

billboard Country Update

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BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

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Country Has More Women In The Pipeline: A Look At The New Acts For Q3, Q4

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Coincidence or a reaction to the trend?

Each of the top 5 singles on the Hot Country Songs chart dated July 11 are by female artists, or a female-male collaboration. And 11 of the top 20 fit that description, too.

With women suddenly getting equal treatment in the top layers of the country chart, they also make up almost half of the genre's new solo artists putting out key inaugural products in the next six months. At least 20 acts have their debut album or EP on the way in the last half of 2026, and of the 16 solo performers, seven (44%) are females. They include a range of acts: **BELLES** filters memorable hooks through numerous styles, **Ava Claire** is sonically unpredictable, **Mary Kutner** explores difficult subject matter and **Lakelin Lemmings** brings a youthful approach to solid country sonics.

Here's a look at the acts who have milestone first releases from July 1 through Dec. 31:

• **BELLES** (East Music Row) — How many acts have **Dolly Parton** on their first album? Try Omaha-raised **BELLES**. She's

also got a penetrating voice, melodic command, strong hooks and a revisionist take on country's established textures. The album arrives in October.

• **Ava Claire** (3686) — A Belmont student, Claire's music veers from the folkie "Salt Mine" to the almost-experimental, banjo pop-rock of "The Sound," with those wide-ranging textures presenting her as an emotional chameleon. Her debut EP, *Honestly*, is in the works.

• **The Creekers** (Warner Nashville) — The six-piece Eastern Kentucky ensemble is a product of its place. **Bill Monroe** bluegrass, **Tom T. Hall** simplicity and **Chris Stapleton** moodiness are all discernible in the sound. Their first major-label album is targeted for September.

• **Colton Dawson** (Warner Nashville) — The influence of '90s country isn't over. Dawson is the latest example, playing amped-up honky tonk and tender ballads that evince **Garth Brooks**, **Doug Stone** and **Joe Diffie**. His self-titled debut album is expected this fall.

• **Thomas Edwards** (Warner Nashville) — Originally planned for the first half of 2026, Edwards' inaugural EP is now on the



CLAIRE



BELLES



KUTTER

BELLES (BY SHERVIN LAINEZ), KUTTER (BY SHANNON FLACK)

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way in the second half. The high-school football player scores with blue-eyed soul, rambunctious boogie and a glimpse of deeper humanity.

• **Jacob Hackworth** (MCA/Goat Island Sound) — Hackworth has already written hits for **Corey Kent**, **Tucker Wetmore** and **Bailey Zimmerman**, but his voice is so admirably smooth, he deserves his own spotlight. His *What Took You So Long* EP arrives in September.

• **Zach John King** (Sony Music Nashville) — King co-wrote his entire debut album, *I'm What You Get*, expected Aug. 28. Current single "Get to Drinkin'," top 20 on Country Airplay, exemplifies his knack for crisply-cadenced melodies. He's capable of sensitivity, too.

• **Erin Kinsey** (199) — Kinsey's clear tone and regional enunciation shadow fellow Texan **Miranda Lambert**, though those qualities are conveyed more innocently. Her first album — *Suede*, due Aug. 7 — includes a raw harmonic blend with **Dylan Marlowe** in "Say I'm Wrong."

• **Kinsley** (MCA) — She's lived in three Southern states and brings a gritty, dramatic vocal state to her first EP, *Learn to Live*, this September. There's a crack in her delivery that houses earthy experiences, ready to appear during her performances.

• **Mary Kutter** (BBR Music Group/BMG Nashville) — Born in Kentucky's bourbon belt, Kutter distills the hard side of life with unforgiving intensity, capturing harsh extremes with cutting lyrics and a vocal delivery to match. Expect a 10-song introductory album this fall.

• **Lakelin Lemmings** (Quartz Hill) — A West Tennessee girl with big ambitions, Lemmings is sometimes airy, sometimes commanding, using pedal steel and baritone guitar to underscore her country upbringing. Her 16-track, eponymous debut album is slated for a July 24 release.

• **Cody Lohden** (DeVile/Big Loud) — The former Kentucky-bred first responder got a positive response from **ERNEST** after making noise on TikTok. A little Southern rock, modern production and a commanding tone create commercial potential, with his initial label project in process.

• **Marfa** (Big Machine/ASCEND) — The duo, **Bryce Menchaca** and **Kellen Wall**, specializes in elaborate harmonies, but its music ranges from **Everly Brothers**-like folk-pop to buzzy Americana-rock. A debut EP is likely this fall, highlighting music that's daring, unpretentious and commercially accessible.

• **Wyatt McCubbin** (MCA/Lucille) — Rural Ohio native McCubbin co-wrote **Zach Top**'s "Sounds Like the Radio" and weaves snarling guitars into songs about heartland America. Following his May 12 Grand Ole Opry debut, his first, **Dave Cobb**-produced album, *650*, releases in October.

• **Slater Nalley** (Warner Nashville/Warner) — Nalley made an emotional impression on *American Idol*, with a worldly vocal sound and a compassionate heart on display in his self-penned audition piece. The Georgian's blues-tinged voice is the centerpiece of an August debut EP.

• **Blake Proehl** (MCA) — *American Idol* viewers will remember Proehl as an ex-Minnesota Viking with admirable stage presence. With a first EP on the way in October, he appears focused on mid- to uptempo sing-alongs with sunny dispositions and guy-next-door sonics.

• **Ryan and Rory** (BBR Music Group/BMG Nashville) — For a good time, call **Ryan Follesè** and **Rory Van Zak**. The duo puts a positive spin even on difficult scenarios — including loneliness, rejection and mortality — in its first album, coming this fall.

• **Landon Smith** (MCA/Lucille) — "I retired my inner child at 17/And I hope that he's alright." A 20-something Georgian, Smith delivers quirky, insightful, guitar-driven folk/country with urgency. His inner child would, quite likely, approve. Smith's first full album arrives in September.

• **Thelma & James** (Big Loud) — Recently nominated for duo of the year by the Academy of Country Music, the married team — **Jake Etheridge** and **MacKenzie Porter** — tends to place dramatic harmonies over austere productions. A debut album is under construction.

• **Kat Velasco** (KV Music) — Velasco's country is shaded by 1980s and '90s pop-rock, leaning on darker textures. She's released five songs thus far for an October album, *Cowgirl Complex*, including melodically compact "Show Pony" and vulnerable "I Should Quit Drinking." ●



LOCASH met **Dale Earnhardt Jr.** when the duo served as grand marshals for NASCAR's eero 400 at Chicagoland Speedway on July 5 in Joliet, Ill. Flanking Earnhardt are LOCASH members **Preston Brust** (left) and **Chris Lucas**.



Cody Johnson chatted with **Apple Music Country** host **Kelleigh Bannen** during the June 26 episode of *The Kelleigh Bannen Show*.



Syndicated *Taste of Country Nights* host **Evan Paul** (left) welcomed **Steve Wariner** on the July 8 edition of the show to discuss "The Flip Side: Paintings by Steve Wariner," an exhibit at the Monthaven Arts & Cultural Center in Tennessee.

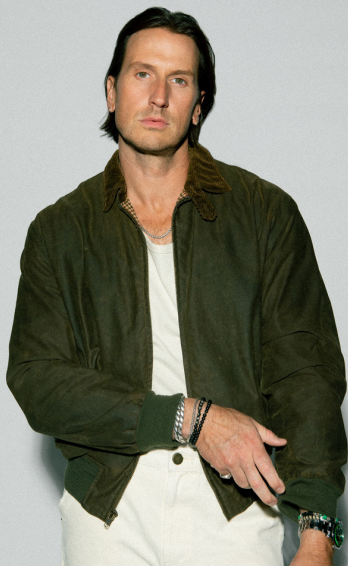


Jon Pardi visited with Cincinnati-area radio staff when he played a post-game show after a July 8 Reds game at Great American Ballpark. From left: WNNF Cincinnati PD **Chris Elliott**, WUBE Cincinnati director of branding and content **Grover Collins**, former WAMZ Louisville personality **Rachel Elliott**, Pardi, Capitol Nashville director of Northeast promotion **Annie Sandor** and WUBE host "Big Dave" **Chandler**.

JESSE DEFLOIRIO

EVAN HARNEY

RUSSELL DICKERSON
WORTH YOUR WILD
27



SCOTTY MCCREERY
NEW ALBUM
"15"
COMING
JULY 17



IAN MUNSICK
LOVE IS BLIND
48



THE SUMMER OF TRIPLE TIGERS

& AKANDO MUSIC

[CLICK HERE FOR THE OFFICIAL PLAYLIST](#)

CHRIS YOUNG
I DIDN'T COME
HERE TO LEAVE
52



ELLA LANGLEY & MORGAN WALLEN
I CAN'T LOVE
YOU ANYMORE
3



ELLA LANGLEY
LOVING LIFE AGAIN
53 + HOT SHOT DEBUT

SHANE PROFITT
LONG LIVE COUNTRY
30



TYLER NANCE
KEEPS ME SANE
50



billboardCountry Airplay

AIRPLAY
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ON THE CHARTS RUSS PENUELL

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More To ‘Tell’: Aldean Notches Newest Multiweek No. 1

Jason Aldean’s “Don’t Tell on Me” (Macon/Broken Bow), his 50th Country Airplay entry and 27th No. 1, spends a second week atop the chart dated July 18, rising 2% to 31.6 million audience impressions July 3-9, according to Luminate. It marks his first multiweek leader since “Trouble with a Heartbreak” ruled for three weeks in May 2022, and his 13th career No. 1 of two weeks or more.

Written by Kurt Allison, Tully Kennedy, John Morgan and Lydia Vaughan, “Don’t Tell on Me” launched at No. 21 in March, the third-highest debut of Aldean’s career. Only “Take a Little Ride,” “Burnin’ It Down,” “How Far Does a Goodbye Go” and the Carrie Underwood duet “If I Didn’t Love You” opened higher; the first three debuted at No. 19, while the lattermost started at No. 20. All five songs ultimately reached No. 1.

With “Don’t Tell on Me,” Aldean moved into sole possession of the fourth-most No. 1s in Country Airplay’s 36-year history, breaking a tie with Luke Bryan, Alan Jackson and George Strait. Kenny Chesney leads all acts with 33, followed by Blake Shelton (30) and Tim McGraw (29).

Notably, Aldean has charted fewer Country Airplay titles than the three acts ahead of him, each of whom has a longer history on the ranking. With 27 of 50 appearances resulting in chart-topping finishes, his 54% success rate paces the acts with the four highest No. 1 totals. He also owns the best top 10 rate among that group, with 42 of his 50 titles, or 84%, having reached the tier.

‘LIFE’ GOES ON Elsewhere on Country Airplay, Ella Langley notches her ninth entry as “Loving Life Again” (SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers), her newest promoted radio single, debuts at No. 53 (970,000); her former four-week leader “Be Her” moves to recurrent, while “I Can’t Love You Anymore,” with Morgan Wallen, climbs 5-3 (24.7 million, up 5%). All three songs are from her LP *Dandelion*, which has spent its first 12 weeks and counting on Top Country Albums at No. 1. 🍷



MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)
ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville/SMN	Corey Kent & Koe Wetzel	+4.640
HANDS UP Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+1.659
PHONE, KEYS, WALLET Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson & John Mayer	+1.320
BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+1.320
CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	+1.274
I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Big Loud/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	+1.189
BOSTON Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost	e Stella Lefty	+1.042
CARRY ON Warner/HEY NOW	Kenny Chesney	+0.868
SAY SO Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Dan + Shay	+0.771
DON'T TELL ON ME Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+0.765

MOST INCREASED PLAYS

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN
ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville/SMN	Corey Kent & Koe Wetzel	+1465
HANDS UP Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+527
BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+419
BOSTON Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost	Stella Lefty	+339
CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	+338
PHONE, KEYS, WALLET Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson & John Mayer	+331
I KNEW IT, I KNEW YOU Pixar/Walt Disney/Republic/MCA Nashville	Taylor Swift	+262
EASY TO LOVE Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch	+230
RIDE, RIDE, RIDE RECORDS/RECORDS Nashville	George Birge Featuring Luke Bryan	+215
CARRY ON Warner/HEY NOW	Kenny Chesney	+198

RECURRENTS

THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	CHOOSIN' TEXAS SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	21.297
2	BE HER SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	20.738
3	SLEEPLESS IN A HOTEL ROOM Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	16.691
4	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	10.020
5	CHANGE MY MIND Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	9.583
6	AMEN American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll	9.527
7	TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	9.412
8	I AIN'T COMING BACK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Post Malone	8.753
9	DARLIN' Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	8.547
10	A BAR SONG (TIPSY) American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	8.029



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING JULY 10, 2026

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	23	GOING THROUGH (WHISKEY LIKE WATER) (Independent)	★ ★ 1 Week at 1 ★ ★ Tilluride	1936	50	11	11	26	BEAUTIFUL YOU (Prophets and Outlaws Music)	Prophets and Outlaws	1329	-81
2	3	14	JUNE'S HONKY TONK MOON (CDX)	Sandee June	1842	76	12	15	9	TAKE IT EASY COWGIRL (Independent)	Aaron Loy	1312	164
3	4	15	REASONS TO CALL (Get Joe)	Billie Jo	1804	51	13	17	12	ON AGAIN TONIGHT (Pickup Man Records)	Case Hardin	1295	171
4	5	15	STUBBORN AND REMAINS (Independent)	William Clark Green	1797	48	14	13	13	I DON'T DRINK ANYMORE (Independent)	Timothy Howls	1271	44
5	6	25	BLESSING AND A CURSE (RedPlay Media)	Guy Vincent	1645	-61	15	18	12	THAT'S WHAT COWBOYS DO (Lonely River)	Curtis Grimes	1251	175
6	7	15	HARD TO WRITE A LOVE SONG (Independent)	Mike Ryan	1629	1	16	16	8	HIGH NOON (Leo33)	Jenna Paulette	1226	98
7	8	9	RAIN (Bowen Sounds/Thirty Tigers)	Wade Bowen	1593	37	17	14	21	IF YOU KNOW YOU KNOW (Synapse)	Derryl Perry	1163	7
8	9	11	DOWN BY THE RIVER (Independent)	Seth Candan	1552	124	18	20	14	YOU AND WHISKEY (Independent)	Chuck Wimer & Brandi Behlen	1112	72
9	10	15	WHISKEY AFTER WOMEN (Write On)	Adysen Malek	1492	68	19	21	7	UNCERTAIN, TX (Lost Highway/Interscope)	Kacey Musgraves feat. Willie Nelson	1110	76
10	12	13	FLOORBOARD FULL OF ROSES (Ranger Music Group)	David Lewis	1425	80	20	23	10	THIRD ROW GEORGE STRAIT (Independent)	Frank Ray	1042	94

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 2026, 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	19	DON'T TELL ON ME Macon/Broken Bow ★★ No. 1 (2 Weeks) ★★	Jason Aldean	31.631	+0.765	8122	0	1
2	2	19	DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	30.496	+0.506	8051	138	2
3	5	11	I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Big Loud/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	27.104	+1.189	7327	138	4
4	8	31	ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville/SMN ★★ Most Increased Audience ★★	Corey Kent & Koe Wetzell	24.678	+4.640	7459	1465	3
5	7	15	BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	23.725	+1.320	6352	419	5
6	3	42	HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	23.596	-3.831	5888	-976	6
7	4	37	BEAUTIFUL THINGS Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	20.367	-5.570	5813	-1681	7
8	9	39	CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	19.303	+1.274	5736	338	8
9	11	17	WOMAN Zone 4/RCA Nashville/SMN	Kane Brown	18.633	+0.677	5222	105	9
10	10	5	I KNEW IT, I KNEW YOU Pixar/Walt Disney/Republic/MCA Nashville	Taylor Swift	17.953	-0.058	5031	262	10
11	12	9	CARRY ON Warner/HEY NOW	Kenny Chesney	16.767	+0.868	4723	198	11
12	15	12	BOSTON Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost	Stella Lefty	14.468	+1.042	3974	339	14
13	14	23	RIDE, RIDE, RIDE RECORDS/RECORDS Nashville	George Birge Featuring Luke Bryan	13.997	+0.403	4260	215	12
14	13	53	KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan	13.972	+0.091	4070	193	13
15	16	15	COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Row Crop/MCA Nashville	Luke Bryan	10.968	+0.103	3199	-95	16
16	20	44	ALL MY EXES Mercury/Big Loud	Lauren Alaina Featuring Chase Matthew	10.012	+0.379	2986	38	19
17	18	23	MCARTHUR Mercury/Big Loud	HARDY, Eric Church, Morgan Wallen & Tim McGraw	9.930	-0.196	3203	-78	15
18	19	20	GET TO DRINKIN' Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Zach John King	9.783	+0.130	3092	83	17
19	17	30	SOUTH OF SANITY Leo33	Zach Top	9.747	-0.382	2902	33	20
20	21	14	SAY SO Warner Records Nashville/WRN ★★ Airpower ★★	Dan + Shay	9.643	+0.771	2987	164	18
21	25	5	PHONE, KEYS, WALLET Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson & John Mayer	8.445	+1.320	2513	331	22
22	24	52	EASY TO LOVE Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch	7.963	+0.752	2372	230	23
23	22	25	BOOTS OFF Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Jon Pardi	7.949	-0.272	2552	-38	21
24	23	7	THINK AS YOU DRUNK Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	7.784	-0.424	2218	49	24
25	32	3	HANDS UP Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	5.697	+1.659	1658	527	28
26	26	29	WATER AT A WEDDING Nashville Harbor	Greytan James	5.622	+0.073	2065	-38	25
27	27	28	WORTH YOUR WILD Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	4.546	+0.158	1684	129	27
28	28	20	PAINTED YOU PRETTY River House/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Hudson Westbrook	4.530	+0.151	1556	18	29
29	29	22	LET HIM IN ANYWAY Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	4.191	+0.036	1693	-7	26
30	30	41	LONG LIVE COUNTRY Triple Tigers	Shane Profitt	3.809	-0.264	1471	-120	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 © 2026, 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. 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
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LUMINATE

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
31	31	24	HOLDIN' IT DOWN Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	3.363	-0.690	1516	-229	30
32	33	19	WHAT IF WE DON'T Warner Music Nashville/WRN	Ashley McBryde	3.341	-0.154	1415	50	32
33	34	13	MOVE ON American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Kevin Powers & Shaboozey	3.231	-0.245	1240	-60	35
34	37	20	KILLIN' ME MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	3.080	+0.173	1253	-47	34
35	35	8	DRY SPELL Kacey Musgraves/Lost Highway	Kacey Musgraves	3.057	-0.091	939	3	39
36	39	12	MEDICINE Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	2.675	+0.199	970	80	38
37	38	24	GARY Mercury/Big Loud	Stephen Wilson Jr.	2.414	-0.489	1305	-32	33
38	40	25	MAKE A LIAR Blue Highway	Jackson Dean	2.321	-0.053	1013	-102	37
39	36	4	HORSEBACK CoJo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Cody Johnson	2.102	-0.948	894	-130	41
40	41	11	WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG Goat Island Sound/Mercury Nashville	Jacob Hackworth	2.075	+0.066	1100	14	36
41	42	7	LAND Hubbard House/Mercury Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	1.732	-0.035	819	-11	43
42	45	16	GOOD DAMN Wheelhouse	Brantley Gilbert	1.524	+0.045	885	46	42
43	43	23	WHEN A COWBOY PRAYS Brandon Lake/Essential/SMN	Brandon Lake X Cody Johnson	1.424	-0.281	651	-100	49
44	44	9	WANNABE Thrivin Here/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Gavin Adcock	1.387	-0.292	682	-66	47
45	46	6	EMPTY WORDS Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Corey Kent	1.337	+0.053	488	68	53
46	47	3	GIRL DAD Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Cole Swindell	1.311	+0.063	687	19	46
47	48	14	BACK IN THE BOTTLE Magnolia Music	Randy Houser	1.308	+0.127	902	10	40
48	51	10	LOVE IS BLIND WEST TO THE REST/Triple Tigers	Ian Munsick	1.181	+0.105	697	-7	45
49	49	21	PSYCHOLOGICAL Nashville Harbor	The Band Perry	1.140	-0.029	760	-54	44
50	50	19	KEEPS ME SANE Tyler Nance/Santa Anna/Akando	Tyler Nance	1.123	-0.027	660	-71	48
51	53	8	BETTER THAT WAY Mercury/Big Loud	Charles Wesley Godwin & Luke Combs	1.063	+0.070	558	19	50
52	55	4	I DIDN'T COME HERETO LEAVE Boss Moves/Black River/Akando	Chris Young	1.011	+0.119	444	29	56
53	NEW		LOVING LIFE AGAIN SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers ★★ Hot Shot Debut ★★	Ella Langley	0.969	+0.253	316	45	-
54	52	7	GOD KNEW BETTER Stoney Creek	Parmalee	0.969	-0.047	533	-1	51
55	56	6	HURTS LIKE YOU YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel	0.956	+0.074	419	43	58
56	54	16	IF I DON'T LEAVE I'M GONNA STAY Blue Highway/Stoney Creek/Nashville Harbor	Carly Pearce & Riley Green	0.926	-0.066	521	-7	52
57	57	2	BABY BLUES Back Blocks/Mercury/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	0.788	-0.000	420	-7	57
58	RE-ENTRY		DEAR BIG CITY Curb	Dylan Scott	0.764	+0.274	366	124	59
59	NEW	1	YOU'RE IT FOR ME, HONEY True To The Song/Big Machine	Caroline Jones	0.644	+0.065	463	26	54
60	60	3	DONE FOR Fugitive Recordings/Magnolia Music	Max McNown	0.617	-0.127	446	-11	55



The four songwriters of Josh Ross' "Hate How You Look" celebrated at the Combustion Music offices in Nashville on June 29 after the song peaked at No. 1 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart dated July 11. From left: Chris McKenna, Jessica Farren, Christian Yancey and Nicholas Sainato.



Charles Esten (left) performed "God Bless the U.S.A." with military veteran John Frost, an ex-member of former Grand Ole Opry group The Four Guys, during a June 24 Musicians on Call event at the Alvin C. York VA Hospital in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

KAYLA EILEEN

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

LINDEN STACKLEY

Niall Horan made his Grand Ole Opry debut July 7, reconnecting with DEK of Hearts, a country trio that competed as his team members on NBC's *The Voice* in 2025. From left: DEK's Emily Clapp, Horan and DEK members Dylan John and Kollin Bailey.

RADIO & RECORDS®

Triple Tigers promoted **Raffaella Braun** to co-president from VP of radio promotion. The move, which teams her with co-president **Annie Ortmeier**, came a day after **Kevin Herring** stepped down from the role on July 6. Herring will serve as a strategic advisor for an unspecified period as he transitions into retirement ... Warner Nashville signed **Morgan Wade** to a recording deal, releasing her latest track, "Love's Insane," on July 10 ... EMPIRE established partnerships with harmony trio **Restless Road** and multi-genre artist **Caldwell**. The acts issued individual tracks — "Forever a Go" and "FSU," respectively — in conjunction with the agreements ... **Charlie Worsham** tapped ONErpm to distribute his first independent album, *Once Upon a Second Time Around*, due Aug. 7 ... Birmingham-based Red Clay Cartel signed country-rock artist **Charlie Reece** as its first artist in partnership with Warner Music Group's ADA ... Connoisseur Media sold its **KBAY** San Jose-San Francisco signal to K-Love for \$2 million but will retain rights to the call letters and related intellectual property. Connoisseur expects to retain a country format in the area ... Connoisseur welcomed VP of human resources **Lorraine Hirsh** on June 29. She previously handled HR-related issues as marketing agency IMRE chief people officer ... **WXTU** Philadelphia promoted **Jen Scordo** to midday host from a fill-in role ... **Danny Bortnick** starts July 13 as Cox Media Group VP of local radio revenue and client growth. He was most recently Hubbard/West Palm Beach director of sales, representing six stations, including country **WIRK** ... A range of outlets reported iHeartMedia cuts over the last two weeks, as a round of layoffs extended over several days. Departures include **KNIX** Phoenix music director/midday host **Lois Lewis** (reported by *The Arizona Republic*), **KWBL** Denver personality **Denise Plante** (9News.com) and iHeart/Media Auburn-Opelika, Ala., senior VP of programming **Van Riggs**, who also handled mornings on the cluster's country **WKRR** and afternoons at **WSTH** Columbus, Ga. (RadioInsight.com) ... **Brad Elliott** joined **KABW** Abilene-Baird, Texas, as afternoon host, RadioInsight.com reported. It marks a return to the station, where he was formerly operations manager. Elliott worked most recently on-air at crosstown classic hits **KULL** ... *Country Countdown USA* host **Lon Helton** will receive the Country Radio Broadcasters president's award Aug. 3 during the Country Radio Hall of Fame induction event Aug. 3 at Virgin Hotels Nashville.

'ROUND THE ROW

The Country Music Association (CMA) selected **Brittany Schaffer** as its new CEO, replacing **Sarah Trahern** on Jan. 1 following her retirement. Schaffer, who is currently Belmont University's dean of the Mike Curb College of Entertainment & Music Business, will begin at CMA on Sept. 8 ... The CMA also announced five promotions and five new hires. The career advancements include four employees whose existing roles were increased to "senior" status: senior event producer **Emily Arvantis**, senior member experience manager **Kayleigh Bentley**, senior manager of creative & content **Amanda Jilek** and senior digital marketing manager **Maddie Myers**. **Nora Webb** was also upped to business affairs manager from coordinator. New CMA hires include: accounting coordi-

nator **Samantha Alenius**, formerly Ocean Way Nashville administrative and marketing assistant; media project manager **Britney Buckwalter**, previously a content department temporary staff member; senior strategic partnerships account manager **Tarah Duarte**, who segues from FlyteVu senior account manager; insights analyst **Alec Staniul**, who had been Virginia-based Williamsburg Area Transit Authority project consultant; and customer relationship manager **Craig Weaver**, who transfers from Atlanta Braves associate research developer ... Academy of Country Music CEO **Damon Whiteside** officially stepped into his CEO emeritus role July 1. He also shared a new email address with members that provides a likely hint at his next career step: damon@nomadentertain.com ... Morris Higham Management hired VP of marketing **Clark Mims Tedesco**, after 13 years with Warner Nashville, where she was most recently VP of artist development ... TKO Artist Management promoted a trio of staff members: **Megan Pavlovic** rose to artist manager from project manager, **Jordan Bernal** was boosted to artist manager from management coordinator, and **Ben Sojka** climbed to manager of publishing & internal operations from management coordinator ... Opry Entertainment Group hired senior manager of artist relations **Stacey Cato**, who previously worked on a number of CMT properties as Paramount/ViacomCBS director of music & talent ... Former Combustion Music senior creative director **Blake Duncan** teamed with producer **Scott Hendricks** (**Blake Shelton, Dan + Shay**) to establish TAYCAN Entertainment, a music publishing and A&R enterprise ... Songwriter **Dallas Wilson** ("Somewhere Over Laredo," "Can't Have Mine") signed a joint-venture publishing deal with Warner Chappell Nashville and The Core Entertainment ... ERN's Cadillac Music signed songwriter **Jordan Merrigan** to a publishing agreement in conjunction with Big Loud Publishing ... Songwriter **Chris Sligh** ("Here Comes Goodbye") joined the roster at Sony Music Publishing Nashville in partnership with Ace High Music ... Artist-writer **Abbey Cone** signed a publishing deal with Endurance Music Group ... Universal Music Publishing Group Nashville engaged with ONE4 Records to create publishing company ONE4 Music, with artist-writer **Hunter Flynn** as the firm's initial signing ... **Ty Herndon** aligned with Universal Attractions for global representation ... **Cindy Mabe**'s Joan of Arc Music signed artist-writer **Carlisle Wright** to a management contract ... Bassist **Dave Sirmon**, a member of **Mark Chesnutt**'s road band, died in his sleep on the group's tour bus July 4 ... Canadian TV host **Tommy Hunter**, 89, died July 2 of natural causes. A country performer, he was best-known as the host of *The Tommy Hunter Show*, which aired for 27 years from 1965-1992 and was imported to the U.S. for a time via the Nashville Network ... Songwriter-producer **Brian Potter**, 87, died June 30 in Granada Hills, Calif. The Englishman was a frequent collaborator with **Dennis Lambert**, hitting their commercial apex when they co-produced **Glen Campbell**'s "Rhinestone Cowboy." They also wrote Campbell's follow-up, "Country Boy (You Got Your Feet in L.A.)," plus **The Oak Ridge Boys**' "Dream On" and the **Billy Jack** soundtrack piece "One Tin Soldier." They also wrote and/or produced pop hits for **Player**, **The Righteous Brothers**, **The Four Tops**, **Tavares** and **Hamilton, Joe Frank & Reynolds**. ●



WEISS EUBANKS

Ashley McBryde (left) performed "Lines in the Carpet" on NBC's *The Kelly Clarkson Show*, hosted by Clarkson, on July 1.



SiriusXM host Cody Alan (left) welcomed Blake Whiten to the satcaster's Nashville office on June 30.

billboard Country Airplay Index

TITLE Publishing-Licensing Org.
(Songwriter) Chart Position

A

ALL MY EXES Iylas Music, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/These Are Pulse Songs, BMI/PASSTHEBEAT PUBLISHING, BMI/Only Legends Music, BMI/Ben There Wrote That Publishing, BMI/Artist 101 Publishing Group, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI/Hoops Don't Lie Publishing, BMI/Modern Arts Songs, BMI/Music By Work Of Art, BMI (Lauren Alaina, J.A.Gutch, B.Johnson, W.Phillips) 16

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DRY SPELL Recordings Of Cosmic Intent, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Sony Lyric Music Publishing, GMR/CN Songs From 1508, GMR/Crawford Mercer Music, GMR/Smackworld Music, GMR/Art of CTM Music Outlander LP, GMR/Warner Geo Met Ric Music, GMR/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Songs For Indy And Owl, ASCAP (K.Musgraves, L.Laird, S.McAnally, J.Osborne) 35

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GET TO DRINKIN' Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Works By Kinda Country Songs, BMI/Speakers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Brody James Music, BMI/Akin For Jonas Music, BMI/8 Publishing, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/ERN's Cadillac Music, BMI/Songs Of Combustion Five, BMI/Beats Building Fences, BMI/Universal Music Corp., ASCAP/Kyle Sturrock Music, ASCAP (Z.J.King, R.Akins, T.Archer, K.A.Fishman, K.Sturrock) 18

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DOOR

REWINDING
THE
COUNTRY
CHARTS

50 Years Ago

Dave & Sugar Tasted Sweet Success
When Country Opened Its ‘Door’

“The Door is Always Open” brought the mixed-gender trio its inaugural chart-topper

He was once a member of the Grand Ole Opry quartet **The Four Guys**, but made his mark in country music as the sole guy in a group with two girls.

Dave Rowland’s trio, **Dave & Sugar**, launched in April 1975 as an opening act for **Charley Pride**, with **Jackie Frantz** and **Vicki Hackeman** as Rowland’s original female singers. “The Door Is Always Open,” the trio’s second single, took the act to No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Hot Country Songs a year later, on the list dated July 10, 1976.

“The Door” already had some his-

tory. Songwriter **Bob McDill** (“Amanda,” “Good Ole Boys Like Me”) wrote the first verse and chorus, but recording artist **Dickey Lee** finished it. Lee recorded it first, followed by **Waylon Jennings** and **Ernest Tubb**. Producer **Jerry Bradley** guided the session when Sugar cut it in January 1976.

It earned a rare place in country music history books. Dave & Sugar became only the second mixed-gender trio to top Hot Country Songs, following **The Browns**’ “The Three Bells” in 1959. To date, just

two more mixed-gender trios (excluding collaborations) have reached the summit: **Lady A** and **The Band Perry**.

Dave & Sugar amassed three leaders among eight total top 10s, though Sugar had a fair amount of turnover. Frantz left at the end of 1976, replaced by **Sue Powell**. Hackeman left her spot to **Melissa Dean** in 1979.

Rowland and Hackeman died in 2018. By then, “The Door Is Always Open” had been covered again, on **Jamey Johnson**’s 2008 album *That Lonesome Song*.

Dave & Sugar perform circa 1977. From left: Powell, Rowland and Hackeman. Right Inset: *Dave & Sugar* album, featuring Frantz (standing), Rowland and Hackeman.

IT	Las	on	TITLE—Artist (Writer), Label & Number (Dist. Label) (Publisher, Licensee)
1	3	13	THE DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN—Dave & Sugar (B. McDill, D. Lee), RCA 10625 (Jack, BMI)
2	1	12	ALL THESE THINGS—Joe Stampley (N. Neville), ABC/Dot 17624 (Tune-Kel, BMI)
3	2	11	SUSPICIOUS MINDS—Waylon & Jessi (M. James), RCA 10653 (Screen Gems-Columbia Music Inc., BMI)
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5	5	16	STRANGER—Johany Duncan (K. Kristofferson), Columbia 3-10302 (Resaca, BMI)

