billboard Country Update

BILLBOARD.COM/NEWSLETTERS

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BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

Tom.Roland@billboard.com

Why Interpreters Matter Alongside Artist-Writers In Country Music



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With 17 of the top 20 songs on *Billboard*'s current Country Airplay chart written, or co-written, by the artist who performed it, the country music industry has found an interesting time to recognize the interpreters.

Emmylou Harris, who relied on other songwriters for most

of the material she has recorded during her career, was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame on Oct. 6. **Trisha Yearwood**, who waited until her latest album to dig seriously into songwriting, was recognized for that project, *The Mirror*, in an Oct. 8 conversation with songwriter **Liz Rose** at Nashville's Anzie Blue. And *The*

Music of My Life: An All-Star Tribute to Anne Murray finds at least a dozen acts celebrating a Canadian songstress who has never written a song in her life on Oct. 27 at the Grand Ole Opry House.

"The average listener doesn't know" if you wrote the song, Murray reasons, "and if you do a good interpretation and you pick good songs, I see no reason why you can't have success. And I did."

Indeed, in previous eras, artist-writers were less common than those who built their careers on songs fashioned by full-time composers. And it's tough to fault the accomplishments of interpreters Martina McBride, Barbra Streisand, Frank Sinatra, Dionne Warwick, Glen Campbell, Elvis Presley, Gladys Knight, Bing Crosby or Linda Ronstadt.

"I just always wanted to be her," Yearwood said of Ronstadt during her Oct. 8 event. "I still just want to be her."

Not everybody does. A premium is placed on singer-

songwriters in the current marketplace, in part by the artists and their representatives, since writer royalties provide singers with an additional revenue stream. But the age of the internet likely creates extra pressure for artists to write their own material. Fans interact with performers through social media, and with that

personal connection, they seek personal insights from artists in their songs, too.

"It's great, whatever they choose to do to become successful and happy," Murray allows. "Things do change."

Murray, in fact, witnessed the first wave of that change. The Beatles, Bob Dylan and The Beach Boys' Brian Wil-

son elevated the concept of the artist as writer in pop music in the 1960s.

It created a certain level of snobbery from some fans — and from some artists — around the subject. Murray is certain she has been criticized for not writing her own songs — "but," she says, "not to my face."

Yearwood similarly maintains a sense of humor about it. When questioned about not writing her hits, she often insisted that "no one ever thought 'I Fall to Pieces' was less of a song just because **Patsy Cline** didn't write it."

In fact, some of the albums that have been most important in country music history — Willie Nelson's Stardust, Ray Charles'Moderns Sounds in Country & Western Music and The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's Will the Circle Be Unbroken — were intentionally built around songs not written by the artist. The



MUST APPLY BY DECEMBER 1 TO VOTE FOR THE 61ST ACM AWARDS

genre wouldn't be what it is without them.

Similarly, most of Harris' albums were shaped by other people's material, even though she proved on *The Ballad of Sally Rose*, *Red Dirt Girl* and *Stumble Into Grace* that she is quite adept at composing when it suits her.

"The song, for me, is everything," she said during her Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame acceptance speech. "I'm an interpreter—proud to be—and I really am grateful that there are people like **Rodney [Crowell]** who write these wonderful songs so that I don't have to go into the writing room and pull them out."

With thousands of songs available, Harris — much like Charles, Ronstadt or Nelson — selected her songs to fit specific themes or sonic motifs. She was able to renew her art repeatedly through her choices.

"She has really challenged herself as an artist through the years and she's just kept growing," fellow Songwriters Hall inductee **Jim Lauderdale** notes. "I would have been content as a fan and listener if she would have just done the first five albums — you know, repeating those in some way — but she went way beyond that."

Harris evolved from album to album much the same way that **Meryl Streep**, **Johnny Depp** or **Charlize Theron** drew from different parts of their creative wells to play parts in movies they did not write. That often required them to convey the personality of roles that had no relationship to their real lives.

Similarly, no one required McBride to have actually burned down a house to deliver the story in "Independence Day." **Garth Brooks** didn't have to crash his ex's wedding to sell the drunken scenario of "Friends in Low Places." **Reba McEntire** wasn't forced to kill anyone to sing "The Night the Lights Went Out in Georgia" or become a hooker to capture the emotions in "Fancy." And Yearwood didn't need to have a teenage fling with a criminal to pull listeners into "Walkaway Joe." She also was able to maintain some privacy.

"I become a character in the movie for three-and-a-half minutes when I sing a song," Yearwood said. "You're able to [connect] through your emotions, but that's really personal. You're not necessarily sharing [your inner life] with everybody. I feel like I kind of kept that wall up for a long, long time."

Still, when the majority of artists are mining their inner world to write their material, a gut-level connection with songs does matter, even for the interpreters. But artists weren't always allowed to select the material that resonated most with them; many—particularly females—were at the mercy of their producers.

"A lot of the girl singers — **Rosemary Clooney, Peggy Lee** and **Patti Page** and people like that — they didn't even have a choice," Murray says. "Somebody chose the songs for them. I've had conversations with Rosemary Clooney about that. She hated some of the stuff she did because they didn't give her meaty stuff. You know, something like 'You Needed Me' where you could sink your teeth into it."

Ultimately, the emotional impact on the listener remains the most important aspect of a performance, whether the conduit is a singer-song writer or an interpreter.

"The world needs songs," Harris said. "We need someone to express what is inside our hearts, what is inside our souls, and nothing touches us more than a song that speaks to our humanity." •



Chris Young (center) performed "Boots on the Ground" on Oct. 21 on syndicated TV show *Live With Kelly & Mark*. He's flanked by co-hosts Kelly Ripa and Mark Consuelos.



Ella Langley brought out surprise guest Koe Wetzel on Oct. 18 to perform their duet, "That's Why We Fight," at Billy Bob's Texas in Fort Worth, where they received RIAAcertified gold records for the single.



Craig Campbell (center) headlined Oct. 14 when WAVW Fort Pierce, Fla., hosted a Wave Country concert at Tiki 52 in Tequesta. He's flanked by WAVW PD Heath West (left) and iHeartMedia South Florida area president Mark McCauley.





The 30th Medallion Ceremony

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We congratulate Tony Brown, June Carter Cash, and Kenny Chesney, and express our deepest gratitude to the many people who gave their time and talent to produce this very special 2025 Medallion Ceremony.



Photos by: Tibrina Hobson and Terry Wyatt / Getty Images for the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and Amiee Stubbs

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE MEDALLION ALL-STAR BAND

Paul Franklin, Steel guitar Jen Gunderman, Keyboards Tania Hancheroff, Vocals Brent Mason, Electric guitar Jerry Pentecost, Drums
Alison Prestwood, Bass
Deanie Richardson, Fiddle and Mandolin
Mica Roberts, Vocals

Biff Watson, Bandleader and Acoustic Guitar **Jeff White**, Guitars and Vocals **Charlie Worsham**, Guitars and Vocals

billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY MONITORED BY

ON THE CHARTS RUSS PENUELL

rpenuell@billboard.com

'Saddle' Up: Luke Combs Lands 19th Country Airplay No. 1

Luke Combs earns his 19th No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Country Airplay chart as "Back in the Saddle" (Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville) gallops three spots on the ranking dated Nov. 1, up 23% to 30.8 million audience impressions Oct. 17-23, according to Luminate.

The single is expected to appear on Combs' sixth studio album, due in early 2026. His latest leader extends one of the most consistent radio runs in recent history—dating to his first week at No. 1 in May 2017, with "Hurricane." He and **Morgan Wallen** are tied for the most Country Airplay leaders.

"Back in the Saddle" is also Combs' 18th Country Airplay No. 1 as a co-writer and eighth as a co-producer. (The only leader as a recording artist that he didn't write: His 2023 cover of **Tracy Chapman**'s "Fast Car.")



Beyond Combs' 19 Country Airplay No. 1s, he has logged six on *Billboard*'s multimetric Hot Country Songs chart, four on Country Streaming Songs and 11 on Country Digital Song Sales.

NEW TOP 10s Both **Parker McCollum** and **Parmalee** break into the Country Airplay top 10. McCollum's "What Kinda Man" (MCA Nashville) rises 11-8 with 17.1 million audience impressions (up 8%), marking his fifth appearance in that range. The Conroe, Texas, native has earned three No. 1s.

Plus, **Parmalee**'s "Cowgirl" (Stoney Creek) climbs 12-10 (17 million, up 9%). The four-man band collects its eighth top 10, a run that includes four No. 1s dating to its first, "Carolina," in 2013. All five of the group's Country Airplay entries this decade have hit the top 10. ●

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

TITLE Imprint/Label Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)
BACK IN THE SADDLE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville Luke Combs	+5.804
DON'T MIND IF I DO Nashville Harbor Riley Green Featuring Ella Langley	+2.174
STAY COUNTRY OR DIE TRYIN' Ten Point/Wheelhouse Blake Shelton	+2.131
HEAVENS TO BETSY Big Machine Jackson Dean	+1.792
FAVORITE COUNTRY SONG Mercury/Republic/Big Loud HARDY	+1.567
3,2,1 Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/EMI Nashville/Mercury/Republic/Mercury Nashville Tucker Wetmore	+1.516
COWGIRL Stoney Creek Parmalee	+1.469
6 MONTHS LATER Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville Megan Moroney	+1.468
DARLIN' Chase Matthew/Warner Music Nashville/WAR Chase Matthew	+1.381
20 CIGARETTES Mercury/Republic/Big Loud Morgan Wallen	+1.362

MOST INCREASED PLAYS

TITLE Imprint/Label Artist	GAIN
BACK IN THE SADDLE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville Luke Combs	+1248
DON'T MIND IF I DO Nashville Harbor Riley Green Featuring Ella Langley	+519
STAY COUNTRY OR DIE TRYIN' Ten Point/Wheelhouse Blake Shelton	+464
HEAVENS TO BETSY Big Machine Jackson Dean	+460
COWGIRL Stoney Creek Parmalee	+419
6 MONTHS LATER Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville Megan Moroney	+410
20 CIGARETTES Mercury/Republic/Big Loud Morgan Wallen	+404
AMEN American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Stoney Creek/Magnolia Music Shaboozey & Jelly Roll	+312
AIN'T A BAD LIFE Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory Thomas Rhett Featuring Jordan Davis	+305
3,2,1 Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/EMI Nashville/Mercury/Republic/Mercury Nashville Tucker Wetmore	+303

RECURRENTS

THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory Thomas Rhett	18.705
2	BOTTLE ROCKETS Triple Tigers Scotty McCreery & Hootie & The Blowfish	16.085
3	JUST IN CASE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud Morgan Wallen	15.816
4	BAR NONE MCA Nashville Jordan Davis	15.477
5	HIGH ROAD YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville Koe Wetzel & Jessie Murph	12.684
6	I'M THE PROBLEM Mercury/Republic/Big Loud Morgan Wallen	12.238
7	THIS HEART Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville Corey Kent	12.165
8	POUR ME A DRINK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud Post Malone Featuring Blake Shelton	10.365
9	LIAR Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek Jelly Roll	9.718
10	HOMETOWN HOME BMG/Galaxy Label Group LOCASH	9.267



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 23, 2025

THIS Week		WKS ON CHART	TITLE (Label) ARTIST	TW Spins	SPINS +/-	THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON Chart	TITLE (Label) ARTIST	TW Spins	SPINS +/-
0	2	18	SWEET (Independent) ★★1 Week at 1★★ Bubba Westly	1731	141	0	14	18	THE OTHERS (Late August Records) Cody Jinks	1165	116
0	3	15	WHEN SHE KISSED ME (Almost Country) Casey Donahew	1501	24	12	11	20	BAD REPUTATION (River House) Grant Gilbert and Hudson Westbrook	1159	11
8	5	30	ARE YOU A REAL COWBOY (Independent) Amanda Kate Ferris	1458	105	®	16	12	HOLD HER HORSES (Independent) Jesse Raub Jr.	1136	103
4	6	20	I MISS US (RedPlay Media) Trevor Underwood	1447	113	•	18	12	GUITAR IN MY HAND (Independent) Tilluride	1100	116
5	4	27	ADELINE (Independent) Shane Smith & The Saints	1432	38	15	13	19	BORN RUNNIN OUTTA TIME (Sony Music Group) Lukas Nelson	1051	-43
6	7	18	LONELY OVER YOU (Warner Music Nashville) William Beckmann	1386	58	10	20	17	KEEP ME UP (Independent) Hayden Haddock	970	15
Ø	9	10	HIT THE HIGHWAY (Independent) Bri Bagwell	1363	117	Ø	19	13	DIED AND GONE COUNTRY (Independent) Curtis Grimes	968	11
8	8	18	TWO HANDS (Independent) Pat Green and Corey Kent	1293	13	18	17	20	UNINVITED GUEST (Independent) Casey Chesnutt	931	-83
9	10	19	BURN (RedPlay Media) Guy Vincent	1254	39	®	22	12	I WAS WRONG (Independent) Mike Ryan	892	29
0	12	11	ALWAYS FLOWERS (Independent) Kylie Frey	1251	155	20	21	14	THE OLDER I GET (MORE COUNTRY I'M GETTING TO BE) (Fool Hearted) Jon Wolfe	888	16

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

billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY MONITORED BY

		WKS		AUDIENCE (I	N MILLIONS)		PLAYS	
THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label Artist	THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
0	4	13	BACK INTHE SADDLE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville ** No. 1 (1 Week)/Most Increased Audience ** Luke Combs	30.761	+5.804	8598	1248	1
2	1	18	I GOT BETTER Mercury/Republic/Big Loud Morgan Wallen	29.177	-3.502	7629	-1289	2
3	3	47	DARLIN' Chase Matthew/Warner Music Nashville/WAR Chase Matthew	27.592	+1.381	7590	124	3
4	2	30	HEART OF STONE Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Republic/Stoney Creek Jelly Roll	24.828	-1.632	6262	-482	4
5	6	39	GOOD NEWS American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music Shaboozey	22.065	-0.611	5350	-117	8
6	7	32	HAPPENTO ME Triple Tigers Russell Dickerson	20.960	+0.586	5572	8	6
Ø	9	57	HEAVENS TO BETSY Big Machine Jackson Dean	19.463	+1.792	5794	460	5
8	11	58	WHAT KINDA MAN MCA Nashville Parker McCollum	17.147	+1.343	4939	161	9
9	10	22	SOMEWHERE OVER LAREDO Broken Bow Lainey Wilson	16.992	+1.038	5457	250	7
0	12	42	COWGIRL Stoney Creek Parmalee	16.990	+1.469	4722	419	11
0	13	33	3,2,1 Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/EMI Nashville/Mercury/Republic/Mercury Nashville Tucker Wetmore	15.856	+1.516	4815	303	10
Ø	15	15	DON'T MIND IF I DO Nashville Harbor Riley Green Featuring Ella Langley	14.860	+2.174	4498	519	12
B	14	31	HOUSE AGAIN River House/Warner Music Nashville/WAR Hudson Westbrook	13.561	+0.641	4176	195	13
•	17	16	6 MONTHS LATER Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville Megan Moroney	13.201	+1.468	3941	410	15
Œ	16	20	GOOD TIMES & TAN LINES Leo33 Zach Top	12.528	+0.521	4079	19	14
1	18	28	FAVORITE COUNTRY SONG Mercury/Republic/Big Loud HARDY	12.322	+1.567	3679	263	17
(1)	20	22	STAY COUNTRY OR DIETRYIN' Ten Point/Wheelhouse Blake Shelton	12.139	+2.131	3734	464	16
B	19	39	IT WON'T BE LONG RECORDS Nashville George Birge	11.040	+0.709	3552	149	18
1	21	6	HOW FAR DOES A GOODBYE GO Macon/Broken Bow ★★ Airpower ★★ Jason Aldean	10.531	+1.144	3148	255	19
20	22	44	TIME'S TICKING Valory ** Airpower ** Justin Moore	9.644	+0.340	2959	52	20
21	23	41	STRAIGHT LINE Hit Red/Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville Keith Urban	8.754	-0.177	2903	-130	21
22	24	38	I DARE YOU Big Machine Rascal Flatts & Jonas Brothers	7.719	+0.545	2842	100	22
23	25	37	BETTER ME FOR YOU (BROWN EYES) Fugitive Recordings/Magnolia Music Max McNown	7.031	+0.497	2591	181	23
2	28	6	AIN'T A BAD LIFE Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory Thomas Rhett Featuring Jordan Davis	6.934	+1.042	2073	305	26
25	26	26	WHAT HE'LL NEVER HAVE Curb Dylan Scott	6.489	+0.452	2507	-1	24
20	27	46	GOLDEN CHILD Riser House Meghan Patrick	6.285	+0.296	2187	81	25
3	29	34	ENDS OFTHE EARTH RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville Ty Myers	5.710	+0.233	1590	54	32
23	31	28	HARD FOUGHT HALLELUJAH Brandon Lake/Essential/Stoney Creek/Lyric Ridge Brandon Lake X Jelly Roll	4.917	+0.075	1578	75	33
29	35	27	I AIN'T COMING BACK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud Morgan Wallen Featuring Post Malone	4.812	+0.817	1420	199	36
30	30	18	WEAK Valory Preston Cooper	4.768	-0.125	1720	-75	30

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. Titles that decline in audience but increase in detections will also receive a bullet if the total audience erosion for the week does not exceed 3%.

RECURRENTS

On Country Airplay, descending titles below No. 10 in either audience or detections are moved to recurrent after 20 weeks, provided that they are not still gaining enough audience points to bullet or if they rank below No. 10 and post a third consecutive week of (non-bulleted) audience decline, regardless of total chart weeks. Plus, songs that ascend to a peak between Nos. 1 and 5 will remain on the chart for one additional week even if dropping below No. 10.

HOT SHOT DEBUT

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

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

Most Increased Audience on Country Airplay lists the songs with the greatest week-to-week increases in total audience.

AIRPOWER

Awarded on Country Airplay to titles ranking inside top 20 in plays and audience rankings for the first time, with increases in both plays and audience.

BREAKER

Awarded on Country Airplay to titles achieving airplay (at least one detection) at 60% of reporting stations for the first time.

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billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY MONITORED BY

THIS	LAST	WKS ON	Nobilital (In Interest of			PLAYS		
THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label Artist	THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
9	34	26	THE FALL CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN Cody Johnson	4.547	+0.365	1495	94	34
€	33	49	WOULD IF I COULD Mercury/Republic/Big Loud ERNEST	4.503	+0.292	1855	29	27
3 3	36	29	TILTHE LAST ONE DIES Boss Moves/Black River Chris Young	4.298	+0.456	1846	134	28
34	32	15	A SONGTO SING Vanner/Republic/Big Loud Miranda Lambert & Chris Stapleton	4.015	-0.212	1692	-79	31
35	37	21	ME & A BEER Harpeth 60 Chris Janson	3.893	+0.291	1787	174	29
36	38	33	WISHYOU WELL Music Soup/Interscope/MCA Nashville Vincent Mason	3.537	+0.316	1485	25	35
<u> </u>	39	16	AMEN American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Stoney Creek/Magnolia Music Shaboozey & Jelly Roll	3.438	+0.734	1413	312	37
33	44	3	20 CIGARETTES Mercury/Republic/Big Loud ★★ Breaker ★★ Morgan Wallen	3.262	+1.362	776	404	51
39	42	19	WRONG HEARTS BMG/Galaxy Label Group LOCASH	3.106	+0.716	1168	116	40
40	41	22	BAGGAGE Black River Kelsea Ballerini	2.502	+0.031	1322	14	39
41	40	22	SAME MOON Riser House/Columbia Nashville Mitchell Tenpenny	2.496	-0.131	1018	-77	42
②	43	11	MAKING GOODTIME Three Up Three Down/Columbia Nashville Old Dominion	2.312	+0.096	982	-26	44
43	46	13	NEVER CALL AGAIN Thrivin Here/Warner Music Nashville/WMN Gavin Adcock	2.015	+0.124	1007	7	43
4	45	16	KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow John Morgan	1.963	+0.070	1020	-20	41
45	47	23	PAPER UMBRELLAS McGraw/Big Machine Tim McGraw Featuring Parker McCollum	1.761	-0.103	1371	3	38
46	48	20	DRINK WITH YOU Nashville Harbor Brett Young	1.656	+0.006	891	-19	45
47	50	23	BURNED DOWN HEAVEN Chase McDaniel/Big Machine Chase McDaniel	1.599	-0.010	805	-18	49
48	49	5	HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville Josh Ross	1.464	-0.149	755	-5	53
49	51	15	EASYTO LOVE Broken Bow Dustin Lynch	1.440	+0.103	809	16	47
<u>50</u>	56	2	CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Music Nashville/WMN Bailey Zimmerman	1.314	+0.270	731	217	54
6	53	4	LONG LIVE COUNTRY Triple Tigers Shane Profitt	1.294	+0.142	775	46	52
 ②	52	10	SEVENTEEN Columbia Nashville Kameron Marlowe	1.281	-0.004	716	18	55
5 €	54	7	ALL MY EXES Mercury/Big Loud Lauren Alaina Featuring Chase Matthew	1.153	+0.021	599	-2	57
54	55	13	I WISH YOU WOULD Valory Mackenzie Carpenter Featuring Midland	1.147	+0.022	808	23	48
⊕	59	8	WE CAN ALWAYS MOVE ON Warner Music Nashville/WAR Cole Swindell	1.086	+0.176	791	83	50
56	58	6	HEAVEN PASSING THROUGH Bossier City/Thirty Tigers/Akando Turnpike Troubadours	1.060	+0.139	373	29	-
57	57	12	NOTELLIN' True To The Song/Nashville Harbor Caroline Jones	0.890	-0.035	869	-16	46
58	NE	w	THE HELLYOU ARE Back Blocks/Mercury/Big Loud ★★ Hot Shot Debut ★★ Ashley Cooke	0.877	+0.103	574	37	58
5 9	NE	w	CHOOSIN'TEXAS SAWGOD/Columbia Ella Langley	0.838	+0.838	96	96	-
60	NE	w	FIREWORKS Curb Kelsey Hart	0.751	+0.002	618	0	56



Michael Ray performed bedside for patients at HCA Florida South Tampa Hospital on Oct. 15 as Musicians On Call launched its program in the city. From left: WTVT-TV Tampa anchor Mark Wilson, HCA Florida South Tampa Hospital CEO Ned Hill, MOC director of artist relations Torianne Valdez and Ray.



Megan Moroney visited with local radio executives when she performed Oct. 18 during the annual Tampa Pig Jig, a benefit for kidney disease. From left: WQYK Tampa Bay, Fla., personality J.R. Jaus and music director/morning co-host Laura Phillips; Moroney; RCA Nashville Southeast regional promotion manager Ali O'Connell; and WFUS Tampa Bay director of programming and brand strategy Ashley Layfield.

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Jon Pardi caught up with WNCY Green Bay, Wis., staff when he played the Resch Center on Oct. 18. From left: WNCY afternoon host Hannah Damas, MCA Nashville director of Midwest promotion Donna Passuntino, Pardi and WNCY morning host Randy "Shotgun" Shannon.

RADIO & RECORDS®

Newly founded full-service company Cobblestone Road, which includes a record label, hired Mike Kraski as GM. A former executive with Sony Music Nashville and Equity Records, Kraski most recently served as managing partner for New Vision Artist Management. Reach him here ... Spin Doctors Music Group president/CEO Al Brock announced plans to retire at the end of the year. He is plotting a March 21, 2026, celebration ... Artist-writer Dalton Davis signed a recording contract with MCA/Republic. His first music under the agreement, "Cows in the Front Yard," was released Oct. 24 ... American Idol alum Slater Nalley inked with Warner Music Nashville/Warner Records in tandem with 19 Entertainment. His debut single, "Foolish Pride," was released Oct. 17 ... SSRS acquired Edison Research, which has repeatedly provided insights into country consumers at the Country Radio Seminar. Edison founders Joe Lenski and Larry Rosin both joined the SSRS management structure ... Nashville-based artist-writer Sarah Harralson will launch a new podcast, Takin' a Walk Nashville, on Oct. 30 in conjunction with Buzz Knight Media Productions and iHeartPodcasts. Chris Young is her inaugural guest ... Eddie Haskell returned to KRST Albuquerque, N.M., as assistant PD/afternoon host, RadioInsight.com reported. He worked middays at the station when he announced his retirement from broadcasting in 2024 ... Country Radio Broadcasters unveiled pieces of the agenda for the 2026 Country Radio Seminar, including panels on genre crossovers, audience analytics and country's increased global reach. Clint Black, Steve Wariner and Paul Overstreet were also announced as participants in a '90s country-themed installment of the seminar's annual songwriter showcase, Bob Kingsley's Acoustic Alley ... GrassRoots Promotion is accepting applications for the Steve Ferguson CRS Scholarship, providing Country Radio Seminar registration to a programmer who has not attended the gathering in the last five years. Apply here through Dec. 5.

'ROUND THE ROW

The Country Music Association made seven staff changes, including one new hire: Mary Spaulding, who joins as content production manager following a run as FlyteVu production coordinator. CMA promoted Michael Farris, who rises to vp of business strategy and insights from senior director; **Kate Watson**, who ascends to senior director of industry relations from director; **Jeff Leet**, who was boosted to director of brand integrity from senior graphic designer; Lindsey Morrison, who climbs to senior manager of community engagement from manager; Richard Xiong, who was elevated to insights senior analyst from insights analyst; and Kennedy Strickler, who was promoted to communications project manager from communications coordinator ... Play It Again Music hired director of digital and streaming

Amy O'Connor and creative director Molly Reinold. O'Connor was formerly Riser House head of streaming marketing strategy. Reinold spent four years with the creative team at 50 Egg Music ... Colt Murski joined KP Entertainment as senior director of publishing. He was most recently Curb | Word vp of country publishing. Reach him here ... Warner Chappell Nashville promoted Eric Reid to junior manager of A&R from coordinator... Atlanta-based Penelope Road signed with Make Wake Artists, where the quintet will be co-managed by Make Wake founder/CFO Chris Kappy and manager Eric Berger ... Songwriter Parker Welling ("Blue Tacoma") was elevated to industry liaison on the Nashville Songwriters Association International's 27-member board. Songwriter Ben Williams ("Tennessee Orange") fills Welling's traditional seat, and Drew Baldridge joined as an artist-writer representative ... Luke Combs and Opry Entertainment Group will open a second Category 10 venue at the Flamingo Las Vegas in fall 2026. The first club bearing that name opened within the last year in Nashville in what was previously the Wildhorse Saloon ... Combs and producer-director Robert Deaton were among six new members inducted into the North Carolina Music Hall of Fame on Oct. 16 at the Mooresville Performing Arts Center ... Charley Pride, Old Dominion and songwriter Liz Rose ("Burn It Down," "Girl Crush") will be inducted into the Music City Walk of Fame on Nov. 11 ... Origins Music Group holds its second Origins Impact Awards on Nov. 20 at The Cowan in Nashville. Finalists with multiple nominations include Rissi Palmer, Louie the Singer, Coffey Anderson, Tonio Armani, Frank Ray, Sammy Arriaga, Angie K and MŌRIAH ... Reba McEntire will host NBC's Christmas in Rockefeller Center on Dec. 3 ... Eric **Church** will release an IMAX film, Evangeline vs. The Machine Comes Alive, on Feb. 13, 2026, along with a concurrent live album ... Amazon Music named Carter Faith its next breakthrough artist during an Oct. 21 Grand Ole Opry takeover ... St. Martin's Press publishes Ain't Nobody's Fool: The Life and Times of Dolly Parton, authored by Martha Ackmann, on Dec. 30 ... Season two of The Energy Curfew Music Hour, a variety-show podcast created by Chris Thile and Claire Coffee, debuted Oct. 23. Guests for the season, hosted by Thile and The Punch Brothers, include Billy Strings, Shawn Mendes and I'm With Her ... The International Bluegrass Music Association is accepting applications for its 2026 International Band Performance Grant here through Nov. 21 ... Craig Campbell will perform Nov. 8 when his Grindstone Cowboy opens a new location in Shelbyville, Tenn., that day ... Alan Jackson added three offerings to his Silverbelly whiskey line ... The family of the late John Prine grossed over \$400,000 for the Hello in There Foundation with the fourth You Got Gold: Celebrating the Songs of John Prine concert series in Nashville that concluded Oct. 12 ... Hannah Ellis raised more than \$27,000 for C.O.P.S., which benefits the families of fallen officers, with her inaugural Officer Down Golf Classic on Oct. 13 ... Industry veteran Frank Mull died Oct. 16 of complications from pneumonia in Palo Cedro, Calif. A former



Charles Kelley, pictured with patient Annzie, was among the performers when the Grand Ole Opry hosted an Oct. 21 installment the New York Stock Exchange that benefited St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.



Grand Ole Opry member Rhonda Vincent rang the opening bell at on Oct. 21 in honor of the Opry's 100th anniversary in November.

billboard



BIG MACHINE LABEL GROUP 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Led by Founder, President and CEO Scott Borchetta, the Big Machine Label Group encompasses Big Machine Records, The Valory Music Co., Nashville Harbor Records & Entertainment, Big Machine/John Varvatos Records and publishing company Big Machine Music as well as its own digital radio station, Big Machine Radio. BMLG artists include superstars Tim McGraw, Thomas Rhett, Sheryl Crow, Rascal Flatts, Brantley Gilbert, and Lady A; chart-topping acts Justin Moore, Eli Young Band, Brett Young, Midland, Carly Pearce, Riley Green, Aaron Lewis, and Badflower. BMLG artists have received multiple GRAMMY, CMA, ACM, AMA, CMT, Teen Choice, MTV, Billboard, People's Choice and Brit Awards. Big Machine is the first-ever American label to align with terrestrial radio for performance royalty rights for its artists and is an industry leader in fighting for artist, songwriter, publisher and record company rights.

Big Machine Label Group created the Music Has Value Fund to provide assistance to nonprofit organizations that make music, aspire to make music, and access and appreciate music.

CONTACTS

East Coast/Midwest Joe Maimone | joe.maimone@billboard.com
Southeast Lee Ann Photoglo | laphotoglo@gmail.com
Los Angeles Aki Kaneko | moishekaneko@gmail.com
Latin Marcia Olival | marciaolival29@gmail.com
Touring & West Coast Cynthia Mellow | cmellow615@gmail.com
International Ryan O'Donnell | rodonnell@pmc.com

billboard Country Airplay Index

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

- 20 CIGARETTES (oncord Tunes, SESAC/Card Tables Music, SESAC/Hang Your Hat Hits, SESAC/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Family Farm Songs, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Jomil 10 Music, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI/Warner-Jameralane Publishing (orp., BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI (CLaCorte, C.McGill, J.Miller, B.Pendergrass) 88
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billboard



TOP BUSINESS MANAGERS

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

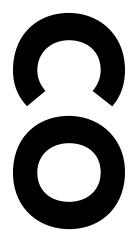
Making money in the music industry is hard enough for artists and executives, which is why they turn to an elite few to help with financial profit and investment.

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.

Advertise in this issue and reach an elite group of influencers who guide their clients' financial fortunes and know a thing or two about how to invest their own money.

CONTACTS

East Coast/Midwest Joe Maimone | joe.maimone@billboard.com
Southeast Lee Ann Photoglo | laphotoglo@gmail.com
Los Angeles Aki Kaneko | moishekaneko@gmail.com
Latin Marcia Olival | marciaolival29@gmail.com
Touring & West Coast Cynthia Mellow | cmellow615@gmail.com
International Ryan O'Donnell | rodonnell@pmc.com



70 Years Ago

When George Jones Made His Chart Debut

In 1955, the singer launched one of country's longest-running careers

It was a quiet start to a thundering career.

George Jones' "Why, Baby, Why?" slipped onto *Billboard's* Most Played in Juke Boxes chart dated Oct. 29, 1955, at No. 10, tied for the list's final slot with Jean Shepard. It marked his first appearance on a *Billboard* chart on his way to membership in the Country Music Hall of Fame.

In the remaining 58 years of his life,

Jones compiled a leading 168 titles on *Billboard*'s country song lists (Hot Country Songs and predecessor charts), with No. 2 **Eddy Arnold** at 146. Jones also made history with 143 top 40 hits, again outpacing Arnold, who had 126.

Of those singles, 1959's "White Lightning" was the first to reach No. 1, while 1983's "I Always Get Lucky With You" became his 13th and last. Additionally, "He Stopped Loving Her Today" is enshrined in the Grammy Hall of Fame.

"Why, Baby, Why?" ultimately peaked at No. 4, while six other artists also charted the song. Two of those versions — Red Sovine & Webb Pierce's 1956 cover and Charley Pride's 1983 rendition — reached No. 1.

