

billboard Country Update

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BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

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It's National Suicide Prevention Month: Why It Matters To Country Artists

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"My last words" are the first words on *Lost Ones*, the debut album by **Chase McDaniel**, which he released Sept. 19.

The opening song, "Before I Let You Go," addressed his father's death by overdose, a tragedy that some members of the family believe was a suicide. McDaniel also attempted to take his own life: He sat on a Louisville, Ky., bridge eight or 10 years ago, ready to free fall onto a slab of concrete, when a pair of arms pulled him from the ledge.

The road back was difficult. It took several years before he could talk comfortably about the episode; instead, he got reacquainted with his guitar and started writing obsessively — three or four songs a day — as he explored the dark spaces in his life. Slowly, the songs began to incorporate flashes of hope as he recognized he could reshape his stories. That describes most of the material on *Lost Ones*, appropriately arriving during National Suicide Prevention Month.

"I don't want to be out here on a soapbox encouraging other people to sink into the chaos," McDaniel says. "I want to be the lantern that goes into the dark and says, 'Hey, this way.'"

The chaos is familiar among country artists. **Naomi Judd**, **Tom T. Hall**, **Mindy McCready**, **Gary Stewart**, former **Oak Ridge Boy Steve Sanders** and **The Earl Scruggs Revue's Steve Scruggs** are among those who have taken their lives. **Johnny**

Cash, **Hank Williams Jr.**, **Willie Nelson**, **Chase Bryant**, **Ty Herndon** and **Bryan Martin** have all publicly disclosed they attempted suicide. And **Chely Wright** stopped short of an actual attempt in 2006 when she saw herself crying in a mirror with a gun in her mouth. The tears signaled to her that she still wanted to live. Like McDaniel, she started writing, though the format was an autobiography: the 2010 book *Like Me*, which opens with that dramatic scene.

"I've been so enriched in my life by sharing my breakdown," she says, "which I now affectionately refer to as my breakthrough."

The majority of the population considers suicide at some point in life, though often, those thoughts are a fleeting curiosity. More than 4% of Americans had serious suicidal thoughts during 2015-2019, according

to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), but the rate is higher among musicians. A study published by [Frontiers in Public Health](#) found that culture, media and the arts are among the five most at-risk career sectors; men in those occupations are 20% more likely than the general population to commit suicide, while women are 69% more likely.

That might surprise the casual observer. The industry romanticizes the life of an artist, but it's a difficult existence for which most aspirants are unprepared. Travel is physically



WRIGHT



McDANIEL

WRIGHT: COURTESY CHELY WRIGHT; McDANIEL: ROBBY STEVENS



taxing, and country artists — particularly in their early years on the national stage — tour incessantly. Every day is a new venue in a new city with a new set of local contacts and, perhaps, a new set of temptations. They're away from their family, and if they left town amid an unresolved argument or some other turmoil, they have plenty of time to think themselves into an emotional hole, particularly on days when fatigue consumes them.

"You've just given the whole reason why Porter's Call has existed for the last 24 years," says **Chad Karger**, co-executive director of a nonprofit in Franklin, Tenn., that provides emotional support for artists.

Porter's Call works with 700-1,000 artists a year, Karger estimates, helping them find ways to cope with unique vocational circumstances. That often includes redefining their relationship with their public persona. Younger performers, in particular, tend to glamorize fame, only to find that it's a hollow trap once they attain it. It's also fleeting, subject to the whims of a fickle audience and the evolving nature of the stylistic trends in entertainment. The artists who navigate their careers in the healthiest manner tend to see their work with greater purpose.

"Our founder, **Al Andrews**, he's famous for saying that the human soul is not made for fame," Karger notes. "Fame is not a good reason to do this. You're going to have to have a much more compelling 'why' to do the hard things in front of you."



Suzy Bogguss (right) was inducted into the Illinois Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Joliet on Sept. 14, becoming the first woman and first country artist to receive the honor. She's joined by her presenters: WGN Chicago hosts Steve King and Johnnie Putman.

Most hopeful artists, of course, never make it. They might be the most musically talented person in their city or region, but once they move to Nashville, they compete with scads of established talents for attention in an overstimulated media landscape. It typically takes several years to refine skills and make key connections — there's a reason Nashville is called a "10-year town" — though most days, it's hard to see the progress.

"Going home for the holidays as a person who hasn't made it yet, it's hard because your family asks you, 'How are things going? Didn't you get a deal yet? Didn't you get signed?'" recalls Wright, who now works as senior vp of corporate social responsibility and new market growth for ISS North America, a firm that designs workspaces and handles specialized

staffing for numerous corporate offices. "Your friends from high school are like, 'I guess you're not going to make it.' I mean, it's just so nebulous."

"Nebulous" is a good word for it. It's easier to determine in many traditional jobs when the work is done. A roofer knows the task is completed when the last shingle is in place, an accountant can take solace in having the books balanced, and a waiter considers the job finished when the bill is paid and the customer asks for a take-home box.

But the standards for a job well done are notably variable in the music business. **Miranda Lambert's** recording of "The House That Built Me" and **Billy Ray Cyrus' "Achy Breaky Heart"** are very different efforts, but both became career-defining hits for the artist. Knowing what will work is often difficult to predict, and even when a musician is successful, they frequently wish they could resing their songs, even though fans are studying every nuance as they learn to sing along.

"It's hard to know when you've done something good or when you haven't," McDaniel says. "It can kind of leave you in a constant state of anxiety and fear that, 'Hey, I've put all of my marbles into this. I have put my entire life on hold.' We put a lot on the line for something that might not work at the end of the day."

But it rarely works unless the artist is willing to work hard. Most baby acts are in constant motion on the way up: writing songs, connecting with fellow musicians, hustling for live gigs and often holding down a job or two to pay the bills. In recent years, do-it-yourself opportunities have grown, but that creates additional work. Independent artists are under pressure to post increasing amounts of music on multiple streaming channels and are also required to amass large volumes of followers on social media. So as they log 12-, 15- and 18-hour days on their job with no objective way to verify actual

progress, they struggle to maintain regular sleep patterns, making them more emotionally fragile. Throw in other issues — such as addictions, family problems or ongoing mental health challenges — and the pursuit can trigger depression, particularly if the artist is exploring dark topics in their writing.

For new or developing acts, it's a volatile stew.

"The touring artist right now is really struggling to fill rooms," Karger says. "So not only are they going away from their family as they walk out the door for the 200th time that year, but then they're facing this kind of looming threat of half-full rooms or undersold venues. If a person is struggling with a persistent underlying mental illness, then those factors come along and up the ante on the possibility of some really reckless and dangerous ideation and choices."

Many are loath to discuss suicidal thoughts or attempts publicly, so when an artist such as Wright does come forward, it can have a big impact.

"Have other artists shared with me how close they came?" she asks rhetorically. "I'd need five more hands to count up a lot of them, [including some] household names."

Fortunately, the skills an artist establishes during their journey can provide the key to bouncing back if — or when — they hit bottom emotionally.

"Most of the news we get is not the news we want to get, yet we press on," Wright says. "And there's an innate resilience that artists have to have. It's a great part of developing yourself."

That resilience is available once artists recognize the conditions that corrode their mental health. That includes turning away from fame and other external results as their motivation and instead focusing on their own creative enjoyment and the possibility of making a difference. Once they're able to retool their outlook, suicidal tendencies are usually reduced, if not entirely removed.

"That's the gold cord that keeps me going," McDaniel says. "You get in your head about all the superficial stuff — about being competitive or the [social media] views, the numbers and sales — and end of the day, it doesn't matter. Like, if you make a difference, that was the goal all along." ●

If you are struggling with your mental health, call or text 988 to connect with the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, which is available 24 hours a day.



Miranda Lambert performed in front of the Hearst Castle in San Simeon, Calif., on Sept. 13 when the Academy of Country Music hosted Wine & Country. From left: former ACM chairpersons Randy Bernard and Ebie McFarland, Lambert and ACM CEO Damon Whiteside.



Emmylou Harris inducted Steve Earle as the newest member of the Grand Ole Opry during the Sept. 17 edition of the WSM-AM Nashville show.

CHRIS HOLLO

STEVE MEHLER

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AIRPLAY
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ON THE CHARTS RUSS PENUELL russ.penuell@billboard.com

Jason Aldean Debuts: How Far Did ‘Goodbye’ Go?

Jason Aldean ties his highest debut on *Billboard*’s Country Airplay chart as “How Far Does a Goodbye Go” (Macon/Broken Bow) launches at No. 19. The single, co-written by Kurt Allison, John Edwards, Tully Kennedy and John Morgan, drew 10 million audience impressions in its first week (Sept. 12-18), according to Luminate. The start was powered in part by first-day spins on participating iHeartRadio stations.

Michael Knox produced the track, which will appear on Aldean’s 12th studio album, due in 2026. He has long been a central part of Aldean’s chart success and ranks among *Billboard*’s newly unveiled [Top Producers of the 21st Century on the Hot Country Songs chart](#). Knox has produced 10 Aldean-recorded No. 1s by that list’s measure.

“How Far Does a Goodbye Go” matches the No. 19 Country Airplay premieres of Aldean’s “Burnin’ It Down” in 2014 and “Take a Little Ride” in 2012. They went on to become two of his 25 career No. 1s. Meanwhile, his latest is the fifth song to debut in the top 20 in 2025, the most in a year since eight made such grand entrances in 2019.

DICKERSON DOUBLES UP Russell Dickerson spends a second week at No. 1 on Country Airplay with “Happen to Me” (Triple Tigers), which increased 2% to 32.2 million in audience in the tracking week. Among his five leaders, he equals his longest command, joining “Love You Like I Used To” in 2020 and “Yours” in 2018.

“Happen to Me”—which was co-written by Jessie Jo Dillon, Chris LaCorte and Chase McGill—hails from Dickerson’s fourth LP, *Famous Back Home*, which debuted at No. 34 on the Sept. 6-dated Top Country Albums chart. The crossover hit also holds at its No. 21 high on Adult Pop Airplay and rises to No. 38, a new best, on Pop Airplay. 🎵



BRIAN HIGBEE

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)
DARLIN' Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	+1.956
HEART OF STONE Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+1.913
BOTTLE ROCKETS Triple Tigers	Scotty McCreery & Hootie & The Blowfish	+1.327
COWGIRL Stoney Creek	Parmalee	+0.913
BAR NONE MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+0.843
IT WON'T BE LONG RECORDS Nashville	George Birge	+0.737
I GOT BETTER Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+0.692
HAPPEN TO ME Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	+0.605
BACK IN THE SADDLE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	+0.602
STAY COUNTRY OR DIE TRYIN' Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	+0.529

MOST INCREASED PLAYS

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN
HOW FAR DOES A GOODBYE GO Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+2432
HEART OF STONE Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+440
DARLIN' Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	+348
BACK IN THE SADDLE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	+342
BOTTLE ROCKETS Triple Tigers	Scotty McCreery & Hootie & The Blowfish	+326
HOUSE AGAIN River House/Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Hudson Westbrook	+150
BAR NONE MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+137
STAY COUNTRY OR DIE TRYIN' Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	+130
6 MONTHS LATER Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville	Megan Moroney	+129
TIME'S TICKING Valory	Justin Moore	+113

RECURRENTS

THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	JUST IN CASE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	20.589
2	HIGH ROAD YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel & Jessie Murph	15.238
3	I'M THE PROBLEM Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	15.019
4	THIS HEART Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville	Corey Kent	13.923
5	BACKUP PLAN Atlantic/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Bailey Zimmerman & Luke Combs	10.893
6	LIAR Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	10.716
7	HOMETOWN HOME BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	10.531
8	PARK Hubbard House/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	10.295
9	POUR ME A DRINK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Post Malone Featuring Blake Shelton	10.033
10	A BAR SONG (TIPSY) American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	8.269



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 18, 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	CHEATIN' ON MY HONKY TONK (WMN) ★★ 1 Weeks at 1 ★★	Randall King / Braxton Keith	1616	71	11	15	13	LONELY OVER YOU (Warner Music Nashville)	William Beckmann	1183	153
2	3	17	COWGIRLS RIDE (LuckySky Music)	Tori Martin	1569	63	12	12	13	TWO HANDS (Independent)	Pat Green and Corey Kent	1166	25
3	4	23	LAST COWBOY STANDING (Independent)	David Adam Byrnes	1528	54	13	13	25	IF IT RAINS TODAY (Independent)	Matt Castillo	1123	2
4	5	20	IT AINT THE WHISKEY (Big Loud)	Jake Worthington	1455	-5	14	16	14	BURN (RedPlay Media)	Guy Vincent	1092	116
5	6	25	ARE YOU A REAL COWBOY (Independent)	Amanda Kate Ferris	1339	25	15	14	23	COUNTY FAIR (Independent)	James Robert Webb	1073	-1
6	8	13	WEATHERMAN (River House)	Hudson Westbrook	1329	45	16	17	15	UNINVITED GUEST (Independent)	Casey Chesnutt	998	32
7	7	22	ADELINE (Independent)	Shane Smith & The Saints	1322	23	17	19	14	BORN RUNNIN OUTTA TIME (Sony Music Group)	Lukas Nelson	981	57
8	9	13	SWEET (Independent)	Bubba Westly	1316	34	18	18	16	WATCH ME GO (Mirror Ball Records)	Caleb Young	971	33
9	10	10	WHEN SHE KISSED ME (Almost Country)	Casey Donahew	1221	65	19	20	15	BAD REPUTATION (River House)	Grant Gilbert and Hudson Westbrook	938	112
10	11	15	I MISS US (RedPlay Media)	Trevor Underwood	1193	40	20	21	13	THE OTHERS (Late August Records)	Cody Jinks	884	95

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	27	HAPPEN TO ME Triple Tigers ★★ No. 1 (2 Weeks) ★★	Russell Dickerson	32.181	+0.605	8905	65	1
2	3	25	HEART OF STONE Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	28.032	+1.913	7737	440	2
3	4	19	BOTTLE ROCKETS Triple Tigers Scotty McCreery & Hootie & The Blowfish		26.648	+1.327	7557	326	3
4	2	34	GOOD NEWS American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	26.282	-2.640	6292	-1029	6
5	6	13	I GOT BETTER Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	22.425	+0.692	6564	83	4
6	7	26	BAR NONE MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	22.187	+0.843	6504	137	5
7	5	31	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	22.052	-1.193	5642	-270	9
8	8	8	BACK IN THE SADDLE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	19.708	+0.602	5710	342	7
9	10	42	DARLIN' Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	19.425	+1.956	5681	348	8
10	9	54	FRIDAY NIGHT HEARTBREAKER Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Jon Pardi	16.806	-0.753	5013	-194	10
11	11	52	HEAVENSTO BETSY Big Machine	Jackson Dean	14.994	-0.181	4553	-20	11
12	12	53	WHAT KINDA MAN MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	12.977	+0.069	3889	-18	14
13	13	17	SOMEWHERE OVER LAREDO Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson	12.657	-0.198	4246	-100	12
14	14	27	HANDS OF TIME BigEC/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Eric Church	11.407	-0.209	4066	-20	13
15	15	26	HOUSE AGAIN River House/Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Hudson Westbrook	11.076	+0.233	3482	150	15
16	17	28	3,2,1 Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/EMI Nashville/Mercury/Republic/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	10.995	+0.515	3439	37	16
17	18	37	COWGIRL Stoney Creek	Parmalee	10.658	+0.913	2940	79	18
18	16	15	GOOD TIMES & TAN LINES Leo33	Zach Top	10.504	-0.195	3326	-55	17
19	NEW		HOW FAR DOES A GOODBYE GO Macon/Broken Bow ★★ Hot Shot Debut /Most Increased Audience/Breaker ★★	Jason Aldean	9.972	+9.965	2435	2432	25
20	19	10	DON'T MIND IF I DO Nashville Harbor	Riley Green Featuring Ella Langley	8.755	-0.024	2752	57	20
21	20	36	STRAIGHT LINE Hit Red/Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Keith Urban	8.130	+0.110	2888	17	19
22	21	34	IT WON'T BE LONG RECORDS Nashville	George Birge	7.709	+0.737	2721	90	21
23	22	23	FAVORITE COUNTRY SONG Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	HARDY	7.373	+0.494	2456	102	24
24	23	33	I DARE YOU Big Machine	Rascal Flatts & Jonas Brothers	6.886	+0.067	2541	45	22
25	25	17	STAY COUNTRY OR DIE TRYIN' Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	6.845	+0.529	2476	130	23
26	24	11	6 MONTHS LATER Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville	Megan Moroney	6.652	+0.278	2217	129	26
27	26	39	TIME'S TICKING Valory	Justin Moore	6.479	+0.301	2113	113	27
28	27	19	YOU HADTO BETHERE Blue Chair/Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville	Megan Moroney & Kenny Chesney	5.505	-0.307	2070	-136	28
29	28	32	BETTER ME FOR YOU (BROWN EYES) Fugitive Recordings/Magnolia Music	Max McNown	4.992	-0.214	1932	14	30
30	29	41	GOLDEN CHILD Riser House	Meghan Patrick	4.771	-0.372	1827	-46	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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 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	30	21	WHAT HE'LL NEVER HAVE Curb	Dylan Scott	4.623	+0.022	2029	69	29
32	31	29	ENDS OF THE EARTH RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Ty Myers	4.553	+0.105	1230	-1	38
33	32	13	WEAK Valory	Preston Cooper	4.058	-0.361	1471	-90	35
34	34	10	A SONG TO SING Vanner/Republic/Big Loud	Miranda Lambert & Chris Stapleton	3.992	-0.057	1569	-10	33
35	35	22	I AIN'T COMING BACK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Post Malone	3.989	+0.132	1133	38	41
36	33	44	WOULD IF I COULD Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	ERNEST	3.975	-0.115	1678	-19	32
37	36	21	THE FALL CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	3.711	-0.125	1077	-7	42
38	37	23	HARD FOUGHT HALLELUJAH Brandon Lake/Essential/Lyric Ridge	Brandon Lake X Jelly Roll	3.624	+0.212	1169	-24	40
39	38	16	ME & A BEER Harpeth 60	Chris Janson	3.077	-0.265	1375	-18	36
40	39	24	TIL THE LAST ONE DIES Boss Moves/Black River	Chris Young	3.036	+0.110	1514	11	34
41	40	17	SAME MOON Riser House/Columbia Nashville	Mitchell Tenpenny	2.537	-0.026	1070	-63	43
42	42	28	WISH YOU WELL Music Soup/Interscope/MCA Nashville	Vincent Mason	2.276	+0.263	1209	48	39
43	41	14	WRONG HEARTS BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	2.121	-0.033	977	-53	46
44	44	10	2 PAIR Zone 4/RCA Nashville	Kane Brown	1.884	-0.046	742	-42	51
45	45	25	NOT AT THIS PARTY VERSION III/Warner/WAR	Dasha	1.817	+0.016	1041	-50	44
46	43	18	PAPER UMBRELLAS McGraw/Big Machine	Tim McGraw Featuring Parker McCollum	1.755	-0.247	1320	-88	37
47	46	17	BAGGAGE Black River	Kelsea Ballerini	1.680	-0.020	1025	31	45
48	48	8	NEVER CALL AGAIN Thrivin Here/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Gavin Adcock	1.587	+0.161	857	12	48
49	47	15	DRINK WITH YOU Nashville Harbor	Brett Young	1.424	-0.068	836	-52	49
50	49	11	KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan	1.408	+0.014	883	37	47
51	51	6	MAKING GOOD TIME Three Up Three Down/Columbia Nashville	Old Dominion	1.374	+0.106	726	-7	52
52	50	18	BURNED DOWN HEAVEN Big Machine	Chase McDaniel	1.319	-0.008	664	12	54
53	53	10	EASY TO LOVE Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch	1.089	+0.038	722	-3	53
54	57	11	AMEN American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll	1.053	+0.249	526	90	59
55	54	8	I WISH YOU WOULD Valory	Mackenzie Carpenter Featuring Midland	1.032	-0.019	663	-7	55
56	55	5	SEVENTEEN Columbia Nashville	Kameron Marlowe	1.022	-0.024	580	20	58
57	52	13	USE ME Leo33	Zach Top	0.935	-0.273	82	-5	-
58	58	7	NO TELLIN' True To The Song/Nashville Harbor	Caroline Jones	0.914	+0.113	753	24	50
59	59	2	ALL MY EXES Mercury/Big Loud	Lauren Alaina Featuring Chase Matthew	0.866	+0.098	495	51	60
60	NEW		AIN'T A BAD LIFE Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett Featuring Jordan Davis	0.756	+0.160	197	75	-



Jessie Murph performed an acoustic set and engaged in a conversation on Sept. 15 in an event hosted by ASCAP at Nashville's Analog at Hutton Hotel. From left: ASCAP Nashville vp Mike Sistad and assistant vp Evyn Mustoe, Murph and ASCAP Nashville manager Emilia James and associate director Duane Hobson.



Sam Hunt caught up with Audacy regional brand manager/WUSN Chicago PD Marci Braun (left) when he performed Sept. 12 at the McHenry Music Festival at Petersen Park in McHenry, Ill. With them is MCA Nashville director of Midwest promotion Donna Passuntino.

billboard



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.

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

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

Hockey Hall of Fame member Shea Weber (right) introduced Josh Ross before he performed "Hate How You Look" on Sept. 13 on the Canadian Country Music Awards in Kelowna, British Columbia, where he was named entertainer of the year.

SONGWRITER JAMES DIES IN CRASH

Brett James, a 2020 inductee in the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, died Sept. 18 in a North Carolina plane crash that claimed the lives of all three passengers.

James, 57, came to Music City originally as an artist, but he rode a strong melodic flare and a passionate focus on writing to an impressive string of hits, including the **Carrie Underwood** titles "Jesus, Take the Wheel" and "Cowboy Casanova," **Dierks Bentley's** "I Hold On," **Jason Aldean's** "The Truth," **Martina McBride's** "Blessed" and **Rascal Flatts' "Love You Out Loud."** He also penned multiple **Kenny Chesney** titles, including "Keg in the Closet" and the **Uncle Kracker** collaboration "When the Sun Goes Down."

James capitalized on his opportunity in the business, producing music by **Kip Moore**, **Josh Gracin**, **Jessica Simpson** and **Danielle Bradbery**, and forming the Cornman Music publishing company. The firm's website currently lists eight writers, including Moore, **Lydia Vaughan** ("If I Didn't Love You"), **Will Bundy** ("Brown Eyes Baby") and **Graham Barham** ("Devil You Know").

RADIO & RECORDS®

MCA added senior director of media **Connor Hunt**, previously employed as Warner director of media and strategic development ... BMG announced it acquired the recorded-music rights for **Jason Aldean's** early works from nearly two dozen other artists and songwriters, bringing the singer's complete discography under BMG's umbrella. The agreements cover his albums released between 2005-2019 ... Artist-writer **Coleman Jennings** signed a recording deal with Big Loud Texas and Mercury. His first track in the agreement — "Head Spinning," produced by **Dave Cobb** (**Chris Stapleton**, **Brandi Carlile**) — was released Sept. 19 ... Leo33 welcomed Denver-bred six-piece act **Clay Street Unit** to the roster. Band members include singer-guitarist **Sam Walker**, mandolinist **Scottie Bolin**, bassist **Jack Kotarba**, banjoist **Jack Cline**, steel guitarist **Brad Larrison** and drummer **Brendan Lamb** ... Advantage Music Research launched a new music-testing product, Scorecard Plus With Sean Ross, featuring audience metrics and insights from the Ross On Radio founder ... Zimmer Midwest launched **KZMO** Springfield, Mo., blending mainstream country with select alternative and red-dirt titles. Cluster operations manager **Chris Kennedy** is PD of the new signal ... Country Radio Broadcasters renewed its leadership with **Kurt Johnson**, of Townsquare Media, returning as president. Three executives were newly elected to three-year board terms: **Ashley Layfield**, **WFUS** Tampa; **Jordan Pettit**, Grand Ole Opry; and **Stacy Waugh**, Big Loud. Go [here](#) for the full board list ... SiriusXM will introduce a limited-run **Taylor Swift** listening option, Taylor's Channel 13, beginning Sept. 20, 13 days ahead of the release date for her next album, *The Life of a Showgirl* ... **Devon "Dee" Doers** was promoted to iHeartMedia MidNorth

Region area president from iHeartMedia/Minneapolis vp of sales, RadioInk.com reported. The new position gives Doers oversight of stations in Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin, with 11 country outlets among them in eight markets, including **KEYY** Minneapolis; **KQDY** and **KBMR** Bismarck, N.D.; and **WMIL** Milwaukee ... Two country stations have made staff moves in Portland, Ore., according to RadioInsight.com. **Danny Dwyer** will join the on-air team at **KWJJ** on Sept. 26, though the station is already promoting his arrival with a travel contest that pairs him with recording artist **Shane Profitt**. Dwyer was formerly assistant PD at rival **KUPL**. Meanwhile, **KUPL** promoted **Dylan Salisbury** to content director after 20 months in the assistant director role ... **KILT** Houston music director/afternoon host **Nick Russo** added the afternoon shift at **WDAF** Kansas City, RadioInsight.com reported ... Country Radio Broadcasters is accepting applications for three Lisa McKay Women in Radio Scholarships through Oct. 13, with the recipients receiving travel and accommodations for the Country Radio Seminar in March 2026. Go [here](#) to apply.

'ROUND THE ROW

HARDY signed a publishing deal with Spirit Music Nashville in an agreement that also includes Spirit's purchase of his ownership in select songs from his existing catalog. **HARDY** remains a partner in Relative Music Group ... River House and Sony Music Publishing Nashville reached a publishing deal with **Spencer Jordan** ... Artist-writer **Drew Parker** ("Forever After All," "Home-made") announced he is shifting his career focus from country to Christian music ... **Billy Strings** claimed his fourth entertainer of the year trophy during the International Bluegrass Music Association's 36th annual IBMA Bluegrass Music Awards on Sept. 18 in Chattanooga, Tenn. **Jason Carter** and **Michael Cleveland** were double winners at the ceremony. Go [here](#) for the full list ... **Madison Hughes** won best country artist behind her song "I Deserve a Drink" during the Unsigned Only Music Awards, announced Sept. 17. Go [here](#) for the complete rundown ... FEMco partners with She Is Music for its monthly showcase on Oct. 1 at Nashville's Anzie Blue, featuring **Ruby Amanfu**, **Jessie Baylin**, **Angie K**, **Eliana** and **Corrina** ... **Mitchell Tenpenny's** 10Penny Fund and ACM Lifting Lives are partnering to provide 10 grants of \$10,000 to support music industry members impacted by cancer. Go [here](#) for details ... Songwriter **Bobby Hart** died Sept. 17, leaving an enviable catalog of hits. Best known for his work with **Tommy Boyce** writing for **The Monkees**, the duo was responsible for "Last Train to Clarksville," among others. Hart also earned country hits as a songwriter when **Johnny Duncan** and **Janie Fricke** covered the **Jay & The Americans** single "Come a Little Bit Closer" and when **Lane Brody** recorded "Over You" for the movie *Tender Mercies* ... Former Nashville publicist **Kim Fowler**, 58, died Sept. 18 following a bout with early-onset dementia. She handled media during her career with Mercury, Sugar Hill and Rising Tide, representing recordings by **Dolly Parton**, **Nickel Creek** and **Shania Twain**, among others. ●



Shaboozey (left) performed as **EMPIRE** celebrated its 15th anniversary with a Sept. 13 concert at Civic Center Plaza in San Francisco. **EMPIRE** founder/CEO Ghazi surprised him with an RIAA-certified diamond plaque for "A Bar Song (Tipsy)."

ISSUE DATE
10/25/25



LIVE NATION®



#LIVESUMMIT

NOVEMBER 3

BillboardLiveMusicSummit.com

billboard LIVE MUSIC 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

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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*) **44**

3,2,1 Concord Copyrights, BMI/Jomil 10 Music, BMI/Native Notes Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/SugarPlum Songs, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP (*J.Miller, S.Overstreet, J.Reynolds*) **16**

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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/Kwsay Publishing, BMI/Writersonthehorn Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI (*B.J.Johnson, H.Phelps, L.Vaughan*) **6**

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WEAK WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Ohiofrick Music, ASCAP/BMG Silver Songs, SESAC/Smokefly Miller Music, SESAC/Sonic Style Music, SESAC/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/742 Sage Songs, BMI/4WarrensMusic, BMI (*P.Coopar, L.Miller, B.Warren, B.D.Warren*) **33**

WHAT HE'LL NEVER HAVE Curb Songs, ASCAP/Robinson Publishing Designee, NS/Ricky Rowton Publishing Designee, NS/Robbie Gatlin Publishing Designee, NS (*D.Scott, L.Robinson, R.Rowton, R.Gatlin*) **31**

WHAT KINDA MAN Parkermac Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Abundantiam Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Harpeth Valley, BMI/WRUCKENROLLMUSIC, BMI/Music Of C1M Outlander Music LP, BMI (*P.M.Collum, J.N.Spillman, N.Hembry*) **12**

WISH YOU WELL Big Music Machine, BMI/Works by Range Music Partners, BMI/Warbaner Publishing, BMI/Big Ass Pile Of Dimes Music, BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI (*G.Warburton, J.J.Dillon, B.Pendergrass, C.LaCorte*) **42**

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/Drag Drag Music, ASCAP/Round Hill Songs II, ASCAP (*P.C.Brust, C.Lucas, M.Dragstrem, J.Thompson*) **43**

Y

YOU HAD TO BE THERE Sony Timber Publishing, SESAC/Georgiano Music, SESAC/Major Bob Music, Inc., ASCAP/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Speakers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Redneck Resume Music, BMI/Tack Mack Tunes, BMI (*M.Moroney, B.Williams, M.Carpenter, M.E.Carpenter*) **28**

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TOP BUSINESS MANAGERS

On Nov. 15, *Billboard* will showcase the most in-demand business managers, whose financial expertise ensures their music industry clients invest (and spend) their money wisely.

Making money in the music industry is hard enough for artists and executives, which is why they turn to an elite few to help with financial profit and investment.

As a result of the rise of branding deals and streaming services, the task of managing artist income has become more complicated than ever, making the role of a music business manager invaluable.

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ISSUE DATE 11/15 | AD CLOSE 11/4 | MATERIALS DUE 11/6

CODA

REWINDING
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CHARTS

10 Years Ago

Dustin Lynch Had A Hell Of A Ride With ‘Hell Of A Night’

In 2015, the single put a hard-rock spin on the singer’s core country sound

Dustin Lynch went to No. 2 when he landed his first single on a *Billboard* chart with his heavenly titled 2012 release, “Cowboys & Angels.” But he made it to the top by going to “Hell.”

Lynch’s “Hell of a Night” hit No. 1 on the Country Airplay list dated Sept. 19, 2015, marking his second of nine appearances at the summit. In contrast

with the traditional-country vibe of “Angels,” “Hell” employs layers of power chords built around a buzzy guitar sound conceived by songwriter Zach Crowell, who co-penned it in 2013 with Adam Sanders and Jaron Boyer.

Lynch first caught “Hell” when Sanders played the demo after a show in Syracuse, N.Y. Producer Mickey Jack Cones chipped in distinctive chorus harmonies

when they recorded it weeks later, in January 2014.

Lynch earned his first Country Airplay No. 1 with “Where It’s At (Yep, Yep)” on Sept. 27, 2014, and most recently topped the chart on Sept. 21, 2024, with the Jelly Roll collaboration “Chevrolet.” Lynch’s latest single, “Easy To Love,” is No. 53 on the list.

—TOM ROLAND

Lynch performed at New York’s Irving Plaza in 2015.



WEEK	WEEK	CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
1	2	44	HELL OF A NIGHT Broken Bow ★★ No. 1 (1 week) ★★	Dustin Lynch	48.236	+0.996	8239	390	1
2	3	22	CRASH AND BURN Valory	Thomas Rhett	46.400	+1.290	7634	243	2
3	5	13	JOHN COUGAR, JOHN DEERE, JOHN 3:16 Hit Red/Capitol Nashville	Keith Urban	43.098	+2.461	7224	263	4
4	4	19	BUY ME A BOAT Warner Bros./WAR	Chris Janson	42.328	+0.728	7370	200	3
5	1	31	HOUSE PARTY MCA Nashville	Sam Hunt	41.248	-6.070	6963	-1112	5
6	3	12	SAVE IT FOR A RAINY DAY Blue Chair/Columbia Nashville	Kenny Chesney	40.011	-1.322	6623	-640	6