Even before Nashville issued safer-at-home guidelines and ordered the downtown bars closed, Loretta Lynn was on lockdown at her home 75 miles away in rural Hurricane Mills, Tenn.

At age 87, she’s in one of the demographic segments of the population considered most at risk from the coronavirus. And with a stroke and a broken hip both in her medical chart from the last three years, she’s even more vulnerable. Her doctors thus required Lynn to cancel or postpone face-to-face appointments, including a planned visit from Billboard Country Update. A phone conversation was still doable, but the shutdown—especially coming on the heels of March 3 tornadoes in Middle Tennessee—already was making her feisty.

“Yes, we’ve been quarantined,” she says. “It’s the damnedest thing I ever seen.”

The timing is regrettable. Lynn had a handful of national promotional opportunities on the calendar before the pandemic got in the way, all to support a new book, *Me & Patsy: Kickin’ Up Dust — My Friendship With Patsy Cline* (April 7, Grand Central Publishing). Written with daughter Patsy Lynn Russell, the book explores the coal miner’s daughter’s relationship with Cline, but also traces the influence of husband Oliver “Mooney” Lynn, producer Owen Bradley (Conway Twitty, Ernest Tubb), former managers The Wilburn Brothers and fellow Grand Ole Opry member Dottie West.

In addition, Legacy plans to release a Lynn remake of Cline’s “I Fall to Pieces” on April 3. Russell and John Carter Cash produced the track with an all-star cast of musicians at the Cash Cabin Studio, the same location where Johnny Cash cut “Hurt.”

“I Fall to Pieces” is significant in Lynn’s friendship with Cline. Lynn sang it on The Midnite Jamboree in 1961 when Cline was laid up in the hospital from a car accident, and the performance earned an invitation to visit her in the hospital. Less than two years later, Cline died in a plane crash, and Lynn would commit “I Fall to Pieces” to vinyl in a 1977 tribute album, *I Remember Patsy*.

“She was my big sister,” suggests Lynn of Cline.

Indeed, Cline served as the voice of experience for Lynn on numerous fronts. She handed down stage clothing, provided advice about contracts and handling inappropriate advances from men in the business and squashed an uprising from jealous female Opry stars when Lynn was inducted into the WSM-AM Nashville cast. And Cline gave a heap of insight into vocal techniques.

“She told me how to walk onstage, you know, and how to hold the mic,” recalls Lynn. “Low note; put the mic close. Whenever it’s going to be a high note, pull the mic away from my mouth, which helped me a lot.

“She told me I could be a better singer if I would,” adds Lynn with a laugh. “I told her she could, too.”
The two women were very different singers. Cline sang with a smooth delivery, bringing a touch of traditional pop influence from such vocalists as Teresa Brewer and Rosemary Clooney to the genre, while Lynn infused songs that frequently tackled controversial domestic and cultural topics — including infidelity and gender inequality — with a backwoods dialect, mangling words on occasion (most famously when she sang, “I was borned a coal miner’s daughter”).

“Everybody told me I wasn’t saying my words right, but I wouldn’t listen to ‘em,” insists Lynn. “If I would’ve listened to ‘em, I would’ve been doing [songs] just like them. And that wouldn’t have been different, would it? Hell, I got more sense than that. I might have been born in Butcher Holler at night, but not last night.”

That willingness to fight for their own place as an artist is a trait that Lynn and Cline shared. Lynn had the good fortune to attend a number of Cline’s sessions — including an August 1961 recording date in which Cline made her first attempt at recording Willie Nelson’s “Crazy” — and she witnessed Cline standing up for her art firsthand.

“Owen and Patsy would cuss each other out,” says Lynn. “They’d start to record; Patsy’d be trying to tell him how to do it. He’d be telling her she’s the singer, not to tell him how to do it. It was funny.”

Lynn and Cline share other similarities: They were both inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame, and both were the subjects of 1980s movies titled after one of their iconic Bradley-produced hits: Lynn in 1980’s Coal Miner’s Daughter and Cline in 1985’s Sweet Dreams.

And there’s a day they spent together that’s etched into Lynn’s memory: Feb. 28, 1963. As detailed in the book, it was the last time they crossed paths before Cline’s plane crash, and they hung out twice — first at Lynn’s new house, where Cline delivered tailor-made drapes, and later at Cline’s house, where she previewed what proved to be her final recordings, including the now-classic “She’s Got You.”

Even though Cline may be physically gone, she still visits Lynn on a fairly regular basis. “I was singing one day, and I thought, ‘Geez, I wish Patsy was here,’ ” recalls Lynn. “I looked up, and there she sat. Every time I’ve done that, she’s been with me. I see her a lot.”

Cline has not aged in those visions, and she’s frequently wearing a specific outfit — a white blouse and red “stretchy pants,” notes Lynn. And Cline offers support each time, still performing the role of a friend when Lynn needs it most.

“She just looks and smiles like, ‘You’re doing good, honey,’ ” says Lynn. It’s the only sort of visit Lynn can accept from the outside world for the moment. The coronavirus pandemic has created that situation for people all across America, and Lynn is trying to maintain a sense of optimism about it.

“I’ll be fine,” she says. “I think they’ll let me out of this anytime, basically whenever the problem is over. Then we’ll talk again.”

And, as she says both in Me & Patsy and on the phone, she knows she will talk with Cline again:

“We’ll all be together pretty soon.”
LUKE BRYAN
WHAT SHE WANTS TONIGHT

THANK YOU, COUNTRY RADIO!
Following his March 20 death at age 81, legendary entertainer Kenny Rogers lands his first No. 1 on Billboard’s Top Country Albums chart in over 34 years.

On the tally dated April 4, The Best of Kenny Rogers: Through the Years (Capitol Nashville/UMe) blasts in at the summit, up from a nominal amount to 31,000 equivalent album units (10,000 in album sales) in the week ending March 26, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data.

Years marks Rogers’ 12th Top Country Albums No. 1 and first since The Heart of the Matter, which wrapped a six-week reign on the chart dated Feb. 1, 1986.

On the all-genre Billboard 200, Years enters at No. 9, awarding Rogers his fifth top 10 and first since Eyes That See in the Dark, which climbed to No. 6 in 1985.

The 20-track Years was originally released in September 2018 in celebration of Rogers’ 80th birthday (that Aug. 21). Of the 21 Hot Country Songs No. 1s that Rogers racked up during his storied career, 16 are on the album, including “Lucille” (1977), “The Gambler” (1978) and “Lady” (1980).

Another Rogers compilation debuts on Top Country Albums, as Daytime Friends: The Very Best of Kenny Rogers (Capitol Nashville/UMe) enters at No. 25 with 5,000 units (3,000 sold), also up from a minor figure. The 20-song set was first issued in 1993.

Until the latest Top Country Albums tally, Rogers last debuted with 2015’s Once Again It’s Christmas, which rose to No. 17. He first charted in 1976 with Love Lifted Me and initially led with his self-titled LP in 1977.

Meanwhile, Rogers’ “Islands in the Stream,” with Dolly Parton, reenters Hot Country Songs at No. 14; it ruled that chart and the all-genre Billboard Hot 100 for two weeks each in 1983. The Bee Gees-written duet drew 3.1 million streams (up 378%) and sold 15,000 (up 4,723%) in the tracking week.

Kelsea Ballerini achieves both her highest debut and highest rank on Top Country Albums as her third full-length, Kelsea (Black River), bows at No. 2 with 28,000 units (13,000 in album sales). The set follows Unapologetically — which opened and peaked at No. 3 in November 2017 with 44,000 units, her strongest one-week total to date — and her debut LP, The First Time, which began at No. 4 in June 2015 with 18,000 units (13,000 sold).

Kelsea lead single “homecoming queen?” has reached No. 14 on Hot Country Songs. The set’s next single, “The Other Girl,” debuts at No. 19, as co-lead Halsey makes her first Hot Country Songs appearance.

Luke Bryan banks his 22nd Country Airplay No. 1, as “What She Wants Tonight” (Capitol Nashville) ascends 3-1, up by 12% to 32.2 million audience impressions in the week ending March 29.

Bryan boasts the sixth-most Country Airplay No. 1s, dating to the chart’s 1990 launch. Kenny Chesney leads with 30, followed by Tim McGraw (29) and Alan Jackson, Blake Shelton and George Strait, each with 26.

“What Tonight” is Bryan’s second consecutive Country Airplay No. 1, following “Knockin’ Boots,” which led for two weeks in September 2019. Before that, “What Makes You Country” hit No. 2 in March 2019 after Bryan ran up a streak of 13 consecutive No. 1 singles dating to 2014 (counting properly promoted, nonholiday songs in which he had a lead role).

“Beer Can’t Fix” (Valory), featuring Jon Pardi, climbs 11-10 on Country Airplay, up 10% to 23 million in audience. Rhett adds his 16th top 10 and Pardi scores his sixth.
ARE YOU ONE OF THEM GIRLS?

LEE BRICE  4.10.20
# Billboard Country Airplay

## Country Airplay Chart Legend

**RANKINGS**
Country Airplay is ranked by total audience impressions for the week ending Sunday based on monitored airplay of 148 stations by Nielsen Music. Audience totals on the chart are derived, in part, using certain Nielsen Audio-copyrighted Persons 12+ audience estimates (under license © 2020, Nielsen Audio). The list of all Country Airplay chart reporters can be viewed on Nielsen Music’s platforms.

**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%.
- **TIES**
  - On Country Airplay, if two songs are tied in total audience, the song with the larger increase in audience is placed first.
- **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.
- **HOT SHOT DEBUT**
  - Awarded to the highest-ranking new entry on Country Airplay.
- **MOST ADDED**
  - The total number of new adds officially reported to Billboard by each reporting station, or by an automatic-add threshold (seven plays for the first time in a chart tracking week, according to Nielsen Music) for stations that do not report adds.
- **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 to Country Airplay to titles achieving airplay (at least one detection) at 60% of reporting stations for the first time.

### Country Airplay Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEKS ON CHART</th>
<th>TITLE Imprint/Label</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)</th>
<th>PLAYS</th>
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<td>THIS WEEK</td>
<td>THIS WEEK</td>
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<td>WHAT SHE WANTS TONIGHT</td>
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<td>Luke Bryan</td>
<td>32.220</td>
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**Country Airplay**

**AIRPLAY MONITORED BY**

**Table:**

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<th>Last Week</th>
<th>Wks On Chart</th>
<th>Title Imprint/Label</th>
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<td>Wheelhouse</td>
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<td>59</td>
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<td>SOMEBODY LIKE THAT</td>
<td>19th &amp; Grand/Reiver</td>
<td>Tenille Arts</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>ONE MARGARITA</td>
<td>Row Crop/Capitol Nashville</td>
<td>Luke Bryan</td>
<td>0.907</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NEW**

| 50 | 5 | FOR MY MONEY | EMI Nashville | Brandon Lay | 0.861 | +0.083 | 329 | 42 |

**Goings for Adds**

- **JASON ALDEAN**
  - Got What I Got
  - Macon Music/Broken Bow

- **KELSEA BALLERINI**
  - The Other Girl
  - Black River

**Billboard Country Update**

**FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE**

**I Love My Country**

**The song, released March 27, previews the duo’s fifth album. Helped by hourly plays on participating iHeartMedia stations on its first day, it flies onto Country Airplay at No. 18 with 8.7 million in audience. It’s the duo's second-highest debut, after “Dirt” (No. 16, 2014).**
MARCH 30, 2020 | PAGE 8 OF 21

TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING MARCH 29, 2020

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 2020, Texas Regional Radio Report

BILLBOARD COUNTRY AIRPLAY

MOST ADDED

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<td>Florida Georgia Line</td>
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<td>HARD TO FORGET MCA Nashville</td>
<td>Sam Hunt</td>
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<td>GOD WHISPERED YOUR NAME</td>
<td>Keith Urban</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>DONE</td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/WAR</td>
<td>Chris Janson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIN'T ALWAYS THE COWBOY</td>
<td>Jon Pardi</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIE FROM A BROKEN HEART</td>
<td>Maddie &amp; Tae</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIKE I KNEW YOU WOULD</td>
<td>Big Machine</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONE NIGHT STANDARDS Atlantic/Warner Music Nashville/WAR</td>
<td>Ashley McBryde</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHY WE DRINK</td>
<td>Justin Moore</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLUEBIRD</td>
<td>Vannen/RCA Nashville</td>
<td>6</td>
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BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE MARCH 30, 2020 | PAGE 8 OF 21

NEW AND ACTIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE Imprint/Label</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>TOTAL AUDIENCE</th>
<th>TOTAL STATIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>FAMOUS</td>
<td>Arieta Nashville</td>
<td>0.739</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOBODY</td>
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<td>0.670</td>
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<td>ANYTHING SHE SAID</td>
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<td>Mitchell Tenpenny feat. Seaforth</td>
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<td>ONLY TRUCK IN TOWN</td>
<td>Night Train/Broken Bow</td>
<td>Tyler Farr</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>JUST THE WAY</td>
<td>Stoney Creek</td>
<td>Parmalee x Blanco Brown</td>
<td>0.441</td>
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RECURRENTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK ENDING MARCH 29, 2020</th>
<th>TITLE Imprint/Label</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Columbia Nashville</td>
<td>Maren Morris</td>
<td>25.438</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/WAR</td>
<td>Dan + Shay &amp; Justin Bieber</td>
<td>17.708</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>RCA Nashville</td>
<td>Old Dominion</td>
<td>17.622</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Broken Bow</td>
<td>Dustin Lynch</td>
<td>17.342</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Big Loud</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
<td>14.372</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wide Open/RECORDS/Good Company/Arista Nashville</td>
<td>Matt Stell</td>
<td>14.313</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Capitol Nashville</td>
<td>Jon Pardi</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Chris Janson</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Stoney Creek</td>
<td>Jimmie Allen</td>
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Most Added: This Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE Imprint/Label</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>ADDS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I LOVE MY COUNTRY BMLG</td>
<td>Florida Georgia Line</td>
<td>8.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARD TO FORGET MCA Nashville</td>
<td>Sam Hunt</td>
<td>3.495</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOBODY BUT YOU</td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/WAR</td>
<td>Blake Shelton Duet With Gwen Stefani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO ME</td>
<td>River House/Columbia Nashville</td>
<td>Luke Combs Featuring Eric Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOPE</td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/WAR</td>
<td>Gabby Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOU</td>
<td>Big Loud</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEER CAN'T FIX</td>
<td>Valory</td>
<td>Thomas Rhett Featuring Jon Pardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATCH</td>
<td>BMLG</td>
<td>Brett Young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>Triple Tigers</td>
<td>Scotty McCreery</td>
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Most Increased Audience: This Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE Imprint/Label</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>GAIN (IN MILLIONS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I LOVE MY COUNTRY BMLG</td>
<td>Florida Georgia Line</td>
<td>+1392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOPE</td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/WAR</td>
<td>Gabby Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARD TO FORGET MCA Nashville</td>
<td>Sam Hunt</td>
<td>+636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHE WANTS TONIGHT</td>
<td>Capitol Nashville</td>
<td>Luke Bryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHISPERED YOUR NAME</td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/WAR</td>
<td>Blake Shelton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN'T FIX</td>
<td>Valory</td>
<td>Thomas Rhett Featuring Jon Pardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUT YOU</td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/WAR</td>
<td>Blake Shelton Duet With Gwen Stefani</td>
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<tr>
<td>YOU</td>
<td>Big Loud</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A BROKEN HEART</td>
<td>Maddie &amp; Tae</td>
<td>+381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>River House/Columbia Nashville</td>
<td>Luke Combs Featuring Eric Church</td>
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Most Increased Plays: This Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE Imprint/Label</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>GAIN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I LOVE MY COUNTRY BMLG</td>
<td>Florida Georgia Line</td>
<td>+1392</td>
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<td>HOPE</td>
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<td>HARD TO FORGET MCA Nashville</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHISPERED YOUR NAME</td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/WAR</td>
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<td>CAN'T FIX</td>
<td>Valory</td>
<td>Thomas Rhett Featuring Jon Pardi</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUT YOU</td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/WAR</td>
<td>Blake Shelton Duet With Gwen Stefani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOU</td>
<td>Big Loud</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A BROKEN HEART</td>
<td>Maddie &amp; Tae</td>
<td>+381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>River House/Columbia Nashville</td>
<td>Luke Combs Featuring Eric Church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BILLBOARD COUNTRY BOXSCORE

Gross Ticket Price ($) Artist Attendance Capacity Promoter(s) 
$269,240 $87.61, $29.84 | OLD DOMINION | Lean's Centre, Kingston, Ontario/Feb. 20 | 4,537 | 4,779 | SAKAMOTO ENTERTAINMENT |
$102,210 $73, $49 | DWIGHT YOAKAM | Victory Theatre, Evansville, Ind./Feb. 27 | 1,381 | 1,806 | MAMMOTH LIVE |
$82,460 $61.50, $29.50 | TRAVIS TRITT | Bob Hope Theatre, Stockton, Calif./Feb. 15 | 1,913 | 1,977 | EMPORIUM PRESENTS |
$74,340 $62, $31.50 | JAKE OWEN | Paramount Theatre, Cedar Rapids, Iowa/Feb. 28 | 1,584 | 1,611 | PEPPER ENTERTAINMENT |
$59,101 $59.50, $29.50 | TRAVIS TRITT | Orpheum Theatre, Wichita, Kan./Feb. 29 | 1,212 | 1,212 | EMPORIUM PRESENTS |

Imported worldwide boxscore figures for Country artists. Boxscore figures should be submitted to Bob Allen by phone (615-891-1976), fax (615-891-2054), or email (bob.allen@billboard.com).
CONGRATULATIONS
FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
#1 MOST ADDED
115 FIRST-WEEK ADDS!

THANK YOU TO ALL THE BELIEVERS!
FIGHT LIKE APES!
CLICK HERE TO LISTEN
The coronavirus hit the Nashville music industry hard this weekend, taking the life of country singer Joe Diffie and sending Americana singer-songwriter John Prine into critical care.

It escalated what might be viewed as typical loss-of-life cycles: Jan Howard, 91, died March 28, the day after her 47th anniversary as a member of the Grand Ole Opry. Her death wasn’t related to the virus.

The news about Diffie and Prine was particularly jarring, with announcements coming two hours apart. Diffie’s infection was revealed March 27, and his passing was noted in a short, one-paragraph statement at 2:30 p.m. CT on March 29; then Prine’s family revealed at 4:30 p.m. that he had been hospitalized on March 26 after displaying COVID-19 symptoms. Prine’s wife/manager, Fiona Whelan Prine, had announced March 17 that she had tested positive for the virus and that the couple was self-isolating to avoid passing it along.

The Nashville music community, already confined to its homes after COVID-19 forced a mass shutdown of the touring industry, poured its collective hearts into paying tribute.

Diffie was one of the significant voices of 1990s country. He earned heavy airplay for such muscular titles as “Honky Tonk Attitude” and “Third Rock From the Sun,” delivered adept ballads with “Ships That Don’t Come In” and “So Help Me Girl” and even slid western swing into the conversation via “If the Devil Danced (In Empty Pockets).” Jason Aldean’s single “1994” weaved a series of Diffie titles into its narrative, and Chris Young’s “Raised On Country” likewise gave Diffie and “Honky Tonk Attitude” a shoutout.

Prine already has conquered multiple health issues, surviving throat cancer in 1998 and lung cancer in 2013. His graceful public adjustment only added to the respect he earned as a masterful songwriter who uses conversational language to invoke deep personal and cultural statements through such songs as “Angel From Montgomery,” “Paradise” and “Some Humans Ain’t Human.”

“This world desperately needs him around as long as possible,” tweeted John Paul White, formerly of The Civil Wars. “Side note: F you, Coronavirus.”

Some artists treated Prine’s affliction and Diffie’s death as a call to action to educate audiences in the heartland, which has reacted more slowly to the spread of the coronavirus than the states that were hit first.

“Man RIP Joe Diffie. A staple for so much about what I love in country music,” tweeted Travis Denning. “This shit is real y’all. Please stay home and stay safe.”

Kendell Marvel was more direct: “Anybody out there not taking this shit seriously we just lost @JoeDiffieOnline to Covid and it breaks my heart and infuriates me that some of you don’t take it serious. Wake the hell up.”

Howard’s passing meant the loss of a longtime Opry figure who deftly balanced class and slyly acerbic humor. She earned two top 10 country singles during the 1960s, including “Evil on Your Mind” (No. 5, 1966), plus four top 10 duets with Bill Anderson. She also penned “My Son,” a tribute to her own child who died in service in Vietnam. The song received attention in the PBS series Country Music: A Film by Ken Burns.

And even Howard’s departure, although unrelated to the coronavirus, was viewed through the prism of COVID-19.

“She left this world peacefully, without suffering or pain and without contracting this terrible virus,” posted her longtime friend, RCA Studio B tour guide Ron Harman, on Facebook. “That is comforting.”
‘Pickup Man’ & More: Joe Diffie’s Biggest Billboard Hits

The late singer-songwriter scored 17 top 10s, including five No. 1s, on the Hot Country Songs chart

By Gary Trust

Joe Diffie, who died from complications stemming from COVID-19 on March 29 at age 61, became a staple of country radio in the early 1990s and a force on Billboard’s charts throughout the decade and beyond.

Diffie tallied 35 entries on the Hot Country Songs survey from 1990 through 2004, with the bulk of them released on Epic Records. Seventeen of those hit the top 10 and five rose to No. 1, beginning with his debut single, “Home,” which led the list dated Nov. 10, 1990.

“There’s a lot of potential in this guy. I love his voice,” Rick Stevens, then-program director of KRRV Alexandria, La., mused about Diffie in the Billboard issue dated Aug. 4, 1990. Then-WWYZ Hartford, Conn., music director John Saville said, “If you like George Strait, Clint Black and Merle Haggard, you’re gonna love Joe Diffie. He has the best elements of everybody.”

On Top Country Albums, Diffie charted 12 titles from 1990 through 2013, including the top 10s Honky Tonk Attitude (in 1993) and Third Rock From the Sun (1994). The sets reached Nos. 10 and 6, respectively.

During his career, Diffie’s songs drew 225 million on-demand audio streams, and he sold 4 million albums in the United States, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data.

In addition, he cowrote Holly Dunn’s “There Goes My Heart Again,” a No. 4 Hot Country Songs hit in 1989, and Jo Dee Messina’s 2005 chart-topper “My Give a Damn’s Busted.”

Meanwhile, Diffie drew shoutouts in Jason Aldean’s ”1994,” a No. 10 hit in 2013, with Aldean singing, ”1994, Joe Diffie comin’ out my radio,” name-checking multiple Diffie hits and repeating his name. “He’s one of the best vocalists we’ve had in this town in years,” Aldean told Billboard regarding Diffie in 2012. Said Diffie of the song, written by Thomas Rhett, Luke Laird and Barry Dean, ”Jason’s found a really cool niche, and he dang sure delivered. To think Jason’s fans will be chanting my name … pretty dang cool.

“Every time I hear the song, it puts a huge grin on my face,” he added. “It makes me feel that what I worked so hard at actually mattered to someone.”

Here is a recap of Diffie’s 20 biggest songs on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart.

Joe Diffie’s Biggest Billboard Hits

1. “Pickup Man” No. 1 peak (four weeks), 1994
2. “Third Rock From the Sun” No. 1 (two weeks), 1994
3. “Bigger Than The Beatles” No. 1 (two weeks), 1996
4. “If the Devil Danced (In Empty Pockets)” No. 1 (one week), 1991
5. “Home” No. 1 (one week), 1990
6. “Prop Me Up Beside the Jukebox (If I Die)” No. 3, 1993
7. “New Way (To Light Up an Old Flame)” No. 5, 1992
8. “John Deere Green” No. 5, 1994
9. “Ships That Don’t Come In” No. 5, 1992
10. “If You Want Me To” No. 8, 1991
12. “Honky Tonk Attitude” No. 5, 1993
13. “Is It Cold in Here” No. 5, 1992
14. “It’s Always Somethin’” No. 5, 2000
16. “A Night to Remember” No. 6, 1999
17. “In Another World” No. 10, 2002
18. “Tougher Than Nails” No. 19, 2004
19. “Next Thing Smokin’” No. 16, 1992
20. “Not Too Much to Ask” (Mary Chapin Carpenter with Diffie), No. 15, 1992

Diffie’s biggest Billboard hits are based on actual performance on the weekly Hot Country Songs chart through the March 28, 2020, ranking. Songs are ranked based on an inverse point system, with weeks at No. 1 earning the greatest value and weeks at lower ranks earning lesser values. Due to changes in chart methodology over the years, certain eras are weighted to account for different chart turnover rates over various periods.
PARKER McCOLLUM
PRETTY HEART
38* BB

On your desk now
ADD DATE 4/27

Already 25 million global streams
Top 40 before official ship date!

SOLD OUT SHOWS IN
Dallas, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Ft. Worth, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Kansas City, Atlanta, Austin

YouTube
Subscribers—27.8k
Views—24.3M

Spotify
Monthly Listeners — 804k

Twitter
161k followers

Instagram
200k followers

< Watch the video for “Pretty Heart” >
MUSIC NOTES

With at-home performances making an impact on streaming platforms and in the March 29 Fox program The iHeart Living Room Concert for America, CBS has two country specials lined up for the coming week. April 1 brings the hourlong Garth & Trisha Live! direct from the home of Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood. Additionally, Kane Brown and John Legend will present the first live version of their new collaboration, “Last Time I Say Sorry,” during ACM Presents: Our Country, a two-hour April 5 presentation that fills a slot vacated by the postponement of the Academy of Country Music Awards. Others in the mix for that telecast include Carrie Underwood, Keith Urban, Florida Georgia Line, Kelsea Ballerini, Luke Combs and Blake Shelton & Gwen Stefani. The ACM Awards are now set for Sept. 16.

Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson wrote “Goodhearted Woman” during a poker game, so it’s appropriate that Nelson is betting on Flow-CasinoWorld.com. Structures that represent his Luck Texas ranch are now available as players build their cities in the site’s virtual gambling universe, and participants can now present themselves through numerous country-themed avatars. Nelson is not specifically available as an avatar, though his name is emblazoned on T-shirts and trademark bandanas.

The Library of Congress announced two pop crossover singles from the 1960s — Glen Campbell’s “Wichita Lineman” and Eddy Arnold’s “Make the World Go Away” — among this year’s 25 new additions to the National Recording Registry. It marked the first entry for both artists in the registry, which debuted with 50 titles in 2002. Whitney Houston’s version of “I Will Always Love You,” penned by Dolly Parton, also made the list. Parton was previously recognized in 2011 for her single “Coat of Many Colors.” Go here for the full Recording Registry list. ☞

ON THIS DATE IN COUNTRY MUSIC

March 31
• 2015 — Clarkson Potter publishes Trisha’s Table: My Feel-Good Favorites for a Balanced Life, the third cookbook authored by Trisha Yearwood. The foreword is written by some guy named Garth Brooks.
• 2005 — The Cole County Sheriff’s Department in Missouri deputizes Chely Wright so she can participate on the Jefferson City law enforcement agency’s team during a charity basketball game. Her team wins.

April 1
• 2019 — MCA releases Jordan Davis’ “Slow Dance in a Parking Lot” to radio.
• 2014 — April fools! The Nashville Scene reports the Bluebird Cafe will close in June, to be replaced by a Jimmy Buffett Cheeseburger in Paradise franchise.

April 2
• 2017 — Thomas Rhett wins in two categories during the 52nd annual Academy of Country Music Awards at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. He earns male vocalist of the year, and “Die a Happy Man” claims song of the year.

April 3
• 2004 — Kenny Chesney and Uncle Kracker hoist “When the Sun Goes Down” to No. 1 on the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart.

April 4
• 2018 — Kane Brown collects platinum awards from the RIAA for his self-titled album and for the single “Heaven.”
• 1980 — Mickey Gilley records “Stand by Me” in Nashville for the movie Urban Cowboy.

April 5
• 1999 — Loretta Lynn performs the national anthem and throws out the ceremonial first pitch to Kenny Rogers for the opening-day game at Cincinnati’s Cinergy Stadium. The visiting San Francisco Giants defeat the Reds, 11-8.

April 6

Source: RolandNote.com, the Ultimate Country Music Database

Top Headlines from billboard.com

A Tornado Hit Their Homes, Now Nashville Execs Are Picking Up The Pieces During A Pandemic

How The Huge Coronavirus Relief Package Helps Artists, Roadies & Other Out-Of-Work Music Professionals

Elton John Opens Concert For America With Message Of Hope: ‘Better Days Lie Ahead’

The Story Behind Kenny Rogers’ Resurfaced Track, ‘Goodbye’

Spotify Pledges Up To $10M To Support Artists Amid Coronavirus, With In-App Fundraising Feature To Come

In a March 22 social media post, Michael Ray pasted himself into a still from E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial while fantasizing about an escape from COVID-19 threats.
From their homes to yours. Country Music’s brightest stars bringing you intimate acoustic performances.

No stadium. No stage. Just you, the artists, and the music.

Straight from their living rooms. Be there!

ACM PRESENTS:

OUR COUNTRY

APRIL 5  8|7c  CBS

WITH PERFORMANCES FROM

BLAKE SHELTON & GWEN STEFANI
BRAD PAISLEY & DARIUS RUCKER
BRANDI CARLILE
CARRIE UNDERWOOD
DIERKS BENTLEY
ERIC CHURCH
FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
KANE BROWN & JOHN LEGEND
KEITH URBAN
KELSEA BALLERINI
LADY ANTEBELLUM
LITTLE BIG TOWN
LUKE BRYAN
LUKE COMBS
MIRANDA LAMBERT
OLD DOMINION
SHANIA TWAIN
SHERYL CROW
THOMAS RHETT
TIM MCGRAW

#ACMOurCountry
## Hot Country Songs

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Peaked at</th>
<th>Weeks on Chart</th>
<th>WEEKS AGO</th>
<th>CHART</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Maren Morris</td>
<td><strong>The Bones</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56</td>
<td><strong>No. 1 (4 weeks)</strong></td>
<td>Maren Morris, Columbia Nashville</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dan + Shay &amp; Justin Bieber</td>
<td><strong>10,000 Hours</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/MGN</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gabby Barrett</td>
<td><strong>I Hope</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Kane Brown, Warner Music Nashville/MGN</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>One Man Band</td>
<td><strong>Homesick</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>93</td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>D. Huff, K. Brown, B. Berryhill, M. McGinnis, P. Phillips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Blake Shelton Duet With Gwen Stefani</td>
<td><strong>Nobody But You</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Warner Music Nashville/MGN</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Luke Bryan</td>
<td><strong>What She Wants Tonight</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>J. Bryan, Capitol Nashville</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sam Hunt</td>
<td><strong>Kinfolks</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>J. Hunt, Z. Crowell, J. Osborne</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Old Dominion</td>
<td><strong>One Man Band</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>S. McAnally, T. Ramsey, T. Rogers, B. Tursi, L. Osborne</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Jordan Davis</td>
<td><strong>Slow Dance In A Parking Lot</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>S. McAnally, B. Somers, R. Conner, C. Scott, A. Frangipane</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>J. Reeder, D. Pinson, K. Young, L. Osborne</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ingrid Andress</td>
<td><strong>More Hearts Than Mine</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>E. Lix, J. Andrewes, S. Ellis, D. Hunt, P. Hedges, P. Flowers, J. Osborne</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Brett Young</td>
<td><strong>Catch</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>D. Huff, B. Young, R. Copperman, A. Gorley</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Kenny Rogers</td>
<td><strong>The Gambler</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Kenny Chesney</td>
<td><strong>Here And Now</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>C. D. S., L. T., D. M., D. A. G.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Sam Hunt</td>
<td><strong>How To Forget</strong></td>
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<td>M. L. H., L. Osborne, A. Gall, M. L. H., L. Osborne, J. Shurtz, R. H. U.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Miranda Lambert</td>
<td><strong>Bluebird</strong></td>
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<td>J. Joyce, J. Lambert, T. Dick, K. Hendricks</td>
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<td><strong>Die From A Broken Heart</strong></td>
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<td>J. Robbin, D. Willis, A. Marlow, C. W. S., S. McAnally, D. R. U.</td>
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### Country Producers

<table>
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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Artist</th>
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<th>Peaked at</th>
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<th>CHART</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Greg Kurstin</td>
<td><strong>Greg Kurstin</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Dan Smyers</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td><strong>Scott Hendricks</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Zach Crowell</td>
<td><strong>Zach Crowell</strong></td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td><strong>Jay Joyce</strong></td>
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**Country Market Watch**

A Weekly National Music Sales Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEKLY UNIT COUNT</th>
<th>YEAR-TO-DATE</th>
<th>YEAR-OVER-YEAR</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WEEKLY UNIT COUNT</strong></td>
<td><strong>2019</strong></td>
<td><strong>2020</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ALBUM CONSUMPTION</strong></td>
<td>11,397,000</td>
<td>12,412,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ALBUM SALES</strong></td>
<td>2,278,000</td>
<td>1,884,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Audio On-Demand</strong></td>
<td>11,095,828,000</td>
<td>13,199,258,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Video On-Demand</strong></td>
<td>2,936,474,000</td>
<td>3,314,368,000</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ALBUM CONSUMPTION</strong></th>
<th><strong>'19</strong></th>
<th><strong>'20</strong></th>
<th><strong>CHANGE</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS</strong></td>
<td>16.51 billion</td>
<td>14.01 billion</td>
<td>-15.40%</td>
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All data measures U.S. activity as of the week ending March 26, 2020. All units counts are rounded to the nearest thousand. Album consumption units — also known as albums plus TEA plus SEA — consists of album sales, track-equivalent album (TEA) sales whereby 10 tracks equal one consumption unit, and stream-equivalent albums (SEA) whereby 1,250 paid and/or 3,750 ad-supported audio on-demand streams (OAD) equal one consumption unit.

For inquiries about any Nielsen Music data, please contact Josh Bennett at 615-807-1338 or josh.bennett@nielsen.com.
### Country Albums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1,000 Hours</td>
<td>Dan + Shay &amp; Justin Bieber</td>
<td>LEGACY (25.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>One Man Band</td>
<td>Chris Stapleton</td>
<td>COLUMBIA 31350/LEGACY</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>Beautiful Crazy</td>
<td>Luke Combs</td>
<td>RCA NASHVILLE/BMG HERITAGE 52008/LEGACY (18.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>More Hearts Than Mine</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>Meaning to Be</td>
<td>Thomas Rhett</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>I Hope You're Happy Now</td>
<td>Luke Combs</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>More Than My Hometown</td>
<td>Luke Combs</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>Heartache On My Head</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>Chasin' You</td>
<td>Maren Morris</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>Do Not Break My Heart</td>
<td>Blake Shelton</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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</table>

### Streaming & Sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Label</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10,000 Hours</td>
<td>Dan + Shay &amp; Justin Bieber</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>One Man Band</td>
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<td>COLUMBIA 31350/LEGACY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Beautiful Crazy</td>
<td>Luke Combs</td>
<td>RCA NASHVILLE/BMG HERITAGE 52008/LEGACY (18.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>More Hearts Than Mine</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Thomas Rhett</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I Hope You're Happy Now</td>
<td>Luke Combs</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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<td>Do Not Break My Heart</td>
<td>Blake Shelton</td>
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### Folk Albums

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Kenny Rogers</td>
<td>KENNY ROGERS 08576/WMN</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10,000 Hours</td>
<td>Dan + Shay</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>One Man Band</td>
<td>Chris Stapleton</td>
<td>COLUMBIA 31350/LEGACY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Beautiful Crazy</td>
<td>Luke Combs</td>
<td>RCA NASHVILLE/BMG HERITAGE 52008/LEGACY (18.98)</td>
</tr>
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<td>More Hearts Than Mine</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
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<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I Hope You're Happy Now</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Heartache On My Head</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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<td>10</td>
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### Bluegrass Albums

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Kenny Rogers</td>
<td>KENNY ROGERS 08576/WMN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10,000 Hours</td>
<td>Dan + Shay</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>One Man Band</td>
<td>Chris Stapleton</td>
<td>COLUMBIA 31350/LEGACY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Beautiful Crazy</td>
<td>Luke Combs</td>
<td>RCA NASHVILLE/BMG HERITAGE 52008/LEGACY (18.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>More Hearts Than Mine</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do Not Break My Heart</td>
<td>Blake Shelton</td>
<td>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE 607343/WMN</td>
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Johnny McGuire Intros His Solo Career With An Edgy Breakup Song

“I can say that it’s over.”

The opening line of Johnny McGuire’s debut single, “I Can’t Even,” is a blunt introduction to the song’s storyline: an overview of a man struggling with the dissolution of a meaningful romantic relationship.

The timing unintentionally fits McGuire on a professional level, too. It’s his first solo single since the breakup of Walker McGuire, a duo that released three singles from 2017-2019. Lead singer Jordan Walker found success during that run as a cowriter of Luke Combs’ “When It Rains It Pours,” and he decided in February 2019 to focus on writing and stay off the road as he builds a young family.

“I’ve had a lot of people on socials and in the comments section say, ‘Is this [song] about you guys?’” McGuire says. “Any emotions that I was going through at the time, maybe that drew me to the song subconsciously. But as far as like maliciousness and feeling any grudge on the past, there wasn’t any there.”

As the harmony singer for an act that never peaked higher than No. 35 on Country Airplay, McGuire was an unknown commodity to most of the marketplace. But BBR executive VP Jon Loba left the door open for a solo deal and gave McGuire and producer Mickey Jet Cones (Dustin Lynch, Joe Nichols) a green light to find and record four songs.

“Johnny’s vocals are so unique,” says Cones. “They have a texture to them and a raspiness, but it also has a bite to it.”

They rounded up three songs fairly easily. The fourth, “I Can’t Even,” came from Big Loud singer-songwriter HARDY, who had just released his own first single, “Rednecker.” Tree Vibez creative director/tour manager Adam Roman played it for McGuire on the way to a pickup basketball game, and McGuire related it to his sister and an ex-girlfriend; both had used that “I can’t even” phrase on him more than once.

“I didn’t really get it at first,” he says. “Then I realized it wasn’t a term of endearment, and I was kind of the butt of the joke.”

McGuire wanted “I Can’t Even,” and he was happily surprised when HARDY let him have it. HARDY, after all, had written “Growin’ Up,” the song that Walker McGuire had abandoned when the duo broke up, and McGuire thought HARDY could have cut “I Can’t Even” for his own career.

“I don’t know if it’s necessarily my sound,” says HARDY. “I had a huge pile of songs.”

“I Can’t Even” was already nearly 2 years old by then. HARDY wrote it with Mark Holman (“Simple”) and James McNair (“See You Try”) on Florida Georgia Line’s Tree Vibez bus outside the FirstOntario Centre in Hamilton, Ontario, on May 3, 2017. Holman—who has produced or played on records by James Durbin, The Struts and Foreigner—played some melodically rich chordal music that formed a backbone for the day.

Holman comes from the rock world, so a lot of his tracks and stuff that he creates are very guitar-driven,” observes McNair. “Sonically, it stands out, that formed a backbone for the day.

The opening salvo, “I can say that it’s over,” is just the first in a row of dominos.

“You’re saying like, ‘I can say this,’ ‘I can do this,’ ‘I can do that,’ ” notes HARDY. “That’s kind of the trick, too. What you can’t do is in the chorus.”

The most interesting of those can-do items is held until the second verse: “I can dive into Hemingway.”

“Some people said, ‘Hemingway; is that like a gun? Like a Remington or something?” observes McGuire. “You’ve got this saying, ‘I can’t even,’ which, people make fun of it, like it’s a Valley girl from the ’90s, but then it has substance, dropping Hemingway.”

The most important drop might be the descending melody that opens the chorus. Typically, writers try to provide some sort of lift in the chorus, so the downward trajectory of those first notes creates an unusual sonic tension and announces the chorus’ arrival at the same time.

“It’s such a unique melody that it just kind of had its own thing, so that the dynamic between the verse and the chorus — it still felt like it lifted,” says Holman.

“The chorus really pops like it does because it’s a super-conversational verse with not many crazy moves going on melodically,” adds McNair. “That’s how the chorus comes in, and it’s super-melodic. And the phrasing is so different that I think that’s what kind of made that song work.”

Holman produced the demo that day with HARDY singing lead across a keyboard-driven chorus.

“Normally, I would play heavy guitars or rhythm guitars in the chorus,” Holman says.

“But The Chainsmokers were really happening right then, so I put these like Chayni synths in that would kind of swell.”

The song drew some interest around town — the writers collectively believe Morgan Wallen, Luke Bryan and Jason Aldean all flirted with “I Can’t Even’ — but when it slid through the system, McGuire was able to pick it up for his first solo session at Nashville’s Omni Sound on April 11, 2019. Drummer Lester Estelle played spasmodic rhythms, punching up key moments in McGuire’s vocal. Bassist Jimmie Lee Sloas found a few spots for melodic bursts, and Troy Lancaster fashioned the beginnings of a Southern-rock guitar solo that Cones finished in a later overdub session. Lancaster also applied a synth effect to his guitar to create a sound in the intro that has a tinge of Snoop Dogg “Gin and Juice” tones.

Underneath it all is an occasional sense that a phone is vibrating — almost as if the ex is calling to get back together.

“I use a program called Stylus, [into which] you can program a drum kind of thing, but it’s more eccentric loops and subfrquencies and a lot of similar things,” says Cones. “It does vibrate because it’s a pulsing thing. It’s probably in there six, maybe eight times, because I just threw it in there in spots.”

Amid the slight hip-hop and Southern rock influences, McGuire’s edgy tone and the dark chorus combine to create a sinewy 3 Doors Down/Puddle of Mudd effect, though Mike Johnson’s steel guitar and McGuire’s Midwestern-bred gravel keep it from sliding too far astray.

“We did countrify it up a little bit, as much as we could,” says McGuire. “But I think the selling point for us was the voice. My voice on it makes it sound enough country that it worked.”

Wheelhouse released it to country radio on Feb. 10 via PlayMPE, giving McGuire an angry vehicle to introduce himself to the world. It’s an appropriate attitude for the song, but don’t think for a second that it applies to the breakup of his duo.

“The whole Walker McGuire experience is really college to what I’m doing,” he suggests. “It got me these relationships with radio, and it taught me how to entertain people and how to be onstage. In all honesty, every single step I took — including Walker McGuire — led me to where I am now.”
**Billboard Country Airplay Index**

**March 30, 2020 | Page 19 of 21**

**Title Publishing-Licensing Org.**

**Songwriter**

**Billboard Country Update**

**ARTICLE B**

**AFTER A FEW**

**AINT ALWAYS THE COWBOY**

**BEER CAN'T FIX**

**BIG, BIG PLANS**

**BREAK IT IN**

**CHASIN’ YOU**

**CATCH**

**EVERYWHERE BUT ON**

**FIRE TO THE Line**

**FOR MY MONEY**

**FRONT SEAT**

**GASLIGHTER**

**GOD WHISPERED YOUR NAME**

**HARD TO FORGET**

**HERE AND NOW**

**HARD TIMES**

**I HOPE**

**I LOVE YOU**

**IN BETWEEN**

**KINFOLKS**

**LONELY IF YOU LIKE IT**

**MOMMA’S HOUSE**

**MORE HEARTS THAN MINE**

**NIGHT LIKE THAT**

**NOBODY BUT YOU**

**ONE NIGHT STANDS**

**PRETTY HEART**

**SHE’S MINE**

**SLOW DANCE IN A PARKING LOT**

**SOMEBODY LIKE THAT**

**THAT'S WHY I LOVE DIRT ROADS**

**WHAT COULD'VE BEEN**

**WHAT IF I NEVER**

**WHY WE DRINK**

**WHO’S YOUR ANGEL**

**WON'T YOU BE MY LOVER**

**YOU CAN HAVE HER**

**YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE**

**YOU'RE THE BEST**

**YOUR ANGEL**

**ZZ TOP**

**Title**

**Publishing-Licensing Org.**

**Songwriter**
HOT COUNTRY SONGS INDEX

A

AFK

AFTER A FEW

AGAIN

AGREE

ALONE

ALSO

ALWAYS

AND

ANGELIANE

ANOTHER

ANYTHING

APPRECIATE

ARCHITECT

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On April 6, 1985, John Schneider’s “Country Girls” sped 3-1 on Hot Country Songs. Written by Troy Seals and Eddie Setser, the song became Schneider’s second of four No. 1s among 10 top 10s that he banked between 1981-87.

Schneider was born in Mount Kisco, N.Y., and was still a teen when he rocketed to fame, landing the role of Bo Duke in the CBS-TV hit The Dukes of Hazzard. He starred alongside Tom Wopat—who charted 10 Hot Country Songs entries himself—Catherine Bach and an ensemble cast from 1979-85, while a soundtrack from the series, including Schneider’s “In the Driver’s Seat,” hit No. 12 on Top Country Albums in 1982. He first hit Hot Country Songs with his No. 4-peaking cover of Elvis Presley’s 1960 Billboard Hot 100 leader “It’s Now or Never.” Schneider has additionally starred in multiple movies and TV projects, including the Oprah Winfrey Network’s The Haves and Have Nots, on which he has played the role of Jim Cryer since 2013.

Now 59, Schneider married longtime girlfriend Alicia Allain in 2019.

—JIM ASKER