
GOOD TIMES & TAN LINES Leo33	Zach Top	+1.230	
COWGIRL Stoney Creek	Parmalee	+1.206	
GOOD NEWS American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	+1.075	
BACK IN THE SADDLE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	+1.073	

MOST INCREASED PLAYS			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN	
BACKUP PLAN Atlantic/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Bailey Zimmerman & Luke Combs	+1381	
I GOT BETTER Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+591	
HEART OF STONE Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+558	
BOTTLE ROCKETS Triple Tigers	Scotty McCreery & Hootie & The Blowfish	+460	
DARLIN' Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	+385	
GOOD TIMES & TAN LINES Leo33	Zach Top	+356	
BACK IN THE SADDLE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	+337	
FRIDAY NIGHT HEARTBREAKER Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Jon Pardi	+271	
HAPPEN TO ME Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	+269	
COWGIRL Stoney Creek	Parmalee	+246	

RECURRENTS			
THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	I'M THE PROBLEM Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	16.774
2	THIS HEART Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville	Corey Kent	16.113
3	HIGH ROAD YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel & Jessie Murph	15.113
4	COUNTRY SONG CAME ON Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Luke Bryan	14.060
5	LIAR Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	12.008
6	PARK Hubbard House/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	11.788
7	FIX WHAT YOU DIDN'T BREAK RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	11.607
8	HOMETOWN HOME BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	10.842
9	POUR ME A DRINK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Post Malone Featuring Blake Shelton	10.683
10	COUNTRY HOUSE MCA Nashville	Sam Hunt	10.012



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING AUGUST 28, 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	20	FLAME (Get Joe)	Billie Jo Jones	1607	23	11	14	10	WEATHERMAN (River House)	Hudson Westbrook	1120	86
2	3	23	THE MOMENT (Independent)	Sundance Head	1573	95	12	11	22	IF IT RAINS TODAY (Independent)	Matt Castillo	1098	10
3	4	15	ONE NIGHT IN DALLAS (Independent)	Tristan Roberson	1501	25	13	13	12	I MISS US (RedPlay Media)	Trevor Underwood	1093	43
4	8	12	CHEATIN' ON MY HONKY TONK (Warner Music Nashville)	Randall King feat. Braxton Keith	1478	129	14	16	10	TWO HANDS (Independent)	Pat Green and Corey Kent	1072	82
5	5	17	IT AINT THE WHISKEY (Big Loud)	Jake Worthington	1460	24	15	15	20	COUNTY FAIR (Independent)	James Robert Webb	1060	43
6	6	20	LAST COWBOY STANDING (Independent)	David Adam Byrnes	1455	49	16	18	7	WHEN SHE KISSED ME (Almost Country)	Casey Donahew	959	65
7	7	14	COWGIRLS RIDE (LuckySky Music)	Tori Martin	1376	15	17	17	12	UNINVITED GUEST (Independent)	Casey Chesnutt	952	20
8	9	22	ARE YOU A REAL COWBOY (Independent)	Amanda Kate Ferris	1270	5	18	20	11	BURN (RedPlay Media)	Guy Vincent	936	86
9	10	19	ADELINE (Independent)	Shane Smith & The Saints	1253	76	19	19	10	LONELY OVER YOU (Warner Music Nashville)	William Beckmann	930	67
10	12	10	SWEET (Independent)	Bubba Westly	1143	80	20	21	13	WATCH ME GO (Mirror Ball Records)	Caleb Young	844	21

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	31	GOOD NEWS American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	★★ No. 1 (1 Week) ★★ Shaboozey	31.093	+1.075	8275	245	2
2	4	17	BACKUP PLAN Atlantic/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	★★ Most Increased Audience ★★ Bailey Zimmerman & Luke Combs	28.881	+5.448	8407	1381	1
3	1	28	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	28.108	-4.802	7414	-1588	3
4	5	24	HAPPEN TO ME Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	24.963	+1.612	7010	269	4
5	3	23	JUST IN CASE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	23.345	-1.252	5415	-495	8
6	7	16	BOTTLE ROCKETS Triple Tigers	Scotty McCreery & Hootie & The Blowfish	22.315	+1.289	6614	460	5
7	8	22	HEART OF STONE Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	21.442	+1.883	6180	558	6
8	9	23	BAR NONE MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	18.485	+0.686	5421	174	7
9	10	10	I GOT BETTER Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	18.079	+2.046	5235	591	9
10	11	51	FRIDAY NIGHT HEARTBREAKER Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Jon Pardi	16.690	+1.000	4880	271	10
11	12	5	BACK IN THE SADDLE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	16.233	+1.073	4509	337	11
12	14	39	DARLIN' Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	14.767	+1.651	4441	385	12
13	13	49	HEAVENSTO BETSY Big Machine	Jackson Dean	13.778	-0.050	4188	-74	13
14	15	50	WHAT KINDA MAN MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	11.435	+0.121	3462	-23	16
15	16	24	HANDS OF TIME BigEC/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Eric Church	10.941	+0.023	4011	111	14
16	17	14	SOMEWHERE OVER LAREDO Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson	10.861	+0.283	3729	-18	15
17	18	23	HOUSE AGAIN River House/Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Hudson Westbrook	9.375	+0.301	3068	74	17
18	20	12	GOOD TIMES & TAN LINES Leo33	★★ Airpower ★★ Zach Top	9.124	+1.230	2886	356	19
19	19	25	3,2,1 Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/EMI Nashville/Mercury/Republic/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	8.787	+0.287	2998	5	18
20	22	34	COWGIRL Stoney Creek	Parmalee	8.224	+1.206	2446	246	21
21	21	33	STRAIGHT LINE Hit Red/Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Keith Urban	8.002	+0.554	2811	75	20
22	23	7	DON'T MIND IF I DO Nashville Harbor	Riley Green Featuring Ella Langley	7.134	+0.660	2076	229	25
23	27	14	STAY COUNTRY OR DIE TRYIN' Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	5.950	+0.907	2210	187	24
24	24	31	IT WON'T BE LONG RECORDS Nashville	George Birge	5.848	+0.225	2290	-41	23
25	25	30	I DARE YOU Big Machine	Rascal Flatts & Jonas Brothers	5.637	+0.285	2296	-17	22
26	26	20	FAVORITE COUNTRY SONG Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	HARDY	5.484	+0.355	2061	66	26
27	28	36	TIME'S TICKING Valory	Justin Moore	5.201	+0.353	1831	138	28
28	29	8	6 MONTHS LATER Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville	Megan Moroney	5.064	+0.664	1719	179	30
29	30	16	YOU HAD TO BETHERE Blue Chair/Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville	Megan Moroney & Kenny Chesney	4.647	+0.286	2043	167	27
30	31	10	WEAK Valory	Preston Cooper	4.195	+0.204	1384	63	35

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.

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.

HOT SHOT DEBUT

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

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billboard Country Airplay

 AIRPLAY
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THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
31	35	38	GOLDEN CHILD Riser House	Meghan Patrick	4.149	+0.661	1678	159	31
32	38	29	BETTER ME FOR YOU (BROWN EYES) Fugitive Recordings/Magnolia Music	Max McNown	4.112	+0.773	1568	164	32
33	34	26	ENDS OF THE EARTH RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Ty Myers	4.081	+0.592	1160	103	39
34	32	18	WHAT HE'LL NEVER HAVE Curb	Dylan Scott	3.959	+0.383	1803	128	29
35	33	19	I AIN'T COMING BACK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Post Malone	3.626	+0.060	1054	5	42
36	37	41	WOULD IF I COULD Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	ERNEST	3.619	+0.202	1541	58	33
37	39	18	THE FALL CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	3.478	+0.150	971	53	44
38	36	7	A SONG TO SING Vanner/Republic/Big Loud	Miranda Lambert & Chris Stapleton	3.386	-0.032	1357	23	36
39	41	13	ME & A BEER Harpeth 60	Chris Janson	3.217	+0.425	1306	-30	37
40	40	20	HARD FOUGHT HALLELUJAH Brandon Lake/Essential/Lyric Ridge	Brandon Lake X Jelly Roll	3.067	-0.233	1098	-53	40
41	42	21	TIL THE LAST ONE DIES Boss Moves/Black River	Chris Young	2.666	+0.233	1405	85	34
42	43	14	SAME MOON Riser House/Columbia Nashville ★★ Breaker ★★	Mitchell Tenpenny	2.046	+0.117	951	96	45
43	48	11	WRONG HEARTS BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	1.828	+0.409	867	97	48
44	44	22	NOT AT THIS PARTY VERSION III/Warner/WAR	Dasha	1.763	-0.034	1052	-72	43
45	49	15	PAPER UMBRELLAS McGraw/Big Machine	Tim McGraw Featuring Parker McCollum	1.692	+0.278	1222	151	38
46	45	7	2 PAIR Zone 4/RCA Nashville	Kane Brown	1.618	+0.018	675	16	53
47	47	12	DRINK WITH YOU Nashville Harbor	Brett Young	1.568	+0.083	883	37	47
48	52	25	WISH YOU WELL Music Soup/Interscope/MCA Nashville	Vincent Mason	1.531	+0.198	1062	93	41
49	46	14	BAGGAGE Black River	Kelsea Ballerini	1.485	-0.087	901	49	46
50	51	8	KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan	1.322	-0.067	797	-21	49
51	50	15	BURNED DOWN HEAVEN Big Machine	Chase McDaniel	1.314	-0.089	643	19	55
52	53	10	USE ME Leo33	Zach Top	1.180	+0.011	77	4	-
53	55	3	MAKING GOOD TIME Three Up Three Down/Columbia Nashville	Old Dominion	1.118	+0.133	578	104	57
54	60	2	SEVENTEEN Columbia Nashville	Kameron Marlowe	1.067	+0.482	513	105	58
55	54	5	NEVER CALL AGAIN Thrivin Here/Warner Music Nashville/WMN ★★ Breaker ★★	Gavin Adcock	1.066	+0.063	701	78	51
56	57	5	I WISH YOU WOULD Valory	Mackenzie Carpenter Featuring Midland	0.952	+0.117	659	22	54
57	56	7	EASY TO LOVE Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch	0.900	+0.050	679	26	52
58	58	3	WE CAN ALWAYS MOVE ON Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Cole Swindell	0.851	+0.030	594	-17	56
59	59	4	NO TELLIN' True To The Song/Nashville Harbor	Caroline Jones	0.781	+0.058	734	55	50
60	NEW		HEAVEN PASSING THROUGH Bossier City/Thirty Tigers/Akando ★★ Hot Shot Debut ★★	The Turnpike Troubadours	0.552	+0.201	248	125	-



Chris Stapleton visited with several radio executives when he performed Aug. 22 at the Ball Arena in Denver. From left: Picklejar co-founder and president Kristian Barowsky, MCA director of promotion Katie Bright, Stapleton, EMI manager of West Coast promotion Briarman Whitfield and iHeartMedia region senior vp of programming JoJo Turnbeaugh.



Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood made a surprise appearance during the SOURCE Hall of Fame Awards to honor O'Neil Hagaman co-founder and partner Cheryl Harris, one of six women inducted Aug. 26 at the Musicians Hall of Fame in Nashville. From left: co-host Kelly Sutton, Harris, Yearwood, co-host Mandy Barnett and Brooks.

MOMENTS BY MOSER

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TOP LATIN POWER PLAYERS

On Oct. 11, *Billboard* will profile the most influential people in Latin music, from label executives, music publishers and management companies to radio and TV stations and live entertainment.

Join *Billboard* in congratulating this year's Latin Power Players.

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 10/11 | **AD CLOSE** 9/30 | **MATERIALS DUE** 10/2

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

Tyler Hubbard (center) welcomed WJVC Long Island, N.Y., PD Adam "Phathead" Zuckerberg (left) and afternoon host Murph Dawg when he performed in Farmingville on Aug. 16.

SPOTIFY HIRES NEW NASHVILLE HEAD

Katie Studley joined Spotify as head of Nashville editorial.

Studley previously served as Nashville vp at The Orchard, spearheading release campaigns for **Kelsea Ballerini**, **Max McNown** and **Russell Dickerson**. She also spent a decade at **Jack White's** Third Man Records, serving as vp of operations and marketing director.

She began her career in artist development and marketing at Thirty Tigers, working with artists including **Jason Isbell** and the **Avett Brothers**.

—Jessica Nicholson

RADIO & RECORDS®

Black River promoted **Kellie LaJack** to director of national promotion from director of Northeast promotion, a position she's occupied since she joined the company in April 2024. Reach her [here](#)... The media program at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro was renamed the Scott Borchetta College of Media and Entertainment, recognizing the Big Machine Label Group president/CEO. Numerous members of the BMLG team, including artist **Carly Pearce**, were on hand for the Aug. 26 ceremony... **Emily Ann Roberts** signed a recording deal with RECORDS/Sony Music Nashville. Her first music under the agreement, "Jack & Jill Daniel's," is due Sept. 5... Big Loud partnered with Universal Music Canada to market **Owen Riegling** in the United States. A new single, "Taillight This Town," is expected Oct. 3... **Julia Cole** signed a recording contract with broke records, becoming the label's first country artist. She also joined Neon Coast for management... Bluegrass label Pinecastle added **Trey Hensley** to its roster ahead of the September release of *Can't Outrun the Blues*... **Chris Huff** returned to Audacy/Houston, where he'll serve as assistant brand manager for three stations, including country **KILT-FM**. He spent the last five years as *Country Aircheck* senior radio analyst... Cumulus/Des Moines, Iowa, named **Brian Sines** vp/market manager for the four-station cluster, including country outlets **KHKI** and **KJJY**. Sines previously was Steel City/Kansas City senior marketing consultant, a role that included work with country signals **KFKF** and **KBEQ**... Forever Communications chief revenue officer **Jared Mims** was named a partner for the chain, which operates in four markets in Kentucky and Tennessee. The move affects country stations **WFGS** Murray, Ky., and Tennessee signals **WOGY** Jackson, **WHNY** Paris and **WWGY** Union City-Martin... **WKDQ** Evansville, Ind.-Henderson, Ky., morning personality **Melissa Brooks** announced her departure from the station on the [company website](#) on Aug. 29, citing work/life balance issues. Her final shift comes Sept. 9... **WWWW** Ann Arbor, Mich., promoted three staff members, [RadioInk.com](#) reported. **Brian Welch** added PD stripes to his job duties, which already included station meteorologist and morning co-host. **Matt Missler** was appointed afternoon drive personality after working as promotions assistant, digital content lead and weekend talent. And **Derek Laughlin** was upped to full-time producer from part-time promotions assistant... **WUSJ** Jackson, Miss., morning personality **Nate West** parted ways with the station after a 30-year run in the New South Radio cluster, including work with top 40 sister **WYOY**... **Ashlen Ray** joined **KMRK** Odessa-Midland, Texas, as midday personality, [RadioInsight.com](#) reported. The move, following an on-air post at **KORA** College Station, comes in conjunction

with the station's overall on-air rebranding... **Kelsea Ballerini** is slated to host an exclusive concert for SiriusXM and Pandora subscribers on Sept. 25 at the Riviera Theatre in Chicago. The performance will air on SiriusXM's The Highway on Oct. 3... A new Country Radio Seminar CRS360 webinar installment, *CRS '26: A Peek Under the Hood*, is available for viewing [here](#).

'ROUND THE ROW

The Academy of Country Music promoted **Taylor Wolf** to ACM Lifting Lives executive director from manager... Quartz Hill Music Group hired manager **Neil Vance** to work with **Matt Cooper** and **Spencer Hatcher**. Vance returns to management in the process, following a year at Wasserman Music. He's previously handled the careers of **Dustin Lynch** and **Tyler Rich**. Reach Vance [here](#)... In addition to Vance's hiring, **Runaway June's** manager, **Tina Hill**, added singer-songwriter **Lakelin Lemmings** to her duties... Muserk, a global rights management company centered around artificial intelligence, made a half-dozen executive moves in Nashville, where the company is overseen by GM **Marc Driskill**. Muserk hired software developers **Jeanine Davis** and **Jeremy Swain** to continue upgrading its Blue Matter AI product. Davis previously was a full-stack developer at BerniePortal. Swain formerly was a software engineer with Exactuals. Also added to the team are administrators **Molly Tiemann** and **Emily Kelly**; Tiemann is a former SESAC executive, while Kelly is a former Music Services senior publishing catalog specialist. Additionally, **Collin White** was promoted to chief technology officer from head of technology, and **Truman Kitos-Lindsey** was upped to director of rights management from copyright and royalty data coordinator... Nashville-based Ryan Aviation Group hired Portland, Maine-based head of sales **Lexi Dunfey**. She arrives after 12 years with Private Jet Services, where she was most recently senior sales director... PLA Media hired public relations specialist **Matt Bjorke**. He was the longtime editor in chief of the now-defunct Roughstock.com. Reach him [here](#)... Marb Marketing head of PR **Caitlin Blackford** ended a five-year run with the company on Aug. 29, with her next role on the horizon. In her absence, Ave East Marketing publicity manager **Natalie Blakley** will take on Blackford's clients. Reach Blackford [here](#)... **Luke Bryan**, **Carrie Underwood** and **Lionel Richie** formalized their return as judges for the 2026 season of *American Idol* on ABC. Auditions for the season are already underway... Sony Music Publishing Nashville signed artist-writer **Aniston Pate** to a publishing deal... The Nashville Songwriters Association International begins taking submissions for its 26th annual Song Contest on Sept. 1. Among \$37,000 worth of prizes are mentoring sessions with **Ashley McBryde** or songwriter **Rivers Rutherford** ("When I Get Where I'm Going," "Ain't Nothing 'Bout You"). Go [here](#) for details... National Music Publishers' Association president/CEO **David Israelite** will deliver a "State of the Music Publishing Industry" update, hosted by the Association of Independent Music Publishers Nashville at 11 a.m. CT on Sept. 23 at The Listening Room. Go [here](#) to register... **WSM-AM** Nashville GM/content director **Eric Marcum** and *Air Castle of the South: WSM and the Making of Music City* author **Craig Havighurst** will participate in WHO KNEW's *The Smartest People in the Room* web series at 1 p.m. CT on Sept. 4. Go [here](#) to register. ●



Songwriter **Jessie Jo Dillon** ("Memory Lane," "10,000 Hours") founded a new MCA imprint, **Gatsby**, with **Carter Faith's** *Cherry Valley* set to be the label's first release on Oct. 3. From left: MCA chief creative officer **Dave Cobb**, **Faith**, **Dillon** and MCA president/CEO **Mike Harris**.

LIBBY DANFORTH

ISSUE DATE
10/25/25



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NOVEMBER 3

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SUMMIT + AWARDS

In November, *Billboard* will honor the most powerful people in the live entertainment industry at the Billboard Live Music Summit & Awards, which returns to Los Angeles on Nov. 3 as a must-attend event for the decision-makers and thought leaders shaping the future of the touring industry.

The 2025 Touring Power Players will be recognized in the Oct. 25 print issue of *Billboard* and celebrated at the Live Music Summit, which will include panel discussions and award presentations to the year's most visionary leaders worldwide.

Advertise in this issue to reach agents, artists, managers, venues, promoters and event producers and to congratulate the **2025 Touring Power Players**, as well as the **Legend of Live**, **Touring Artist of the Year** and **Executive of the Year**.

BONUS DISTRIBUTION:

Billboard Live Music Summit & Awards: 11/3

ON SALE: 10/25

AD CLOSE: 10/14 / **MATERIALS DUE:** 10/16

CONTACT:

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

Latin: Marcia Olival
marciaolival29@gmail.com

Touring and West Coast: Cynthia Mellow
cmellow615@gmail.com

Southeast: Lee Ann Photoglo
laphotoglo@gmail.com

International: Ryan O'Donnell
rodonnell@pmc.com

Los Angeles: Aki Kaneko
moishekaneko@gmail.com

billboard Country Airplay Index

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

2 PAIR Not Listed (*K.Brown, G.Foust, I.Franzino, J.Free, A.Haas, J.A.Hackworth*) **46**

3,2,1 Concord Copyrights, BMI/Jomil 10 Music, BMI/Native Notes Music, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Sony Plum Songs, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP (*J.Miller, S.Overstreet, J.Reynolds*) **19**

6 MONTHS LATER Sony Timber Publishing, SESAC/Georgiamo Music, SESAC/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Burrito Lovers Music, ASCAP/Tape Room LLC, Series 1, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/MESSY INTERNATIONAL Music, BMI/Shannanigans Publishing, SESAC/Eclipse Three Music, SESAC/Sony Lakeview, SESAC (*M.Moroney, B.Williams, D.Mescon, R.Hatch*) **28**

A

AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED

Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Be A Light Publishing, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/John Byron Music, BMI/Goat Island Bay Music, BMI/Songs By 10K HRS Publishing, BMI/1317 Music, ASCAP/Kobalt Songs Music, Publishing LLC, ASCAP/Dragon Bunny Music, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI (*Thomas Rhett, J.C.Bonetta, J.Byron, J.Free, J.K.Hindlin*) **3**

B

BACK IN THE SADDLE Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Show Me Your Titles LLC, BMI/Sony Countryside, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Hits Of 50 Egg Music, ASCAP/Braven Baker Music, ASCAP (*L.Combs, D.Ibell, J.D.Singleton*) **11**

BACKUP PLAN Little Louder Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Worktape Tunes, BMI/Songs By The Bell, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI (*T.Beathard, J.Bell, J.Sherwood*) **2**

BAGGAGE Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Feel Your Way Through Publishing, ASCAP/Big Music Machine, BMI/Big Ass Pie Of Dimes Music, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Soft Made Entertainment, BMI/The Piano Room, ASCAP/PW.C. Music Corp., SESAC/Handeary Songs, SESAC/Songs Of Rhythm House Black, SESAC (*K.Ballern, J.J.Dillon, K.Fairchild, H.Linsay, A.Vanderheyem*) **49**

BAR NONE Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI/Artist 101 Publishing Group, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Tape Room LLC, Series 1, ASCAP/Hunter Phelps Pub Designee, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Kwsy Publishing, BMI/Writersonthecon Publishing, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI (*B.J.Johnson, H.Phelps, L.Vaughan*) **8**

BETTER ME FOR YOU (BROWN EYES)

Songs From The Penalty Box, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Max Mcnown Music, BMI/Carver Music Publishing, ASCAP/Tunes Of King Pen, BMI/Ready Set Publishing, BMI (*M.Mcnown, J.Kenney, A.A.Suppessa, T.L.Rhimes*) **32**

BOTTLE ROCKETS Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Dagum Music, BMI/Songs Of Spirit II Nashville, ASCAP/FluidTunes II, ASCAP/Beats By Baby Brent, ASCAP/Burley Bishop Music, ASCAP/Songs Of Spirit Nashville Three, SESAC/Songs Of Fluid II, SESAC/Hop On The Buss, SESAC/Spirit Nashville Two, ASCAP/Fluid Tunes, ASCAP/Songs Of Spirit One Nashville, BMI/Tunes Of Fluid II, BMI/Heavy Lefty Music, BMI/Woah, ASCAP/Monica's Reluctance To Lob, ASCAP/EMI April Music, Inc., ASCAP (*S.C.McCreery, B.Anderson, D.George, J.Bussef, F.Rogers, K.Criswell, B.Hamrick, D.Pucker, M.Bryan, D.Felber, J.Sonfeld*) **6**

BURNED DOWN HEAVEN

Nothing Like You Heard Sound, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Rudy Rocks The USA, BMI/Sony Timber Publishing, SESAC/Cuts Like A Nite Music, SESAC (*C.McDaniel, J.M.Nite, L.Rhimes*) **51**

C

COWGIRL Tilverd Music Publishing Ltd., PRS/Sentric Music Ltd., PRS/Reservoir 416, BMI/33 Creative, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/NewManiac Music North, SOCAN/VaughnCo Music Publishing Inc., PRS/Cooking Vinyl Publishing Ltd., PRS/Thomas Frank Ridley Horsley Publishing Designee, PRS/6936 Music, BMI/Parmalee Music Publishing, BMI (*J.D.Lewis, D.Fanning, P.D.Norman, R.Jay, T.R.Horsley, M.Thomas, B.Knox, J.McSwain, S.Thomas*) **20**

D

DARLIN' Hunter Huff Publishing Designee, BMI/Ciaran Wilkie Publishing Designee, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Verse 2, BMI/Droptime Music, BMI/Chase Matthew Music Publishing, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Bridge 1 Music, BMI/Kobalt Music Services Ltd., PRS (*Chase Matthew, A.Maxwell, H.Huff, C.Wilkie, Jake Angel*) **12**

DON'T MIND IF I DO Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Back 40 Publishing International, BMI (*R.Green*) **22**

DRINK WITH YOU Super Big Music, ASCAP/Caliville Publishing, ASCAP/Concord Road, BMI/Rio Bravo Music, Inc., BMI/Off The Record, ASCAP/Sony Tunes, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP (*B.Young, J.Frasure, L.Lucca, E.L.Weisband*) **47**

E

EASY TO LOVE Hit Train Music, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Ben There Wrote That Publishing, BMI/Artist 101 Publishing Group, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI/HALPASS, ASCAP/Turntable Music Pub, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Rocky Creek James, ASCAP/Tape Room LLC, Series 1, ASCAP/Rocky Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/PINB Publishing, ASCAP (*D.Lynch, B.J.Johnson, J.R.Hall, H.Phelps, Z.Crowell*) **57**

ENDS OF THE EARTH Ty Myers Publishing Designee, BMI (*T.Myers*) **33**

F

THE FALL Sea Gayle Ale House Music, BMI/Bobby Pinson Publishing Designee, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Keep Chopin Publishing, BMI/Exit 183 Songs, BMI/Anthem Music Publishing II, ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP (*B.Pinson, R.Fulcher, J.S.Stover*) **37**

FAVORITE COUNTRY SONG Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Relative Red Music, BMI/Bigger Bendable Music, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Tape Room Music Round Two, BMI/FBRI Country Tunes, BMI/Myron Bailey Publishing, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP/Poggy's Picks, ASCAP (*M.W.Hardy, Z.Aband, B.Bailey, A.G.Gorley*) **26**

FRIDAY NIGHT HEARTBREAKER Concord Copyrights, BMI/Jomil 10 Music, BMI/Cascade Road Songs, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Tompkins Family Vacation, ASCAP/Big Music Machine, BMI/Big Ass Pie Of Dimes Music, BMI/I Finally Got Some Publishing, BMI/The Buffalo Catalogue, BMI (*J.Miller, C.Tompkins, J.Dillon, D.Ross, R.J.Huro*) **10**

G

GOLDEN CHILD Anthem Entertainment B, SOCAN/Iron Songbird Publishing B, BMI/Jackoby Songs II, BMI/Anthem Music Publishing I, BMI/Sweet Baby RuRu Songs, BMI/World For Aaron Eshuis Concord Alto CCI, ASCAP (*M.Patrick, J.Hyde, A.Eshuis*) **31**

GOOD NEWS Kreshendo, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/SZ Songs LLC, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Range Media Partners LLC, ASCAP/Essency Music Publishing, ASCAP/Torrey Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd., PRS/Paco Place Songs, BMI (*C.Chibovez, N.Sasthy, S.C.Cook, J.Torrey, M.R.Polack, ROMANS*) **1**

GOOD TIMES & TAN LINES Rio Bravo Music, Inc., BMI/Zach Top Music, BMI/Major Bob Productions, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Don't Do It, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI/50 Egg Music, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI (*Z.Top, C.Chamberlain, W.McCubbin*) **18**

H

HANDS OF TIME Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Longer And Louder Music, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Endurance Sierra Charlie, ASCAP/More Magic Carusoe Music, ASCAP (*E.Church, Scooter Carusoe*) **15**

HAPPEN TO ME Concord Copyrights, BMI/Big Hits N Gravy, BMI/Concord Tunes, SESAC/Card Tables Music, SESAC/Hand Your Hat Hits, SESAC/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/Big Ass Pie Of Dimes Music, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Family Farm Songs, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI (*R.Dickerson, C.LaCorte, J.J.Dillon, C.McGill, R.Hazard*) **4**

HARD FOUGHT HALLELUJAH Brandon Lake Music, ASCAP/Music By Elevation Worship Publishing, BMI/Be Essential Songs, BMI/Also Also Industries, BMI/Bailee's Ballads, BMI (*B.M.Lake, S.Furtick, B.W.Hastings, C.J.Brown, J.B.DeFord*) **40**

HEART OF STONE Bailee's Ballads, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Round Hill Songs III, ASCAP/Foxwood Entertainment Music Group Division, ASCAP/Big Blue Nation Music, ASCAP/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/God Made Most Played Most Paid Publishing, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP (*J.B.DeFord, Z.Crowell, B.Pendergrass, Sny Carter*) **7**

HEAVEN PASSING THROUGH Game Rooster Music, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI (*E.Felker*) **60**

HEAVENS TO BETSY Little Louder Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Well That Was Awkward Music, BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Tuckaway Music, BMI/Daddy's Home Music, BMI/Songs Of Hargett Valley, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI (*J.Dean, B.Davis, D.Williams*) **13**

HOUSE AGAIN Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Tuckaway Music, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Party Of 3 Songs, ASCAP/Southern Kid Music, ASCAP/Saxet HW Music, BMI (*H.Westbrook, N.A.Medley, D.Aley*) **17**

I

I AIN'T COMING BACK Honey Hole Publishing, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Bell Ear Publishing, ASCAP/Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Universal Music Works, GMR/Posty Publishing, GMR/Ern Dog Music, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Relative Music Group, BMI/Redneck Music, BMI (*M.C.Wallen, L.B.Bell, M.W.Hardy, A.R.Post, E.K.Smith, Charlie Handsome*) **35**

I DARE YOU Nick Jonas Publishing, BMI/PWZ Publishing House, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Shay Mooney Music, BMI/Seven Peaks Music, ASCAP/Seventeen Music, ASCAP (*N.J.Jonas, Tommy English, S.Mooney, D.Whitemore, J.C.*) **25**

I GOT BETTER Honey Hole Publishing, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Philippines 47 Songs, BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI/Ern Dog Music, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI (*M.C.Wallen, M.W.Hardy, C.McGill, B.Pendergrass, E.K.Smith, Charlie Handsome, J.Reeves*) **9**

IT WON'T BE LONG Big Machine, ASCAP/Liz Rose Music, LLC, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Songs Of Wild Cat Well Music, BMI/Sony Countryside, BMI (*G.Birge, J.A.Fox, C.McGill, T.Anderson*) **24**

I WISH YOU WOULD Tack Mack Tunes, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Concord Arch Songs, ASCAP/Big Loud Mountain Tunes, ASCAP/Boom Town Publishing, ASCAP/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Creative Pulse Music, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Cascade Road Songs, ASCAP/Tompkins Family Vacation, ASCAP (*M.E.Carpenter, J.Hutcherson, J.Moore, C.Tompkins*) **56**

J

JUST IN CASE Honey Hole Publishing, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Electric Feel Music, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Orange Music Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/John Byron Music, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/1317 Music, ASCAP/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Red Bandana Publishing, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Ern Dog Music, BMI (*M.C.Wallen, A.W.Bak, J.Byron, J.K.Hindlin, B.Pendergrass, J.P.Thompson, Charlie Handsome, E.K.Smith*) **5**

K

KID MYSELF Triple Play Music, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/I Tree Music, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Endurance Alpha, ASCAP/Total Schmidt Songs, ASCAP (*J.Morgan, T.R.Hubbard, J.M.Schmidt*) **50**

M

MAKING GOOD TIME WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Bird And Bean Music, ASCAP/Trevor's Advocate Publishing, ASCAP/Thelwede Dogwood, ASCAP/Universal Music Corp., ASCAP/Tuns And Chorus, ASCAP/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Smackshot Music, BMI/Katie In Paris, BMI/Music Of COT Outlander Music LP, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/South Of CT Publishing, BMI/Music Of Blackheart, BMI (*M.Ramsay, I.Rosen, B.F.Tursi, R.Copperman, Ross Ellis*) **53**

ME & A BEER Anthem Red Vinyl Music, BMI/Buckkilla Music, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP/Poggy's Picks, ASCAP/TDP Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI/Firebird Country Tunes, BMI/Oakdale Market Publishing, BMI (*C.Janson, T.Phillips, A.G.Gorley, A.Sheridan*) **39**

N

NEVER CALL AGAIN Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Good Luck Tunes, BMI/World For Colton Vanner, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Iea Farm Publishing, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Bridge 1 Music, BMI/Bada Bing Bada Boom Publishing, BMI (*G.Adcock, J.Taylor, C.Venner, J.Rauton*) **55**

NOT AT THIS PARTY Ben There Wrote That Publishing, BMI/Artist 101 Publishing Group, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Dashville Publishing House, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP/Poggy's Picks, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI (*A.D.Novotny, A.G.Gorley, B.J.Johnson*) **44**

NO TELLIN' Caroline Jones Publishing Designee, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Dark Bars Music, BMI/Smack Back Music, BMI/Music Of COT Outlander Music LP, BMI (*C.D.Jones, L.McLamb, C.Park*) **59**

P

PAPER UMBRELLAS Spirit Nashville One, BMI/Tunes Of Fluid, BMI/Rust And Chrome Music, BMI/Sony Countryside, BMI/DESTON SONG SLAYER, BMI/Marzia Music, BMI (*M.Criswell, D.Milligan*) **45**

S

SAME MOON Sony Countryside, BMI/Riser Ten Music, BMI/Universal Music Corp., ASCAP/Pauywood Music, ASCAP/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Chapter Blue, BMI/Songs Of Riser House, BMI/Down Boogie Music, BMI (*M.Tenpenny, P.D.Giovanni, D.Southerland, D.Wilson*) **42**

SEVENTEEN Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Idiot Circle Publishing LLC, BMI/Bridge 1 Music, BMI/Bada Bing Bada Boom Publishing, BMI/Sony Pop Music Publishing, GMR/Eldridge Publishing Co., GMR/Little Louder Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Songs Of Combustion Five, BMI (*K.Marloue, T.Beathard, A.Goodloe, J.Taylor, B.Springsteen*) **54**

SOMEWHERE OVER LAREDO Sony Countryside, BMI/Story Farmer, BMI/Songs Of Wild Cat Well Music, BMI/Songs Of Riser House, BMI/Down Boogie Music, BMI/Concord Sounds, ASCAP/Backbox Publishing, ASCAP/EMI Feist Catalog, Inc., ASCAP (*L.Wilson, T.Anderson, D.Wilson, A.Albert, E.Y.Harburg, H.Arlen*) **16**

A SONG TO SING Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Pink Dog Publishing, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/I Wrote These Songs, ASCAP/W.C. Music Corp., SESAC/NaynerPuddinPie Publishing, SESAC/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Songs For The Munch Music, BMI (*M.Lambert, C.Stapleton, J.Frasure, J.Fleener*) **38**

STAY COUNTRY OR DIE TRYIN' Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Relative Red Music, BMI/Cowboy Cuts Music, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Writersonthecon Publishing, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Chimney Pot Songs, ASCAP/Songs Of Madfun, ASCAP/Tape Room Music Round Two, BMI/Myron Bailey Publishing, BMI/FBRI Country Tunes, BMI (*D.Parker, G.Barnham, S.Ellis, B.Bailey*) **23**

STRAIGHT LINE Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/MARONA Music, BMI/Family Farm Songs, BMI/Thelwede Dogwood, ASCAP/Haw Records & Tapes, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Sir Greg Wells Songs, ASCAP/Kobalt Songs Music Publishing LLC, ASCAP (*K.Urban, C.McGill, J.Flowers, G.Wells*) **21**

T

TIL THE LAST ONE DIES Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Songs By Slip, ASCAP/Sony Timber Publishing, SESAC/M & M College Fund, SESAC/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/340 Songs, BMI (*B.Hayslip, S.Mosley, J.Walker*) **41**

TIME'S TICKING Double Barrel Ace Music, BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Wild Willy Music, ASCAP/Music Of The Corn, ASCAP/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Full Draw Publishing, BMI/Anthem Music Publishing II, ASCAP/Tunes From The Red Ant And Blue School, ASCAP (*J.Moore, W.L.Bundy, R.Montana, J.S.Stover*) **27**

U

USE ME Rio Bravo Music, Inc., BMI/Zach Top Music, BMI/Too Broke To Quit Music, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Anthem And Magazines Publishing, BMI (*Z.Top, C.Chamberlain, T.Nichols*) **52**

W

WEAK WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Ohiofrick Music, ASCAP/BMG Silver Songs, SESAC/Smokey Miller Music, SESAC/Sonic Style Music, SESAC/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/742 Sage Songs, BMI/4WarrensMusic, BMI (*C.Pooper, L.Miller, B.Warren, B.D.Warren*) **30**

WE CAN ALWAYS MOVE ON 8 Publishing, BMI/Young Guns Publishing, LLC, BMI/CTM Publishing, BMI/Combustion Music, BMI (*K.A.Fishman, T.Archer, M.Tyer*) **58**

WHAT HE'LL NEVER HAVE Curb Songs, ASCAP/Logan Robinson Publishing Designee, NS/Ricky Rowton Publishing Designee, NS/Robbie Gatlin Publishing Designee, NS (*D.Scott, L.Robinson, R.Rowton, R.Gatlin*) **34**

WHAT KINDA MAN Parkermac Publishing, BMI/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Abundantiam Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Harpeth Valley, BMI/VRUCKENROLLMUSIC, BMI/Music Of COT Outlander Music LP, BMI (*P.M.Collum, J.N.Spillman, N.Hemby*) **14**

WISH YOU WELL Big Music Machine, BMI/Works by Range Music Partners, BMI/Warbaner Publishing, BMI/Big Ass Pie Of Dimes Music, BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI (*G.Warburton, J.J.Dillon, B.Pendergrass, C.LaCorte*) **48**

WOULD IF I COULD Sony Acuff Rose Music, BMI (*D.Dillon, S.Ewing*) **36**

WRONG HEARTS BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Websinger Publishing, BMI/Lovelegend Songs, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Red Bandana Publishing, BMI/Super Big Music, ASCAP/Drac Drag Music, ASCAP/Round Hill Songs II, ASCAP (*P.C.Brust, C.Lucas, M.Dregstrom, J.Thompson*) **43**

Y

YOU HAD TO BE THERE Sony Timber Publishing, SESAC/Georgiamo Music, SESAC/Major Bob Music, Inc., ASCAP/Warner-Iameterlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Spokers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Redneck Resume Music, BMI/Tack Mack Tunes, BMI (*M.Moroney, B.Williams, M.Carpenter, M.E.Carpenter*) **29**

CODA

REWINDING
THE
COUNTRY
CHARTS

20 Years Ago

Brad Paisley Found ‘Time’ At No. 1
On Top Country Albums

In 2005, the singer-songwriter-guitarist owned the list for two weeks

When Labor Day weekend arrived in 2005, **Brad Paisley** worked his way into the lead position on *Billboard*’s Top Country Albums chart dated Sept. 3 for the first of two weeks with *Time Well Wasted*. Paisley punched in at the top of the list for the second of nine times in his career, the first occurring with 2003’s *Mud on the Tires*; the most recent came with 2017’s *Love and War*.

Time’s lead single, “Alcohol,” peaked at No. 4 on Hot Country Songs two weeks after the album’s chart debut. Its four subsequent singles went to No. 1: the **Dolly Parton** collaboration “When I Get Where I’m Going,” “The World,” “She’s Everything” and “Waitin’ On a Woman.” The double-platinum project, which was nominated for the best country

album Grammy Award, notably closed with “Cornography,” a risqué piece of audio theater featuring **The Kung Pao Buckaroos**: fellow Grand Ole Opry members Parton, **Little Jimmy Dickens**, **Bill Anderson** and **George Jones**. Lately, Paisley has spent time on another Opry project: contributing music to the forthcoming Hallmark movie *A Grand Ole Opry Christmas*. —TOM ROLAND

Paisley at the 2005 Academy of Country Music Awards in Las Vegas.

THIS WEEK					ARTIST		Title		CERT.	PEAK POST.
1	LAST WEEK	2 WEEKS AGO	WEEKS ON CHART	IMPRINT & NUMBER / DISTRIBUTING LABEL (PRICE)	#1	BRAD PAISLEY	Time Well Wasted	1		
2	1	1	3	WARNER BROS. 48794/WRN (18.98)	1 WK	ARISTA NASHVILLE G9642/RLG (18.98)	Fireflies	1		
3	3	2	47	LYRIC STREET 165049/HOLLYWOOD (18.98)		RASCAL FLATTS	Feels Like Today	2	1	
4	4	4	43	MERCURY 002172/UMGN (18.98)		GREATEST SUGARLAND	Twice The Speed Of Life		4	
5	2	5	48	CAPITOL 77469 (18.98)		KEITH URBAN	Be Here	2	1	
6	5	3	11			TOBY KEITH				