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COUNTRY'S RISING SOUND

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BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

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The Classic Album ‘Wanted! The Outlaws’ Continues To Resonate As It Turns 50

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It had no relationship to the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list, but four country artists benefited from the outsider implication in the album title *Wanted! The Outlaws*.

Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Jessi Colter and Tom-pall Glaser rode the *Outlaws* album to No. 1 on *Billboard*’s

Top Country Albums 50 years ago, on the chart dated Feb. 28, 1976, in one of the genre’s most misunderstood branding efforts. The misinterpretations are part of what made it successful.

The “outlaw” brand — which would also apply to fellow rebels **David Allan Coe, Johnny Paycheck, Jerry Jeff Walker and Kris Kristofferson** among others in that era — was about breaking rules in the music industry and refusing to bend to convention. Still, the fact that many of its proponents did spend some time in the pokey or get investigated for criminal activities only added to the mystique around them. The outlaw sound was tough, and if those sonics bled over into perceptions of the artists’ personal lives, well... it definitely made them attractive to a certain audience.

“It changed the course of country music,” says **Ronnie Dunn**, who — at age 22 — was in his formative years as a musician when the *Outlaws* album arrived. “It was probably the most significant wave in 50 years. From my perspective, it turned everything around.”

Country music in the early- and mid-1970s was heavily domi-

nated by sweetened singles, loaded with string sections that somehow made the adult themes of the day — drinkin’, cheatin’ and heartbreak — a little easier to take alongside the genre’s love songs while listening to the radio on the way to work. But the artists who stood up to the system injected some of the rawness, the energy and the brashness of rock into their brand of country.

“That movement developed an attitude that country had never had before,” notes **Brothers Osborne** guitarist **John Osborne**. “It went from being kind of like the wholesome music for Mom and Dad to, you know, the outsiders have a chance to listen to this genre.”

Wanted! The Outlaws spent six weeks at No. 1 on Top Country Albums and became the first country album certified platinum by the Recording Industry of America. And it arguably created a niche for itself that has never been matched. There have certainly been other successful multi-art-

ist compilations that documented a certain sound, including *The Anthology of Folk Music*, the *American Graffiti* soundtrack and the *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* soundtrack. But rarely, if ever, has a compilation documented a movement *while it was happening*, thus raising the profile and understanding of that format.

“Then [the genre] just goes to a whole ‘nother level after it comes out,” says filmmaker **Eric Geadelmann**, whose documentary *They Called Us Outlaws* premieres March 15 at the SXSW Film & TV Festival in Austin.



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The outlaw subgenre emerged in Texas, a state known for its diverse musical heritage. Rock, country, western swing, folk, R&B and various strands of Mexicali music blended into different sounds that all found an audience in the state's healthy club scene. Those venues are ideal outlets for raw, hardened music, and they mostly draw under-35 demographics. In those conditions, young Texan adults developed a taste for the fusions they were hearing. Thus, Jennings and Nelson were famously characterized as musicians who brought the hippies, the college students and the ranchers together. They also provided a natural space for people who straddled those lifestyles.

"I wouldn't get my ass kicked as much, standing in cow pastures with guys that *used* to kick my ass, [because we were] watching the same bands," remembers **Steve Earle**, who launches a new tour, "Steve Earle: Fifty One Years of Songs and Stories," Feb. 27 at New York City's Gramercy Theatre. "I was always a guy with long hair and cowboy boots, and that was sometimes an issue."

Jennings, signed at the time to RCA, famously battled the label over its recording policies. The company demanded that its artists record in its facilities, RCA Studio A and Studio B, using tried-and-true studio musicians who routinely knocked out an efficient three or four songs per three-hour session. Jennings wanted to record elsewhere, away from the watchful eyes of the RCA brass, and he wanted to pick his own material, using the musicians who would be charged with playing the songs in concert.

"All he wanted to do was to include his road musicians in his music and the sound that he had imprinted," Colter says.

She had been married to rock guitarist **Duane Eddy** prior to Jennings and had taken for granted that every artist had the kind of freedom that Eddy enjoyed in making his albums.

"He could decide who he wanted to produce, who he wanted to [play] on it, and I couldn't figure out what they were doing here," she says. "It was just strange. Waylon... was just hoping to make a change."

Jennings said as much — "We need a change" — in the lyrics of "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way," a No. 1 single in November 1975. That was a big year for their brand of music. Colter's "I'm Not Lisa" occupied the summit six months prior, on May 24; and Nelson captivated listeners with the austere production of his concept album *Red Headed Stranger*, which yielded his breakthrough "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain."

RCA had previously recorded music in the vault from each of those acts, and division chief **Jerry Bradley** was convinced that if they could position the music as a movement, it would raise Jennings' sales. **Hazel Smith**, who ran Glaser's office, had coined the phrase "outlaws," and Bradley decided to use it as a positioning statement in the album title. He invited **Guy Clark** and **Bill Joe Shaver** to participate; Clark declined, and Shaver's wife, **Brenda**, told Jennings she wasn't allowing her husband to be on it.

"Brenda was in the other room, overheard it, came running in and ran Waylon out," Geadelmann says. "[She] said, 'No, he ain't gonna be on any outlaw thing' because he'd been in jail and had all kinds of issues going on, and she was trying to straighten his ass out."

Since *Wanted! The Outlaws* was a marketing construct, rather than a pack-



Eric Church greeted St. Louis radio staff when he performed Feb. 21 at the Enterprise Center. From left: KSD PD **Dusty Panhorst**, Church, WIL assistant PD/music director **Marty Brooks** and Mercury Nashville Southwest promotion rep **John Trapane**.

age created by a single artist chasing the muse, it didn't entirely mirror the creative intent that Jennings and his compadres fought to achieve. But it did capture the sonic spirit, and it became a significant introduction to this edgy version of country for consumers who hadn't put it all together yet.

"I got a hold of a very early copy of it and proceeded to wear it out," says Earle, who was signed to a Nashville publishing company at the time.

He connected with it in spite of its corporate-driven foundation.

"I knew it was a compilation, and I knew what the motives were for the people that put it together," he says. "I don't think we, who were there in [the business in] that moment, saw it the same way everybody else did, but then it becomes a big hit, and we understood why."

It surpassed RCA's wildest dreams behind the Jennings & Nelson single "Good Hearted Woman," fully organizing the raw side of country as its own separate subgenre.

"I was just as surprised as anybody else," Bradley said during an interview for *They Called Us Outlaws*. "But I guaran-damn-tee you, the more you heard it on the radio, the more you liked it."

Earle, with his gruff "Guitar Town," revived the outlaw vibe in the next generation of country acts, but he was hardly alone at carrying the flame forward. **Jamey Johnson**, **Jason Aldean** and **Eric Church** all emerged in the 21st century's first decade as self-styled artists making music that cut against the grain.

Other modern-day outlaws include **Luke Combs**, **Zach Bryan**, **Corey Kent**, **Red Clay Strays**, **Stephen Wilson Jr.** and **Miranda Lambert**, not to mention most of the Texas red-dirt artists and the country-centric acts that are classified as Americana.

To be certain, not everyone fully understands the artistic point of the "outlaw" brand. It's easy to adhere to the surface connotations, rather than the creative motivations it represents, as Earle is frequently reminded in his role as the host of *Hard Core Troubadour* on SiriusXM's Outlaw Channel.

"There's times when I get a little irritated with people that I run into, you know, artists that we play that their interpretation of outlaw country is drugs and alcohol," he says.

Then again, other creatives — such as songwriter **Laura Veltz** ("The Bones," "Speechless") — are completely on board with its tenets.

"I consider outlaws to be people who take risks and they're unbothered when someone is bothered by them," she says. "That's an outlaw. I'm that through and through. I don't know if that's what I write, but it's certainly who I am."

And Geadelmann's teen-aged daughter understood the brand so well that she announced that if *They Called Us Outlaws* didn't feature current acts **Tyler Childers** and **Parker McCollum**, she would not be watching it. Or telling her friends about it. Both artists are indeed in the film, carrying on the vision of the original outlaws, who didn't necessarily have a name for what they were doing until *Wanted! The Outlaws* came along.

"At the end of the day, it's what it's all about," Geadelmann says. "It's not a fuck-you to the industry. It's an exploration of what it means to be an artist and follow what's inside yourself." ●



Miranda Lambert and **George Strait** were among the inductees at the Texas Songwriters Hall of Fame awards ceremony Feb. 21 in Austin.



Hudson Westbrook hung with Cox Media/San Antonio director of branding & programming **Christi Brooks** when he appeared Feb. 17 at the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo.

A person wearing a cowboy hat and dark clothing is silhouetted against a bright sunset. They are standing on the deck of a sailboat, leaning against the mast. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong lens flare and illuminating the scene with a warm, golden light. The water is calm, and the sky is a mix of blue and orange. The overall mood is serene and adventurous.

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Radio Makes ‘Room’ For Two Luke Combs Songs In Top 10

Luke Combs logs his 26th Country Airplay top 10 — and places two rising titles in the tier at once — as “Sleepless in a Hotel Room” (Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN) climbs a spot to No. 10 in its seventh week on the chart (dated March 7). The track earned 18.3 million in audience, up 11%, Feb. 20–26, according to Luminate.

Co-written by Combs with **Chip Matthews** and **Jonathan Singleton**, the song joins Combs’ “Days Like These” in the tier, as the latter holds at its No. 8 high (19.7 million, up 4%) in its 16th chart week.

It’s uncommon for an artist not part of a collaboration to have two songs gaining in the Country Airplay top 10 simultaneously. (**Morgan Wallen** has also doubled up with multiple ascending hits in the bracket, thanks to “Last Night” and “One Thing at a Time” in May 2023.)

“Country radio and the fans never cease to amaze me,” Combs marvels to *Billboard*. “We took ‘Days Like These’ to country radio and had no plans to do anything else until its run was over, but then the fans just really took hold of ‘Sleepless in a Hotel Room’ and gave us no choice but to send it to radio, too. But to have them both in the top 10 at the same time? Wow. I’m super grateful!”

To Combs’ point, “Sleepless in a Hotel Room” and “Days Like These” drew 10.7 million and 4.7 million official U.S. streams, respectively, Feb. 13–19, the former ranking at No. 4 on the Feb. 28-dated Country Streaming Songs chart. Both preview his album *The Way I Am*, due March 20.

DRINKING, KILLIN’ & PAINTIN’ Coming on to Country Airplay is Fayetteville, Ga., native **Zach John King**’s first *Billboard* chart entry, “Get to Drinkin’” (Zach John King/SMN) at No. 49 (1.4 million). Plus, **Parker McCollum**’s “Killin’ Me” (MCA Nashville) debuts at No. 57 (834,000) and **Hudson Westbrook**’s “Painted You Pretty” (River House/Warner Records Nashville/WAR) bows at No. 60 (680,000). ●



COMBS

ROBBY KLEIN

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)	
SLEEPLESS IN A HOTEL ROOM Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+1.778	
BRUNETTE Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Republic/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	+1.550	
CHANGE MY MIND Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	+1.333	
GET TO DRINKIN’ Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Zach John King	+1.327	
TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+1.178	
20 CIGARETTES Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+1.138	
TIME’S TICKING Valory	Justin Moore	+1.113	
AMEN American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Stoney Creek/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll	+1.109	
BEAUTIFUL THINGS Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	+0.875	
GARY Mercury/Big Loud	Stephen Wilson Jr.	+0.843	

MOST INCREASED PLAYS			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN	
BRUNETTE Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Republic/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	+457	
TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+451	
SLEEPLESS IN A HOTEL ROOM Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+391	
GET TO DRINKIN’ Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Zach John King	+388	
TIME’S TICKING Valory	Justin Moore	+356	
20 CIGARETTES Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+306	
CHANGE MY MIND Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	+303	
KILLIN’ ME MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	+302	
ENDS OF THE EARTH RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Ty Myers	+287	
ME & A BEER Harpeth 60	Chris Janson	+284	

RECURRENTS			
THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	FAVORITE COUNTRY SONG Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	HARDY	17.162
2	DARLIN’ Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	15.614
3	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	15.239
4	COWGIRL Stoney Creek	Parmalee	13.429
5	HAPPEN TO ME Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	11.352
6	I GOT BETTER Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	10.799
7	JUST IN CASE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	10.682
8	GOOD NEWS American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	10.259
9	I DARE YOU Big Machine	Rascal Flatts & Jonas Brothers	9.047
10	HIGH ROAD YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel & Jessie Murph	8.965



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 26, 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	3	21	ROUGH SPOT (Independent) ★★ 1 Week at 1 ★★	Tristan Roberson	1788	121	11	12	7	LIFE STILL HAPPENS (Weathers Legacy Music/Sea Gayle Music)	Josh Weathers	1377	77
2	2	19	FLYIN’ (Bowen Sounds/Thirty Tigers)	Wade Bowen	1723	-8	12	1	9	FORT WORTH (Independent)	Kylie Frey feat. Randall King	1276	-583
3	4	18	SOUTHERN KING (CDX)	Sandee June	1619	3	13	13	20	RATHER BE ALONE (Broken Angel)	Love & Chaos	1262	46
4	5	28	I WAS WRONG (Independent)	Mike Ryan	1609	7	14	15	25	.30-30 (Independent)	Deryl Dodd	1255	95
5	6	23	PRETTY WOMAN OF MINE (Independent)	Lee Thomas	1553	21	15	16	23	WHITE DRESS DIRECTION (Write On)	Adysen Malek	1147	35
6	7	23	WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE (Bill Grease Rec)	William Clark Green	1530	14	16	23	7	LONG WAY HOME (Independent)	Matt Daniel	1052	180
7	8	25	TEXAS STRONG (Independent)	Aaron Loy	1529	84	17	17	26	HEARTBREAK QUEEN (Fame Records)	Kensie Coppin	1010	43
8	9	15	STEADY (Leo33)	Jenna Paulette	1529	98	18	20	7	SO GOOD FOR ME (Independent)	Bubba Westly	1006	83
9	11	22	HONKY TONK HEART (Independent)	David Lewis feat. Randall King	1434	76	19	18	19	MOVING ON (Independent)	Trent Covie	1004	70
10	10	23	IS THIS THING WORKIN’ (Tommy Jackson/Thirty Tigers)	Randy Rogers Band feat. Parker McCollum	1427	23	20	14	30	THE OLDER I GET (MORE COUNTRY I’M GETTING TO BE) (Fool Hearted)	Jon Wolfe	954	-226

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

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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	21	20 CIGARETTES Mercury/Republic/Big Loud ★★ No. 1 (2 Weeks) ★★	Morgan Wallen	33.839	+1.138	9157	306	1
2	2	19	CHOOSIN' TEXAS SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	33.120	+0.746	8421	-51	2
3	3	34	AMEN American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Stoney Creek/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll	30.889	+1.109	8108	236	3
4	4	24	HOW FAR DOES A GOODBYE GO Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	23.006	-5.045	6189	-1342	6
5	6	62	TIME'S TICKING Valory	Justin Moore	22.411	+1.113	6351	356	4
6	5	24	AIN'T A BAD LIFE Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett Featuring Jordan Davis	21.713	+0.271	6262	143	5
7	7	55	BETTER ME FOR YOU (BROWN EYES) Fugitive Recordings/Magnolia Music	Max McNown	19.996	+0.548	5633	271	8
8	8	16	DAYS LIKE THESE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	19.713	+0.689	5653	179	7
9	9	44	WHAT HE'LL NEVER HAVE Curb	Dylan Scott	18.651	+0.386	5229	104	9
10	11	7	SLEEPLESS IN A HOTEL ROOM Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN ★★ Most Increased Audience ★★	Luke Combs	18.318	+1.778	4850	391	11
11	10	44	THE FALL CoJo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Cody Johnson	17.269	+0.625	5125	70	10
12	12	52	ENDS OF THE EARTH RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Ty Myers	16.389	+0.764	4392	287	12
13	14	45	I AIN'T COMING BACK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Post Malone	13.505	+0.103	3504	8	16
14	15	18	TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	13.094	+1.178	4059	451	13
15	17	11	BRUNETTE Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Republic/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	12.658	+1.550	3457	457	17
16	16	9	CHANGE MY MIND Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	12.483	+1.333	3870	303	14
17	18	39	ME & A BEER Harpeth 60	Chris Janson	11.600	+0.679	3510	284	15
18	21	18	BEAUTIFUL THINGS Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN ★★ Airpower ★★	Megan Moroney	9.226	+0.875	2853	185	19
19	20	51	WISH YOU WELL Music Soup/Interscope/MCA Nashville	Vincent Mason	9.199	+0.372	2993	30	18
20	19	33	A SONG TO SING Vanner/Republic/Big Loud	Miranda Lambert & Chris Stapleton	8.596	-0.418	2784	-39	20
21	22	12	ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville/SMN	Corey Kent & Koe Wetzel	8.241	+0.267	2664	69	21
22	23	29	MAKING GOOD TIME Three Up Three Down/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Old Dominion	7.279	+0.014	2424	27	24
23	24	20	CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	6.932	+0.550	2426	149	23
24	25	47	TIL THE LAST ONE DIES Boss Moves/Black River	Chris Young	6.614	+0.365	2585	74	22
25	27	11	SOUTH OF SANITY Leo33	Zach Top	5.821	+0.349	1649	88	31
26	28	15	AFTER MIDNIGHT RCA Nashville/SMN	Nate Smith & Tyler Hubbard	5.588	+0.369	1867	210	26
27	26	40	BAGGAGE Black River	Kelsea Ballerini	5.527	-0.039	2083	40	25
28	29	4	MCARTHUR Mercury/Big Loud	HARDY, Eric Church, Morgan Wallen & Tim McGraw	5.424	+0.345	1635	190	32
29	32	23	HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	4.768	+0.734	1855	222	27
30	30	37	WRONG HEARTS BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	4.750	+0.077	1835	61	28

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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 AIRPLAY
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THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
31	31	31	NEVER CALL AGAIN Thrivin Here/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Gavin Adcock	4.428	+0.205	1790	147	29
32	34	4	RIDE, RIDE, RIDE RECORDS/RECORDS Nashville	George Birge Featuring Luke Bryan	4.074	+0.432	1433	261	34
33	35	34	KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan	3.965	+0.360	1769	164	30
34	33	25	ALL MY EXES Mercury/Big Loud	Lauren Alaina Featuring Chase Matthew	3.804	+0.155	1441	28	33
35	36	6	BOOTS OFF Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Jon Pardi	3.376	+0.588	1135	153	37
36	37	22	LONG LIVE COUNTRY Triple Tigers	Shane Profitt	2.549	+0.286	1127	35	38
37	38	10	WATER AT A WEDDING Nashville Harbor ★★ Breaker ★★	Greytan James	2.542	+0.310	934	75	40
38	47	5	GARY Mercury/Big Loud	Stephen Wilson Jr.	2.302	+0.843	924	165	41
39	39	33	EASY TO LOVE Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch	2.299	+0.295	1214	75	35
40	40	19	FIREWORKS Curb	Kelsey Hart	2.030	+0.059	1197	-12	36
41	44	18	THE HELL YOU ARE Back Blocks/Mercury/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	1.854	+0.134	877	20	42
42	41	15	STRAIGHT FORTHE HEART Alexandra Kay/Wheelhouse	Alexandra Kay	1.813	-0.026	1074	33	39
43	43	6	MAKE A LIAR Big Machine	Jackson Dean	1.771	+0.050	814	39	46
44	46	2	BE HER SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	1.654	+0.177	472	93	60
45	45	5	NEVER COMIN' BACK Lost Highway	Flatland Cavalry	1.635	-0.033	582	77	52
46	48	24	HEAVEN PASSING THROUGH Bossier City/Thirty Tigers/Akando	Tumpike Troubadours	1.561	+0.105	516	45	54
47	51	3	LET HIM IN ANYWAY Ten Point/Wheelhouse ★★ Breaker ★★	Blake Shelton	1.480	+0.193	828	147	45
48	50	15	TRAVELIN' SOLDIER CoJo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Cody Johnson	1.471	+0.147	296	-1	-
49	NEW		GET TO DRINKIN' Sony Music Nashville/SMN ★★ Hot Shot Debut ★★	Zach John King	1.422	+1.327	501	388	56
50	49	16	KILLED THE MAN Curb	Lee Brice	1.369	+0.043	791	5	47
51	52	9	WORTH YOUR WILD Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	1.360	+0.137	773	21	48
52	53	5	HOLDIN' IT DOWN Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	1.313	+0.092	838	16	44
53	54	14	DREAM COMETRUE Big Machine	Carly Pearce	1.255	+0.066	864	-35	43
54	59	4	WHEN A COWBOY PRAYS Brandon Lake/Essential/SMN	Brandon Lake X Cody Johnson	1.149	+0.305	514	119	55
55	56	12	DEVIL AIN'T DONE Stoney Creek	Atlas	1.119	+0.033	653	17	50
56	57	7	HIGHS & LOWS Quartz Hill	Matt Cooper	0.884	-0.027	656	17	49
57	NEW		KILLIN' ME MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	0.834	+0.404	493	302	58
58	60	6	REBEL Patoka Sounds/Stoney Creek	Drew Baldridge	0.706	+0.026	602	57	51
59	55	3	PSYCHOLOGICAL Nashville Harbor	The Band Perry	0.691	-0.427	480	-34	59
60	NEW		PAINTED YOU PRETTY River House/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Hudson Westbrook	0.680	+0.111	103	16	-



Megan Moroney attracted radio attention when she played three songs on her 9 Cities. 9 Days. pop-up tour Feb. 24 in Newport, Ky. From left: iHeartMedia/Kentucky-West Virginia director of country programming Rachel Elliot, Columbia Nashville Southeast director of radio marketing & promotion Anna Widmer, Moroney and WUBE Cincinnati director of branding and content Grover Collins.



Trisha Yearwood delivered a preview of her forthcoming The Mirror Tour: An Intimate Acoustic Evening of Stories & Songs Feb. 23 at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's Ford Theater. From left: Virgin Music Group senior director of national promotion & streaming John Mayer and marketing director Jordon Isbell, Yearwood, and Virgin Music Group president of North American/executive VP of global artist relations Jacqueline Saturn and senior VP of label management Jen Bontusa.

A portrait of Jason Aldean wearing a straw cowboy hat and a denim shirt, looking off to the side. The background is a blurred interior of a bar or restaurant with warm lighting.

JASON ALDEAN

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

Zach John King visited WSOC Charlotte on Feb. 19 as he continues his radio promotion tour. With him near the Local Focal Marketplace: WSOC PD Cameron Moore (left) and RCA Nashville Southeast regional promotion manager Ali O'Connell.

RADIO & RECORDS®

The Guaranty Corporation promoted **Gordy Rush** to Guaranty Communications VP of business development from Guaranty/Baton Rouge, La., VP/GM, a role that included oversight of country **WTGE** ... JVC/Fort Walton Beach, Fla., promoted **Scott Mallory** to operations manager from sales account executive, RadioInk.com reported. Mallory continues to hold down the afternoon shift on country **WHWY**. The cluster also added radio veteran **Brad Miller** as production and promotions lead ... **Dave Wheeler** begins March 2 as an on-air talent for Roser Communication Networks/Utica, N.Y., according to RadioInk.com. He'll handle two different shifts, including mornings at country **WBGK**/**WBUG**. Wheeler recently left rival Townsquare/Utica, where he was director of content for the cluster and a member of the morning team at country **WFRG** ... Former **WBCT** Grand Rapids, Mich., news director **Reese Rickards** died Feb. 24, **WOOD-TV** reported. Rickards worked in the market for more than two decades before leaving **WBCT** 10 years ago ... Audacy named **Zach John King** and **Stephen Wilson Jr.** as the latest beneficiaries of its LAUNCH music discovery program for new and developing artists ... Country Radio Seminar will introduce Scareoke, a karaoke competition, on March 18 during this year's gathering. Artists set to perform that same day at the Warner Records Nashville luncheon include **Ashley McBryde**, **Blake Whiten**, **Gabby Barrett**, **The Band Loula** and **The Creekers**.

'ROUND THE ROW

Borman Entertainment closed shop following the Feb. 22 announcement that founder/CEO **Gary Borman** was retiring after 50 years. The firm's flagship artist, **Keith Urban**, subsequently tapped Crush Music for management ... **Ashley Gorley**'s Tape Room Music hired **Alicia Pruitt** as chief creative officer/president of A&R. She slides into the role after working as Warner Chappell Nashville senior VP of A&R and Madfun founder. Reach her [here](#) ... **Brian Traeger** joined Dreamliner Luxury Coaches as chief of staff. He previously served as Ryman Hospitality senior VP of programming & artist relations ... Ground Control Business Management acquired Wiles + Taylor & Co. Wiles + Taylor president **Dwight Wiles** continues in his existing role ... Shore Fire Media promoted four employees: Nashville-based **Maria Eilert** and New York-based **Moya Crowley** were upped to senior account executive after working as account execs, Los Angeles-based **Micah Benton** rose to account executive from a junior post, and Nashvillean **Jenisse Sanches** was reclassified as junior account executive after serving as a publicity assistant ... **Shaboozey** agreed to a publishing deal with Empire, where he's already signed to a recording contract ... Texas-based artist **Colby Lee Swift** nabbed a publishing deal with BMG Music and a booking agreement with WME ... New artist **Bryan Andrews** joined the roster at WME. His first new track since signing, "Are We Great Yet?", arrives on March 6 ... Artist-writer **Delaney Ramsdell** inked a joint-venture publishing deal with One Riot Music and Reservoir. She has recordings with **Lukas Nelson** and **Paul Cauthen** ... Artist-writer-podcaster **Sarah Harralson** tapped JWA Media for PR ... East Tennessee Children's Hospital in Knoxville an-

nounced Feb. 26 that it is rebranding as Dolly Parton Children's Hospital ... More than 20 artists were announced as performers for the annual CMA Fest in Nashville June 4-7. Among those slated to play the Nissan Stadium stage: **Blake Shelton**, **Ella Langley**, **Luke Bryan**, **Tucker Wetmore**, **HARDY** and **Tim McGraw** ... The Academy of Country Music has begun filling in the event schedule ahead of the 61st annual ACM Awards, taking place May 17 in Las Vegas. Announced thus far are "ACM Lifting Lives Country on the Green: Riley Green & Friends," a concert at Topgolf Las Vegas on May 15; and "ACM Next Wave: Country's Beach Bash," a concert at the Mandalay Bay Beach and Wave Pool ... The full lineup for the 34th annual Tin Pan South Songwriters Festival has been released with **Radney Foster**, **Ashley Cooke**, **Drew Baldridge** and **Caylee Hammack** among the attractions. Go [here](#) for the full schedule, March 24-28 ... **Kelsea Ballerini**'s *Patterns (Deluxe)* art book and zoetrope vinyl earned four Gold ADDY awards and a Judge's Choice honor, recognizing creativity in advertising ... **K. Michelle** joins the cast as the new season of Bravo's *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* returns April 5 ... Developing artist **Alex Miller** signed a one-year sponsorship deal with Cowboy Hardware apparel ... *Country Roads USA*, a theatrical production that covers the history of the genre, opens March 19 at **Ray Stevens'** Cabaret Showroom. **Lonestar**'s **Dean Sams** wrote and produced the project, featuring an 11-person cast and a music list that uses country copyrights from 1928-2000 ... **Trisha Yearwood** returns as the headliner for the second annual "Band as One Concert for the Cure" March 22 at Nashville's Grand Ole Opry House. The show benefits breast cancer charity Susan G. Komen, with participation from **The War & Treaty**, **Ashley McBryde**, **Hailey Whitters**, **Rissi Palmer**, **Charles Kelley**, **Lukas Nelson** and **The Band Loula** ... The Country Music Association takes part March 13 in the SXSW Music Festival in Austin, Texas, with **Wyatt Flores** and his team leading a discussion about its mental health efforts on the road, followed by a CMA Songwriter Series installment with performances from Flores, **Chase McDaniel**, **Ingrid Andress** and **Tiera Kennedy** ... **Brandi Carlile**'s "Be Human: A Concert for Minneapolis" raised more than \$600,000 for human rights causes Feb. 21 at the Target Center ... **Miranda Lambert**'s MuttNation Foundation announced a three-year partnership with the Doris Day Animal Foundation on World Spay Day, Feb. 24, for an "It Takes Balls" spay and neuter program targeting Southern California ... **Carly Pearce** delivers an April 6 benefit at City Winery Nashville on behalf of the Pet Community Center ... Promotion veteran **Roger Ramsey Corkill** died, according to a Feb. 21 social media post by his son, **Nick Corkill**. Following an early run in radio, he worked for MCA for 20 years as a Southwest regional during a time when the roster included **George Strait**, **Conway Twitty**, **Barbara Mandrell** and **The Oak Ridge Boys**. He spent the last 16 years as an independent promoter in the Texas red-dirt subgenre. A celebration of life is expected at a later date ... A celebration of life is set for songwriter **Brett Jones** ("Crazy Town," "That's How Country Boys Roll") at 4 p.m. March 2 at BMI in Nashville. Jones died Feb. 16 following a battle with brain cancer. ●



Gavin Adcock (center) visited with WQMX Akron, Ohio, PD/morning host Sarah Kay when he performed Feb. 20 at the Dusty Armadillo in Rootstown. With them: Warner Records Nashville/WAR director of radio accounts James Marsh.

billboard

2026

WOMEN IN MUSIC

SPECIAL ISSUE

On April 18, *Billboard* will publish its highly anticipated Women in Music special issue, featuring top women in the music business who are making their mark across top industry sectors.

Coinciding with this issue will be the Women in Music awards ceremony on April 29 at Hollywood Palladium. The event will bring together music's most prominent women artists and the industry's top women business executives to recognize and celebrate their achievements.

Take this opportunity to congratulate the most powerful and talented women in music and wish them continued success.



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ISSUE DATE 4/18 | AD CLOSE 4/7 | MATERIALS DUE 4/9

billboard Country Airplay Index

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

20 CIGARETTES Concord 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-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI (C.LaCorte, R.C.McGill, J.L.Miller, B.Pendergrass) **1**

A

AFTER MIDNIGHT W.C.M. Music Corp., SESAC/Track & Feels Publishing Designee, SESAC/Tape Room Tunes, SESAC/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Vibez From Tree Vibez Music, ASCAP/Concord Alto CCL, ASCAP/Five Docks Down Music Publishing, ASCAP/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/T Tree Music, BMI (C.Brown, C.Crowder, T.R.Hubbard) **26**

AIN'T A BAD LIFE Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Be A Light Publishing, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/John Byron Music, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/Sony Tunes LLC, ASCAP/Poggy's Picks, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Big Loud Mountain Tunes, ASCAP/Mark Trussell Pub Designee, ASCAP (Thomas Rhett, J.Byron, A.G.Gorley, B.Pendergrass, M.Trussell) **6**

ALL MY EXES lylas Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/These Are Pulse Songs, BMI/PASSTHEAT 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/Tape Room Hits, BMI/Hoops Don't Lie Publishing, BMI/Modern Arts Songs, BMI/Music By Work Of Art, BMI (Lauren Alaina, J.A.Gut, B.C.Johnson, W.Phillips) **34**

AMEN Poorchoice Music Publishing, BMI/Songs Into Poems, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Crazy Baby Songs, BMI/Jordan Gray Publishing Designee, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Range Media Partners LLC, ASCAP/Essency Music Publishing, ASCAP/S2 Songs LLC, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Kevin Powers Publishing Designee, BMI/Baile's Ballads, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Sea Gayle Ale House Music, BMI (C.O.Chibweze, J.B.DeFord, S.C.Cook, J.H.Foote, S.W.Ennis, J.Gray, K.J.Powers, N.Sastry) **3**

B

BAGGAGE Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Feel Your Way Through Publishing, ASCAP/Big Music Machine, BMI/Big Ass Pile Of Dimes Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Self Made Entertainment, BMI/The Piano Room, ASCAP/W.C.M. Music Corp., SESAC/Vandeezy Songs, SESAC/Songs Of Rhythm House Black, SESAC (K.Ballerini, J.J.Dillon, K.Fairchild, H.Lindsey, A.Vanderheyem) **27**

BEAUTIFUL THINGS Sony Timber Publishing, SESAC/Georgiamo, SESAC/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Triple Rae Creative Inc, BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/Big Ass Pile Of Dimes Music, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Where I Started Music Publishing, ASCAP (M.Moroney, C.R.Harrington, J.J.Dillon, J.L.Alexander) **18**

BE HER Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Sea Gayle Distillery Music, ASCAP/Endurance Music Group, BMI/Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Spirit Nashville One, BMI (E.Langley, S.Ahnquist, J.M.Schmidt, M.W.Hardy) **44**

BETTER ME FOR YOU (BROWN EYES) Songs From The Penalty Box, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Max McNow Music, BMI/Carver Music Publishing, ASCAP/Tunes Of King Pen, BMI/Ready Set Publishing, BMI/Fugitive Songs Publishing, BMI (M.McNow, J.Kenney, A.A.Suppelsa, T.K.Dabbs) **7**

BOOTS OFF Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI/50 Egg Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Crawford Mercer Music, GMR/Songs Of CN, GMR (J.Pardi, W.McCubbin, L.Laird) **35**

BRUNETTE Concord Tunes, SESAC/Hang Your Hat Hits, SESAC/Card Tables Music, SESAC/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Family Farm Songs, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Jomil 10 Music, BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI (C.LaCorte, R.C.McGill, J.L.Miller, B.Pendergrass) **15**

C

CHANGE MY MIND Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Back 40 Publishing International, BMI/Duckman Publishing, BMI/Fatland Boy Music, BMI/Hit Songs Of 50 Egg Music, BMI/Full Draw Publishing, BMI (R.Green, Erik Dylan, R.Montana) **16**

CHEVY SILVERADO Little Louder Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Sparks Phone Music, BMI/Gavin J. Lucas Publishing, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Vacant Heart Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Bailey Zimmerman Publishing, BMI (T.Beathard, J.Luber, G.J.Lucas, W.Harren, B.Zimmerman) **23**

CHOOSIN' TEXAS Langley Publishing, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Luke Dick Publishing Designee, BMI/Pink Dog Publishing, BMI/Bada Bing Bada Boom Publishing, BMI/Bridge 1 Music, BMI (E.Langley, C.L.Dick, M.Lambert, J.Taylor) **2**

D

DAYS LIKE THESE Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Bootleg Lyrics, BMI/Titawhirl Music, BMI/Lucky Three Music Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/ONE TOOTH PRODUCTIONS, BMI/Super LCS Publishing, BMI (L.Combs, B.Cobb, A.Raitiere) **8**

DEVIL AIN'T DONE Atlas Music Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Songs Of Spirit II Nashville, ASCAP/SpiritVault Songs II, ASCAP/4Ever Songz, ASCAP/Big Music Machine, BMI/Works by Range Music Partners, BMI/Warabanger Publishing, BMI (S.Haywood, D.A.Garcia, G.Warburton) **55**

DREAM COME TRUE BMG Gold Songs, ASCAP/Redfeather Publishing, ASCAP/Razor And Tie Music Publishing, BMI/Tofer The Musical, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/This Is Chromatic Music, BMI/Sony Tunes LLC, ASCAP/WeisOwl, ASCAP (C.Pearce, T.Brown, L.Hungate, E.L.Weisband) **53**

E

EASY TO LOVE Hit Train Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Ben There Wrote That Publishing, BMI/Artist 101 Publishing Group, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI/HALLPASS, ASCAP/Turntable Music Pub, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Rocky Creek James, ASCAP/Tape Room LLC, Series 1, ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/PTNB Publishing, ASCAP (D.Lynch, B.J.Johnson, J.R.Hall, H.Phelps, Z.Crowell) **39**

ENDS OF THE EARTH Ty Myers Publishing Designee, BMI (T.Myers) **12**

F

THE FALL Sea Gayle Ale House Music, BMI/Bobby Pinson Music, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Keep Choppin Publishing, BMI/Exit 183 Songs, BMI/Anthem Music Publishing II, ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI (B.Pinson, R.Fulcher, J.S.Stover) **11**

FIREWORKS Sea Gayle Ale House Music, BMI/Bobby Pinson Music, BMI/Good Boy Gravy, BMI/Sony Countryside, BMI/Eclipse One Music, BMI/Y'all Come Back Now, BMI/Taylor Goyette Entertainment, BMI (B.Baber, J.James, T.Goyette) **40**

G

GARY Poems On Junk Mail, SESAC/BMG Cicada, SESAC (S.L.Wilson Jr.) **38**

GET TO DRINKIN' Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Works By Kinda Country Songs, BMI/Speakers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Brady James Music, BMI/Akin For Jones 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) **49**

H

HATE HOW YOU LOOK Songs Of Combustion Five, BMI/Me Gusta Music, BMI/Round Hill Verses Publishing, BMI (N.Salato, C.McKenna, J.Farren, C.Yancey) **29**

HEAVEN PASSING THROUGH Game Rooster Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI (E.Felker) **46**

THE HELL YOU ARE Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Twelve Two Music, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/The Blocks Are Back Music, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Crazy Baby Songs, BMI/W.C.M. Music Corp., SESAC/Better Bad Songs, SESAC/Philippians 4:7 Songs, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/WeisOwl, ASCAP (A.Cooke, S.W.Ennis, J.A.Fox, R.C.McGill, E.L.Weisband) **41**

HIGHS & LOWS Songs Of North Chapel Music, BMI/Endurance Music Group, BMI/318 Records Publishing, BMI (M.Cooper) **56**

HOLDIN' IT DOWN Chase Matthew Music Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/The Big One, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Redd Up Publishing, BMI/Aaron Presley Beachum Publishing Designee, BMI/Evan Christian Mayo Publishing Designee, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI (Chase Matthew, E.Escue, A.Maxwell, Presley Aaron, E.C.Mayo, J.Center) **52**

HOW FAR DOES A GOODBYE GO Makena Cove Music, ASCAP/BMG Gold Songs, ASCAP/Tripole Play Music, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Irishsonmusic, BMI (K.M.Allison, J.Edwards, T.Kennedy, J.Morgan) **4**

I

I AIN'T COMING BACK Honey Hole Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Bell Ear Publishing, ASCAP/Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Universal Music Works, GMR/Posty Publishing, GMR/Ern Dog Music, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Relative Music Group, BMI/Redneck Music, BMI (M.C.Wallen, L.B.Bell, M.W.Hardy, A.R.Post, E.K.Smith, Charlie Handsome) **13**

K

KID MYSELF Triple Play Music, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/T Tree Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Endurance Alpha, ASCAP/Total Schmidt Songs, ASCAP (J.Morgan, T.R.Hubbard, J.M.Schmidt) **33**

KILLED THE MAN Sony Lakeview, SESAC/Riser House Tunes, SESAC/I Barely Even Know Er Music, BMI/International Dog Music, BMI/Downtown DMP Songs, BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/LuVegas Publishing, BMI/Sony Countryside, BMI/Songs Of Riser House, BMI (M.D.Whitworth, J.D.Conrad, T.Cartwright, C.B.Baldwin) **50**

KILLIN' ME Parkernac Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Endless Tour Music, BMI/Songs Of Spirit Nashville One, BMI/Tunes Of Fluid II, BMI/Heavy Lefty Music, BMI (P.M.Collum, R.Rogers, M.Criswell) **57**

L

LET HIM IN ANYWAY Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Relative Red Music, BMI/Bigger Bendable Music, BMI/Best Damn Music, BMI (M.W.Hardy, Z.Aband, K.S.Clark, C.D.Wallace) **47**

LONG LIVE COUNTRY Shane Proffitt Publishing Designee, BMI/Matt Rogers Publishing Designee, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Rudy Rocks The USA, BMI (S.Proffitt, M.Rogers, L.Rimes) **36**

M

MAKE A LIAR Little Louder Songs, BMI/Emileon Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Full Draw Publishing, BMI (J.Dean, C.L.Dick, R.Montana) **43**

MAKING GOOD TIME WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Bird And Bean Music, ASCAP/Trevor's Advocate Publishing, ASCAP/Twelve6 Dogwood, ASCAP/Universal Music Corp., ASCAP/Turs And Chorus, ASCAP/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Smackshot Music, BMI/Katie In Paris, BMI/Songs Of CTM Outlander Music LP, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/South Of CT Publishing, BMI/Music Of Blackheart, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Sony Tunes LLC, ASCAP (M.T.Ramsey, T.J.Rosen, B.F.Tursi, R.Copperman, Ross Ellis) **22**

MCARTHUR Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Relative Music Group Family, ASCAP/Head Coach Music, ASCAP/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Philippines 4:7 Songs, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Old Bandana, BMI (M.W.Hardy, R.C.McGill, J.Rodgers, J.Thompson) **28**

ME & A BEER Anthem Red Vinyl Music, BMI/Buckkilla Music, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP/Poggy's Picks, ASCAP/TDP Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI/Firebird Country Tunes, BMI/Oakdale Market Publishing, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Sony Tunes LLC, ASCAP (C.Janson, T.Phillips, A.G.Gorley, A.Sheridan) **17**

N

NEVER CALL AGAIN Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Good Cock Tunes, BMI/World For Colton Verner, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Tea Farm Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Bridge 1 Music, BMI/Bada Bing Bada Boom Publishing, BMI (G.Adcock, J.Taylor, C.Verner, J.Rauton) **31**

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P

PAINTED YOU PRETTY Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Luckaway Music, BMI/Saxet HW Music, BMI/Tape Room Music Round Two, BMI/Myron Bailey Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/FBRI Country Tunes, BMI (H.Westbrook, Lukas Scott, B.Bailey) **60**

PSYCHOLOGICAL Smack Back Music, BMI/Concord Baritone CCL, BMI/Midtown Mistake Publishing, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Colton Verner Publishing, BMI (C.Park, G.Tyler, C.Verner) **59**

R

REBEL Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Adam Sandler, ASCAP/Laguna Madre Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI (D.Baldrige, A.Sanders) **58**

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW Songs Of Combustion Five, BMI/Coey Kent Music, BMI/Beats Building Fences, BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/Lighting Street Publishing, BMI/Melodies Of CTM Outlander, SESAC/Michael Tyler Music, SESAC/MT ROOM, SESAC/Young Guns Tunes, SESAC (Corey Kent, T.Archer, A.Goodloe, M.Tyler) **21**

S

SLEEPLESS IN A HOTEL ROOM Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Bootleg Lyrics, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Sullivan S Guns Music, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Hits Of 50 Egg Music, ASCAP/Braven Baker Music, ASCAP (L.Combs, R.Montana, J.D.Singleton) **10**

A SONG TO SING Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Pink Dog Publishing, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/I Wrote These Songs, ASCAP/W.C.M. Music Corp., SESAC/NaynerPuddinPie Publishing, SESAC/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Songs For The Munch Music, BMI (M.Lambert, C.Stapleton, J.V.Frasure, J.Fleener) **20**

SOUTH OF SANITY Rio Bravo Music, Inc., BMI/Zach Top Music, BMI/Major Bob Productions, BMI/Too Broke To Quit Music, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Do What I Do, BMI/Getyasome Music, BMI (Z.Top, C.Chamberlain, M.Nesler) **25**

STRAIGHT FOR THE HEART Cinq Trax, ASCAP/Lyridge Music, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Cascade Road Songs, ASCAP/Karley Scott Collins Publishing Designee, ASCAP/Susan Perb Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Mod Junkie, BMI (J.Robbins, K.S.Collins, Sasha Alex Sloan) **42**

T

TIL THE LAST ONE DIES Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Songs By Slip, ASCAP/Sony Timber Publishing, SESAC/M & M College Fund, SESAC/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/940 Songs, BMI (B.Hayslip, S.Mosley, J.Walker) **24**

TIME'S TICKING Double Barrel Ace Music, BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Wild Willy Music, ASCAP/Music Of The Corn, ASCAP/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Full Draw Publishing, BMI/Anthem Music Publishing II, ASCAP/Tunes From The Red White And Blue School, ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP (J.Moore, W.L.Bundy, R.Montana, J.S.Stover) **5**

TRAVELIN' SOLDIER Bruce Robinson Music, BMI/Titawhirl Music, BMI (B.Robson) **48**

TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND Anthem Music Publishing II, ASCAP/Jordan Davis Music, ASCAP/Neon Cross Music, BMI/Black Jeans Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/MV2 Music, BMI/Red Bandana Publishing, BMI/Sony Countryside, BMI/Songs Of Riser House, BMI/Jake Mitchell Publishing Designee, BMI (J.Davis, D.Dawson, J.Mitchell, J.Thompson) **14**

W

WATER AT A WEDDING Relative Red Music, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Super Big Music, ASCAP/M Drag Songs, ASCAP/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Philippines 4:7 Songs, BMI/Songs For Knox, BMI (G.J.Egan, M.Dragstream, R.C.McGill) **37**

WHAT HE'LL NEVER HAVE Curb Songs, ASCAP/Logan Robinson Publishing Designee, NS/Ricky Rowton Publishing Designee, NS/Robbie Gatlin Publishing Designee, NS (D.Scott, L.Robinson, R.Rowton, R.Gatlin) **9**

WHEN A COWBOY PRAYS Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Brandon Lake Music, ASCAP/All Essential Music, ASCAP/Prayin' Cowboy Publishing, SESAC/So Essential Tunes, SESAC/Songs By That Dog Will Hunt, BMI/Capitol CMG Paragon, BMI/Sugar Rain Music, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI (B.M.Lake, J.Sooter, H.Bentley, D.Southerland) **54**

WISH YOU WELL Big Music Machine, BMI/Works by Range Music Partners, BMI/Warabanger Publishing, BMI/Big Ass Pile Of Dimes Music, BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI (G.Warburton, J.J.Dillon, B.Pendergrass, C.LaCorte) **19**

WORTH YOUR WILD Concord Copyrights, BMI/Big Hits N Grav, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Songs Of Home Team Music, BMI/Tunes Of TrailerParker, BMI/Track & Feels Publishing Designee, SESAC/Tape Room Tunes, SESAC/W.C.M. Music Corp., SESAC (R.Dickerson, P.Welling, C.Brown) **51**

WRONG HEARTS BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Websinger Publishing, BMI/Lovelegend Songs, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Red Bandana Publishing, BMI/Super Big Music, ASCAP/Drag Drag Music, ASCAP/Round Hill Songs II, ASCAP (P.C.Brust, C.Lucas, M.Dragstream, J.Thompson) **30**

INDIE POWER PLAYERS

On May 9, *Billboard* will publish its annual Indie Power Players list. This special feature in advance of Indie Week (June 8-11) and the 16th annual Libera Awards will profile leading executives at top independent record labels, distributors and artist and label services companies. Positioning themselves as the driving force behind the success of the independent music industry, these executives contribute to both the indie sector and the world of music at large.

Take this opportunity to advertise and congratulate this year's 2026 Indie Power Players.

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40 Years Ago

Dwight Yoakam Makes His National Debut As A ‘Honky-Tonk’ Chart Hero

The iconic artist-writer emerged from Los Angeles’ club scene with a Johnny Horton cover

One of country music’s singular figures made his first appearance on a *Billboard* chart four decades ago when **Dwight Yoakam** debuted on the Hot Country Songs list dated March 1, 1986, with “Honky Tonk Man.”

Born in Kentucky and raised in Ohio, Yoakam emerged out of the cowpunk scene in Los Angeles, where his unique musical persona was allowed to flourish in the city’s nightclubs. He played an aggressive rhythm guitar, employed stylized dance steps and applied a hard-edged

vocal tone with an arresting hiccup in his phrasing. After he broke nationally with his Reprise debut, Yoakam would quickly be paired with **Randy Travis** as the leading lights among the New Traditionalists, a cadre of acts — including **George Strait**, **Ricky Skaggs** and **The Judds** — who combined classic country influences with modern, CD-era sound quality.

Yoakam wrote much of his material, but “Honky Tonk Man” came from another source: the late **Johnny Horton**, who was credited as a co-writer with

songwriter **Howard Hausey** and manager **Tillman Franks**. Horton rose to No. 9 with his version of the song 30 years prior, and it was released again in 1962 — 17 months after Horton’s death in a car accident — rising to No. 11.

Yoakam bested Horton’s chart runs, peaking at No. 3 on June 14, 1986. It was the first of 39 titles to hit the list, including 14 top 10 releases, led by two No. 1 singles: a 1988 collaboration with **Buck Owens** on “Streets of Bakersfield” and 1989’s “I Sang Dixie.” —TOM ROLAND

Dwight Yoakam circa 1986



73	44	33	18	JUST IN CASE J.L.WALLACE,T.SKINNER (J.P.PENNINGTON, S.LEMAIER)	THE FORESTER SISTERS WARNER BROS. 7-28875
74	NEW ▶			HONKY TONK MAN P.ANDERSON (H.HAUSEY, T.FRANKS, J.HORTON)	DWIGHT YOAKAM REPRISE 7-28793/WARNER BROS.
75	83	—	2	BIRDS OF A FEATHER T.WEST (M.RAGONA)	THE ALMOST BROTHERS MTM 72062/CAPITOL
76	84	—	2	TWO STEPS FROM THE BLUES R.RUFF (S.WINSLOW)	CARLETTE LUV 116/NSD
77	77	—	2	SWEET CAROLINE C.GRAY (N.DIAMOND)	CLAUDE GRAY COUNTRY INTERNATIONAL 208