

billboard Country Update

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MAY 15, 2026 | PAGE 1 OF 13

BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

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Carter Faith's *Cherry Valley* Gambles Pay Off With A Surprise ACM Visit To Las Vegas

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When Amazon asked **Carter Faith** to record a version of **Faith Hill**'s "Let's Go to Vegas" to promote the Academy of Country Music (ACM) Awards' return to Nevada, she delayed a flight to Europe several days to accommodate the opportunity.

Since their Faith-based names overlapped, Carter felt an affinity for Hill growing up, and the chance to do a song she associated with one of her heroes was too good to pass up.

"When you're younger, you feel connected to people for random things, and that was one of the things for me," Carter says. "They asked me to sing that song. I was like, 'Hell, yeah, I'll cut it.'"

She had been forewarned that she did not qualify for the ACM's new female artist trophy. The rules on the Academy's website indicate that, among several other factors, an artist has to have earned a top 50 single, and Faith had yet to issue a song to radio. So when she found out during her overseas trek that

Cherry Valley was a finalist for album of the year at the ACMs, which will be presented May 17, she knew something significant had occurred.

"I don't have a hit on there, I don't have a radio song, I don't play these arenas," she says. "But I feel like people just really connected with the music because it was different and said something that maybe a lot of people haven't said in a while. Or ever."

Cherry Valley is named loosely for a small community 40 miles east of Nashville's Music Row. Faith had seen the name on a road sign, and she imagined a place where an upbeat veneer disguises

a stream of difficult personal topics among its citizenry. The album explores sex, drugs, religion, hypocrisy and alcohol in a range of styles. The opening title track is a string-enhanced, cinematic outing, but the 15-song project drifts through folk, honky-tonk and traditional pop textures. Despite the wide range, it all holds together like an audio version of *Valley of the Dolls*: titillating, cheeky and gorgeous.

"Carter and I listened to a lot of older music," notes producer **Tofer Brown** (**Willow Avalon**, **Little Big Town**). "We just are inspired by **The Beach Boys**, **The Beatles**, old country and all that. And we started noticing all these records that we were referring to, they all came out of, like, 1966, '67 and that era. The Beach Boys, **Nancy Sinatra**, and the sonics and the feel and the emotion and the heartbeat behind those records kind of inspired us."

While the individual songs wander a bit stylistically, they're united by Faith's simultaneously bold and fragile vocals and a consistent production team. Brown employed the same studio band on every track; if a player was unavailable for a particular date, they rescheduled at a time when the whole crew could reconvene.

"It was a band of brothers and sisters coming together with the same thesis statement and shooting for the same target," Brown says. "I think that that really helped with the cohesiveness."

Faith wrote her first song at age 16 back in North Carolina, instinctively using music to process her emotions over a breakup.



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Writing became a pursuit, and she enrolled at Nashville’s Belmont University, focused on composition. She secured a songwriting deal with Universal Music Publishing Nashville, then signed with the company’s recorded music division, since renamed MCA, despite her initial reservations about performing.

“I’ve always kind of grappled with the thought of people seeing me sing these songs and being on stage,” she says. “I had such bad stage fright — you know, going up on stage and singing your songs is vulnerable. I think I’ve come into myself as I’ve lived here.”

As the album coalesced, **Jessie Jo Dillon**, who founded MCA’s Gatsby label, encouraged Faith to align with her imprint. Both Dillon and Brown protected her instincts, supporting her when her artistic decisions veered left of center.

“Me and Topher, we talked about it a lot,” Faith says. “We were like, ‘This should be the record that, if we never get to make another record, that this is something we’re proud of.’ And I really try to do that with every single decision. I just want to do it all up and not play it safe.”

The bigger the risk, of course, the bigger the potential reward, and the gambles in *Cherry Valley* paid off creatively. It became a critical favorite and obviously impressed ACM voters, sneaking onto the final ballot despite the organization’s tendency to celebrate hits.

Gatsby, meanwhile, isn’t done with *Cherry Valley*. The company greenlighted an updated version — *Cherry Valley Forever: The Deluxe Album* — with five new songs, due July 24. None of them were recorded when the original album streeted, though the community theme of the project and the existing variety of the material made it fairly easy to fold in new songs.

“Just like any town can grow, *Cherry Valley* can grow,” Brown suggests. “We allowed ourselves to be like, ‘Oh, we might be adding a new neighborhood,’ rather than being like, ‘How does this fit so perfectly?’ If you do that, you’re going to lose your mind, and you’re going to overthink things.”

For now, the original package allows Faith to go to Vegas for her first awards-show performance, with Brown behind her in the backing band. She’s aware of her outsider status, even though her ACM nomination suggests she’s as welcome at the MGM Grand Garden Arena as she is in *Cherry Valley*.

“I’m the new girl,” she says. “I’m nervous, and I don’t know these people that I’m going to be backstage with. I’ve heard about them, I’ve heard their music on the radio, I’ve seen them, and I’m a big fan of them, but I do feel like I’m kind of stepping into a world I’m not super a part of yet. That’s a little scary.”

Meanwhile, Faith does get to make another album. She’s already considering 20-30 titles for the next project, and she’s completely aware that it’ll be a different experience. With *Cherry Valley*, she recorded her songs not knowing who might hear them. Now, she has fans — in the industry in addition to the general public — who may expect a certain sound or approach. Her new challenge is to avoid becoming overly self-conscious, to continue to be real as she wanders beyond the fictitious *Cherry Valley*.

“I see a lot of people become caricatures of themselves, and I really try not to do that,” she says. “That’s kind of what I love about my favorite artists, is that they still feel like themselves.”



SAM SIMPKINS

Belmont University president Dr. Greg Jones (left) presented honorary degrees to The Store co-founders Brad Paisley and Kimberly Williams-Paisley during a May 8 commencement exercise at the Curb Event Center in Nashville.



JON GARDINER

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill chancellor Lee H. Roberts (left) presented an honorary degree to Eric Church, who delivered the commencement speech for more than 7,000 graduates May 9 at Kenan Memorial Stadium.



Stephen Wilson Jr. performed during a May 9 Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum discussion of the book *Won't Back Down: Heartland Rock and the Fight for America*, authored by Museum writer-editor Erin Osmon (right). The panel was moderated by Museum writer-editor Allison Moorer.

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STELLA LEFTY

DEBUT EP
IS THIS HEAVEN?
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BREAKOUT SINGLE
“BOSTON”

CURRENTLY TOP 30 ON HOT 100 &
TOP 10 ON HOT COUNTRY SONGS CHART



FEATURING NEW SONG
“SOMETHING TO LOSE”

WITH VINCENT MASON

billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY MONITORED BY **LUMINATE**

ON THE CHARTS **RUSS PENUELL** rpenuell@billboard.com

Cody Johnson's 'Fall' Rises To No. 1

Cody Johnson earns his third No. 1 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart as "The Fall" (Cojo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN), in its 55th week, climbs three spots to the top of the ranking dated May 23. It delivered 29.6 million audience impressions (up 14%) May 8-14, according to Luminate.

Produced by **Trent Willmon** and cowritten by **Ray Fulcher**, **Bobby Pinson** and **Jeremy Stover**, "The Fall" is one of 15 Country Airplay entries for Johnson since "With You I Am" became his first in 2016. His previous No. 1s are "'Til You Can't" (two weeks, 2022) and "The Painter" (one week, 2024).

"The Fall" becomes one of 13 songs since Country Airplay began in 1990 to take at least 55 weeks to hit No. 1. **Justin Moore's** "Time's Tickin'" holds the record for the longest ascent (while **Garth Brooks'** "More Than a Memory" remains the only song to debut on top, in 2007).



CHRIS DOUGLAS

DO 'TELL' **Jason Aldean's** "Don't Tell on Me" (Macon/Broken Bow) rises two spots to No. 10 on Country Airplay (17.2 million, up 6%). His 42nd top 10 follows "How Far Does a Goodbye Go," which became his 26th No. 1 in February.

HEY NOW, HERE'S KENNY **Kenny Chesney** ties for his sixth-highest Country Airplay debut as "Carry On" (Warner/Hey Now) opens at No. 20 with 9.9 million first-week impressions. The song marks his first release through Hey Now Records, the label founded by veteran Nashville executives **John Esposito**, **Clint Higham** and **Kris Lamb**. "If you're going to launch a label, what better way to do it?" Lamb tells *Billboard*. "Kenny Chesney, a great song, the best team out there, and friends at radio who hear the magic and can't wait to share it with their listeners."

Chesney charts his milestone 100th title across 32 years on Country Airplay, encompassing 61 top 10s and 33 No. 1s. All are bests over the list's history—he matches **George Strait** for the most appearances, while his top 10 total is shared with Strait and **Tim McGraw**. ●

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)
CARRY ON Warner/HEY NOW	Kenny Chesney	+9.876
THE FALL CoJo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Cody Johnson	+3.550
I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	+2.554
BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+2.553
HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	+2.114
BE HER SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	+2.038
DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+1.510
BRUNETTE Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Republic/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	+1.458
TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+1.259
BOSTON Stella Lefty/Atlantic Outpost/Atlantic	Stella Lefty	+0.970

MOST INCREASED PLAYS

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN
CARRY ON Warner/HEY NOW	Kenny Chesney	+2693
THE FALL CoJo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Cody Johnson	+1223
I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	+725
BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+657
HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	+544
DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+495
BE HER SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	+426
BRUNETTE Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Republic/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	+418
TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+330
BOSTON Stella Lefty/Atlantic Outpost/Atlantic	Stella Lefty	+302

RECURRENTS

THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	AMEN American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll	17.194
2	20 CIGARETTES Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	13.144
3	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	12.566
4	DAYS LIKE THESE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	10.735
5	DARLIN' Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	10.676
6	GOOD NEWS American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	8.921
7	I GOT BETTER Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	8.165
8	HAPPEN TO ME Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	7.882
9	JUST IN CASE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	7.582
10	WHAT HE'LL NEVER HAVE Curb	Dylan Scott	7.493



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING MAY 14, 2026

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE (Label)	ARTIST	TW SPINS	SPINS +/-	THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE (Label)	ARTIST	TW SPINS	SPINS +/-
1	2	13	PAINTED YOU PRETTY (Independent) ★★1 Week at 1 ★★	Hudson Westbrook	1809	199	11	9	17	FOUND (Late August Records)	Cody Jinks	1292	39
2	3	20	WHEN I THINK ABOUT YOU (Independent)	Amanda Kate Ferris	1787	193	12	14	11	LIVE FREE (SEE ME RUNNING) (Independent)	Shane Smith & The Saints	1274	95
3	5	17	HOW MANY SORRYS (Cameron Allbright Music)	Cameron Allbright	1665	100	13	16	6	JUNE'S HONKY TONK MOON (CDX)	Sandee June	1249	149
4	4	18	LONG WAY HOME (Independent)	Matt Daniel	1651	67	14	12	26	COWBOY KINDA PARTY (Independent)	Caleb Sutton	1208	-23
5	6	13	ONE WILD REASON (Independent)	Jesse Raub Jr.	1549	100	15	17	18	BEAUTIFUL YOU (Prophets and Outlaws Music)	Prophets and Outlaws	1181	87
6	7	15	GOING THROUGH (WHISKEY LIKE WATER) (Independent)	Tilluride	1474	51	16	15	18	NEON NEVER LIES (Mirror Ball Records)	Caleb Young	1147	36
7	10	10	I CAN'T GET OVER YOU (Independent)	Tristan Roberson	1452	201	17	18	7	REASONS TO CALL (Get Joe)	Billie Jo	1141	147
8	8	17	BLESSING AND A CURSE (RedPlay Media)	Guy Vincent	1430	35	18	20	7	STUBBORN AND REMAINS (Independent)	William Clark Green	1074	125
9	11	10	SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE (Independent)	Jamie Richards	1310	68	19	21	7	HARD TO WRITE A LOVE SONG (Independent)	Mike Ryan	1010	75
10	13	14	DANCING WITH MY BABY TONIGHT (Independent)	Trevor Underwood	1299	84	20	1	15	SELFISH (Independent)	Josh Abbott Band	960	-844

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

billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY
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THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
1	4	55	THE FALL CoJo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN ★★ No. 1 (1 Week) ★★	Cody Johnson	29.564	+3.550	8137	1223	1
2	1	18	SLEEPLESS IN A HOTEL ROOM Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	28.492	-6.057	7071	-1973	3
3	3	22	BRUNETTE Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Republic/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	27.620	+1.458	7437	418	2
4	5	13	BE HER SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	26.575	+2.038	6747	426	5
5	2	30	CHOOSIN' TEXAS SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	26.025	-0.747	5728	-381	8
6	6	20	CHANGE MY MIND Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	24.434	+0.743	6897	204	4
7	7	29	TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	23.460	+1.259	6621	330	6
8	8	34	HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	23.297	+2.114	6207	544	7
9	9	29	BEAUTIFUL THINGS Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	18.678	-0.015	5379	183	9
10	12	11	DON'T TELL ON ME Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	17.210	+0.968	4911	227	10
11	10	23	ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville/SMN	Corey Kent & Koe Wetzel	16.905	+0.313	4632	54	12
12	14	11	DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	16.021	+1.510	4422	495	13
13	11	50	ME & A BEER Harpeth 60	Chris Janson	15.800	-0.591	4770	-116	11
14	13	56	I AIN'T COMING BACK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud Morgan Wallen Featuring Post Malone	Morgan Wallen Featuring Post Malone	14.878	-0.686	3993	-114	14
15	15	9	WOMAN Zone 4/RCA Nashville/SMN	Kane Brown	13.313	+0.353	3875	188	15
16	17	31	CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	12.497	+0.906	3823	264	16
17	16	62	WISH YOU WELL Music Soup/Interscope/MCA Nashville	Vincent Mason	12.323	-0.185	3745	226	17
18	19	3	I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers ★★ Airpower ★★	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	11.883	+2.554	3142	725	19
19	18	15	RIDE, RIDE, RIDE RECORDS/RECORDS Nashville	George Birge Featuring Luke Bryan	10.249	+0.479	3177	86	18
20	NEW		CARRY ON Warner/HEY NOW ★★ Hot Shot Debut/Breaker/Most Increased Audience ★★	Kenny Chesney	9.895	+9.876	2702	2693	23
21	21	15	MCARTHUR Mercury/Big Loud HARDY, Eric Church, Morgan Wallen & Tim McGraw	HARDY, Eric Church, Morgan Wallen & Tim McGraw	9.195	+0.161	2947	81	20
22	20	45	KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan	8.971	-0.189	2838	-41	21
23	22	22	SOUTH OF SANITY Leo33	Zach Top	8.765	+0.011	2782	15	22
24	27	7	BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	8.508	+2.553	2236	657	27
25	24	7	COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Row Crop/MCA Nashville	Luke Bryan	8.471	+0.174	2401	26	25
26	23	48	WRONG HEARTS BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	8.228	-0.105	2631	-74	24
27	25	17	BOOTS OFF Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Jon Pardi	6.845	+0.168	2282	-4	26
28	28	12	GET TO DRINKIN' Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Zach John King	6.536	+0.862	2196	238	29
29	26	36	ALL MY EXES Mercury/Big Loud Lauren Alaina Featuring Chase Matthew	Lauren Alaina Featuring Chase Matthew	6.520	+0.341	2235	87	28
30	30	6	SAY SO Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Dan + Shay	5.144	+0.474	1903	157	31

COUNTRY AIRPLAY CHART LEGEND

RANKINGS

Country Airplay is ranked by total audience impressions for the week ending Sunday based on monitored airplay by Mediabase of 145 stations by Luminate. Audience totals on the chart are derived, in part, using certain Nielsen Audio-copyrighted Persons 12+ audience estimates (under license © 2026, Nielsen Audio). The list of all Country Airplay chart reporters can be viewed in Luminate's online platform.

TIES

On Country Airplay, if two songs are tied in audience, the song with the larger increase in audience is placed first.

BULLETS

Awarded on Country Airplay to titles gaining audience or remaining flat from the previous week. Titles that decline in audience but increase in detections will also receive a bullet if the total audience erosion for the week does not exceed 3%.

RECURRENTS

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

HOT SHOT DEBUT

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

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

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

AIRPOWER

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

BREAKER

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

billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY
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LUMINATE

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
31	29	44	EASY TO LOVE Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch	4.901	+0.169	1936	29	30
32	31	21	WATER AT A WEDDING Nashville Harbor	Greylan James	3.994	-0.272	1668	-88	32
33	32	33	LONG LIVE COUNTRY Triple Tigers	Shane Profitt	3.715	-0.107	1446	11	36
34	35	14	LET HIM IN ANYWAY Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	3.702	+0.200	1510	44	35
35	33	12	PAINTED YOU PRETTY River House/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Hudson Westbrook	3.528	-0.247	1295	-12	38
36	42	4	BOSTON Stella Lefty/Atlantic Outpost/Atlantic	Stella Lefty	3.449	+0.970	941	302	49
37	34	26	STRAIGHT FOR THE HEART Alexandra Kay/Wheelhouse	Alexandra Kay	3.436	-0.090	1606	-54	33
38	36	16	GARY Mercury/Big Loud	Stephen Wilson Jr.	3.316	+0.037	1283	2	39
39	38	11	WHAT IF WE DON'T Warner Music Nashville/WRN	Ashley McBryde	3.122	+0.024	1227	19	41
40	37	30	FIREWORKS Curb	Kelsey Hart	3.053	-0.092	1556	39	34
41	40	20	WORTH YOUR WILD Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	2.987	+0.025	1228	-34	40
42	39	16	HOLDIN' IT DOWN Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	2.979	-0.084	1417	-27	37
43	41	16	NEVER COMIN' BACK Lost Highway	Flatland Cavalry	2.875	+0.311	1080	76	43
44	44	29	THE HELL YOU ARE Back Blocks/Mercury/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	2.473	+0.090	1175	80	42
45	45	5	MOVE ON American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Kevin Powers & Shaboozey	2.457	+0.216	1065	91	44
46	46	4	MEDICINE Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	2.295	+0.191	824	37	51
47	43	17	MAKE A LIAR Blue Highway	Jackson Dean	2.290	-0.109	1016	-6	46
48	47	12	KILLIN' ME MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	2.141	+0.038	997	37	47
49	48	15	WHEN A COWBOY PRAYS Brandon Lake/Essential/SMN	Brandon Lake X Cody Johnson	1.749	-0.008	751	-39	54
50	49	27	KILLED THE MAN Curb	Lee Brice	1.684	-0.032	1037	50	45
51	50	8	GOOD DAMN Wheelhouse	Brantley Gilbert	1.517	+0.047	848	-23	50
52	51	18	HIGHS & LOWS Quartz Hill	Matt Cooper	1.474	+0.061	766	-3	53
53	52	3	WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG Goat Island Sound/Mercury Nashville	Jacob Hackworth	1.447	+0.216	961	73	48
54	53	3	LONELIEST GIRL Kacey Musgraves/Lost Highway	Kacey Musgraves	1.420	+0.235	528	137	60
55	55	11	KEEPS ME SANE Tyler Nance/Santa Anna/Akando	Tyler Nance	1.156	+0.079	745	87	55
56	56	6	BACK IN THE BOTTLE Magnolia Music	Randy Houser	0.925	-0.043	771	-1	52
57	54	8	IF I DON'T LEAVE I'M GONNA STAY Blue Highway/Nashville Harbor	Carly Pearce & Riley Green	0.888	-0.270	569	-52	58
58	57	13	PSYCHOLOGICAL Nashville Harbor	The Band Perry	0.866	-0.003	743	2	56
59	58	2	LOVE IS BLIND WEST TO THE REST/Triple Tigers ★★ Breaker ★★	Ian Munsick	0.774	+0.027	548	33	59
60	NEW		WANNABE Thrivin Here/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Gavin Adcock	0.772	+0.331	345	210	-



Carrie Underwood performed "Home Sweet Home" and "Kickstart My Heart" with Mötley Crüe on the May 11 finale of ABC's *American Idol*. From left: Crüe members Nikki Sixx and Vince Neil, Underwood, and Crüe members John 5 and Tommy Lee.



Artist-writer Lauren Watkins re-signed with Big Loud Publishing (BLP), administered by Warner Chappell, in a deal announced on May 12. From left (back row): BLP senior VP Kimberly Gleason, Warner Chappell Nashville A&R manager Bethany Mako and Big Loud Records senior VP of A&R Sara Knabe. From left (front row): Big Loud partner/CEO Seth England, Watkins and BLP creative director Katie Flynn.

ERIC MCCANDLESS/DISNEY

JESSIE ADDLEMAN

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2026

COUNTRY POWER PLAYERS



Billboard's 12th annual Country Power Players issue will celebrate the executives and artists who have propelled country music to another stellar year. This special feature will highlight those who have had the greatest impact in the genre over the past year, spanning recorded music, streaming, radio, publishing, management and live entertainment.

Advertise in *Billboard's* Country Power Players issue to congratulate this year's honorees while reaching key decision-makers who are driving the music business.

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Billboard Country Power Players Cocktail Party & Awards
June 3 in Nashville.

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ISSUE DATE 5/30 | AD CLOSE 5/19 | MATERIALS DUE 5/21

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

LIGHT OF BLUE PHOTOGRAPHY



Vince Gill (center) received the Ken Burns American Heritage Prize, recognizing his creative reflection of the American spirit, during a May 6 event at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. With him: American Prairie board of directors chair Bill Hill (left) and Burns.

THE DIRT BAND'S FAREWELL TO NASHVILLE

The **Nitty Gritty Dirt Band** called on a small group of friends to help celebrate the group's final Nashville performance May 13, on the anniversary of its first paid gig 60 years ago.

The 1966 show at The Paradox in Orange, Calif., was a far less prestigious locale than the 2026 appearance at the Grand Ole Opry House as part of All the Good Times: The Farewell Tour. Somewhere in between — to paraphrase their first country No. 1, “Long Hard Road (The Sharecropper’s Dream)” — they’ve clearly grown, in admirable plain Dirt fashion.

Suzu Bogguss, Dobro player **Jerry Douglas**, banjo ace **Allison Brown** and vocalist **Kathleen Edwards** assisted periodically in an engaging, two-plus hours of music that defied category. Country, folk, blues and pop were all part of the stew, visually represented well by their lack of stage props. No production flash, little in the way of instrumental fireworks, no crazy vocal runs — the entire event consisted of strong, melodic songs with blue-collar themes.

“Long Hard Road,” “Workin’ Man (Nowhere to Go),” “Mr. Bojangles” and “Nashville Skyline” exemplified the middle-class values of a travellin’ band that’s earned the right to finally clock out after six decades. Even in an age of rising oligarchs, the gritty, classic values the Dirt Band represents remain a central piece of America’s story.

RADIO & RECORDS®

RECORDS promoted two New York executives whose roles include representation for RECORDS Nashville. **Andrew Saltman** rose to senior VP of artist development from VP of marketing and digital strategies, while **Sara Gil** was boosted to GM from label manager ... **Shane Allen** joined Riser House as executive VP of promotion and artist brand strategy. His lengthy promotion history includes stops at Capitol Nashville and Columbia Nashville. Riser House also promoted three executives: **Megan Stottlmyer** rose to VP of label operations from label manager, **Alex Heimerman** stepped up to head of marketing and label strategy from VP of streaming & strategy partnerships, and **Jason VanAuken** climbed to VP of business affairs from head of the department ... Independent artist-writer **Denitia** signed with Thirty Tigers to distribute her next album and tapped mtheory for management ... Artist-writer-producer **Brock Phillips** signed a joint-venture recording deal with Big Loud and Local Hay ... Nineteen-year-old **Colton Dawson** joined the artist roster at Warner Records Nashville and enlisted TKO Artist Management to represent his career ... Connoisseur Media announced it’s selling six South Dakota stations to Riverfront Broadcasting, including country signals **KLDO** and **KSDR-FM Watertown** ... **Chris Cagle** launched a 15-part documentary, *25 Years of Playing It Loud: Live from SiriusXM Studios*, with the first episode released May 12 on YouTube. The project builds on a Y2Kountry interview and performance hosted previously by SiriusXM personality **Ashley Till**.

'ROUND THE ROW

Lacey Criss was named pre-opening project manager and manager of guest experience for Dolly’s Life of Many Colors Museum, expected to open in Downtown Nashville this fall. Criss was most recently All In Events volunteer & logistics coordinator ... Artist-writer **Kaylin Roberson** renewed her publishing deal with Peermusic Nashville ... BMG Music Nashville signed artist-writer **Taylor**

Jones to a publishing contract ... Amazon will stream the 61st annual Academy of Country Music Awards for free at 7 p.m. CT on May 17 over multiple company platforms, including Prime Video, accessible [here](#). Presenters, announced May 13, include **Ashley McBryde**, **Shaboozey**, **Keith Urban**, **Michael Bublé** and **The War and Treaty** ... The Country Music Association (CMA) extended its agreement with Disney through 2032, covering the simulcast of the CMA Awards on ABC and Disney+, in addition to the annual *CMA Fest* and *CMA Country Christmas* specials ... CMA Fest’s Fan Fair X, an exhibit and indoor-performance area in Nashville’s Music City Center, will recognize **Russell Dickerson**, **Carly Pearce**, **Shaboozey** and **Ashley McBryde** as artists of the day during the four-day festival June 4-7 ... The 69th annual Grammy Awards are set for Feb. 7, 2027, at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles. Nominations will be announced Nov. 16 ... Six projects with direct relevance to country music were revealed May 14 as additions to the Library of Congress’ National Film Registry. They include two singles, **Vince Gill**’s “Go Rest High On That Mountain” and **The Charlie Daniels Band**’s “The Devil Went Down to Georgia,” plus four albums: **Ray Charles**’ *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music*, **Rosanne Cash**’s *The Wheel*, **Reba McEntire**’s *Rumor Has It* and **Taylor Swift**’s *1989* ... **Abby Anderson** and **Michael Farren** took first place in the country category of the International Songwriting Competition with their composition “Heart on Fire in Mexico.” **Thompson Square** co-founder **Keifer Thompson** topped the comedy/novelty category with “Ain’t No Branches On My Family Tree.” Go [here](#) for a complete overview ... A Tennessee Music Pathways marker will be installed behind Moby Dicky’s in Hendersonville on June 2 to commemorate the site of the former Morningstar Sound Studio, where **Randy Travis** recorded “Forever and Ever, Amen” and **Dan Seals** cut “Bop.” The event will be attended by Travis, producer **Kyle Lehning** and Morningstar owner **Tony Gottlieb** ... **Trace Adkins** will debut a new song, “American Made,” as PBS airs *A Capitol Fourth: 250th Weekend Celebration* live from the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., on July 3 ... The Heartland Network airs three barbecue-related specials to recognize America’s 250th anniversary, with **Alecia Davis** hosting for Memorial Day, May 21; Independence Day, July 2; and Labor Day, Sept. 3 ... Open auditions to perform on the Margaritaville at Sea Cruise Line, in conjunction with **Zac Brown**’s “Same Boat,” will be held May 16 at the Margaritaville restaurant on Broadway in Nashville ... Songwriter **Shelby Kennedy** (“I’m a Survivor”) has published a book for aspiring creatives, *Gold & Platinum Nuggets of Wisdom: Bite-Sized Perspectives for Navigating the Music Business* ... An album of previously unreleased music by the late **Gary Stewart**, *One Track Mind*, is due July 17 from the Delmore Recording Society. The 16-track project includes three covers of Motown classics ... **Tom Truitt**’s WHO KNEW “The Smartest People in the Room” series will feature Anzie Blue recording artist **Pynk Beard** and producer **Oak Felder (Rihanna, Lizzo)** at 1 p.m. CT on May 21. Go [here](#) to register for free ... The Hispanic Entertainment Alliance, founded by Marushka Media owner **Jackie Marushka**, established a charitable fund in conjunction with the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. Go [here](#) for details ... **Walker Montgomery** visited Sunrise Hospital in Las Vegas in conjunction with ACM Lifting Lives’ \$20,000 donation to Musicians On Call’s bedside music programs ... **BlackHawk** and **The Outlaws** donated \$50,000 total to Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center and MusiCares. ●



Stone Country artist Lakelin Lemmings poses with Townsquare/Lansing, Mich., director of content Jonathan “JR” Ruppel on May 7 after appearing on the morning show at country WITL.

MIDYEAR TOURING REPORT



Join *Billboard* as we take a midyear look at the touring industry's top venues, tours and promoters based on *Billboard*'s exclusive Boxscore charts. Charts will include: Top grossing venues, tours and promoters, top Boxscores, top ticket sales, top tours by genre + comedy.

Place your brand in front of booking agents, artists, managers, concert promoters, producers, venue operators, label heads and other key touring executives who are driving the touring business worldwide.

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Midyear Touring Print edition:

ISSUE DATE: May 30

AD SPACE CLOSE: May 19

MATERIALS DUE: May 21

Midyear Touring Digital - Special edition of Bulletin:

ISSUE DATE: May 27

AD SPACE CLOSE: May 19

MATERIALS DUE: May 21

billboard Country Airplay Index

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

A

ALL MY EXES Lylas Music, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane 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/Hoops Don't Lie Publishing, BMI/Modern Arts Songs, BMI/Music By Work Of Art, BMI (Lauren Alaina, J.A.Gutch, B.J.Johnson, W.Philips) **29**

B

BACK IN THE BOTTLE Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/I'm Your Huckleberry Music, BMI (R.Houser) **56**

BEAUTIFUL THINGS Sony Timber Publishing, SESAC/Georgiamo, SESAC/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Triples 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) **9**

BE BY YOU Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Tuckaway Music, BMI/Songs By Porchlight, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Highway 75 Publishing, BMI/Duckman Publishing, BMI/Wildhawk Publishing, BMI (D. Alley, S.Banks, N.Waish) **24**

BE HILLER Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Sea Gayle Distillery Music, ASCAP/Endurance Music Group, BMI/Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Spirit Nashville One, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Langley Publishing, BMI/Ross & Rae Music, ASCAP/Relative Rights, ASCAP (E.Langley, S.Ahnquist, J.M.Schmidt, M.W.Hardy) **4**

BOOTS OFF Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI/50 Egg Music, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Crawford Mercer Music, GMR/Songs Of CN, GMR (J.Pardi, W.McCubin, L.Laird) **27**

BOSTON 13117 Music, ASCAP/Kobalt Songs Music Publishing LLC, ASCAP/Grace Enger Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Joee Reeves Publishing, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/LMC Is The Place For Me Publishing, ASCAP/Secret Meadow Songs, ASCAP/Sony Allegro, ASCAP/Stella Lefty Music, ASCAP (G.Enger, J.K.Hindin, J.Reeves, N.Kahan, S.Lefty) **36**

BRUNETE 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-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI (C.LaCorre, R.C.McGill, J.L.Miller, B.Pendergrass) **3**

C

CARRY ON Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Big Blue Nation Music, ASCAP/Combustion Five, ASCAP/Damn Country Music Publishing, ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP (R.C.McGill, M.Jenkins, J.L.Alexander) **20**

CHANGE MY MIND Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Back 40 Publishing International, BMI/Duckman Publishing, BMI/Flatland Boy Music, BMI/Hit Songs Of 50 Egg Music, BMI/Full Draw Publishing, BMI (R.Green, Erik Dylan, R.Montana) **6**

CHEVY SILVERADO Little Louder Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Sparko Phone Music, BMI/Gavin J. Lucas Publishing, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Vacant Heart Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Bailey Zimmerman Publishing, BMI (T.Beathard, J.Luber, G.J.Lucas, H.Warren, B.Zimmerman) **16**

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/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI (E.Langley, C.L.Dick, M.Lambert, J.Taylor) **5**

COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Concord Copyrights, BMI/Jomil 10 Music, BMI/Trailer Parker Iwang Lab, BMI/Hometeam Publishing LLC, BMI/Kilometre Music Group B, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Super Big Music, ASCAP/M Drag Songs, ASCAP (J.L.Miller, P.Welling, M.Dragstrom) **25**

D

DON'T TELL ON ME Makena Cove Music, ASCAP/BMG Gold Songs, ASCAP/Triple Play Music, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Irinsonmusic, BMI/Kwsay Publishing, BMI/WritersonthehornPublishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI (K.M.Allison, T.Kennedy, J.Morgan, L.Vaughan) **10**

DON'T WE Honey Hole Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/Long And Curly Entertainment, BMI/John Byron Music, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Poppy's Picks, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI (M.C.Wallen, R.H.Block, J.Byron, A.G.Gorley, B.Pendergrass, Charlie Handsome) **12**

E

EASY TO LOVE Hit Train Music, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane 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/PINB Publishing, ASCAP (D.Lynch, B.J.Johnson, J.R.Hall, H.Phelps, Z.Crowell) **31**

F

THE FALL Sea Gayle Ale House Music, BMI/Bobby Pinson Music, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Keep Chopin 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) **1**

FIREWORKS Sea Gayle Ale House Music, BMI/Bobby Pinson Music, BMI/Good Boy Gravy, BMI/Sony Countrywide, 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-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Works By Kinda Country Songs, BMI/Speakers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Brady James Music, BMI/Akin For Jonas Music, BMI/8 Publishing, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/ERNY'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) **28**

GOOD DAMN Indiana Angel Music, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Don't Be A Gypsy, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Relative Music Group, BMI/Redneckr Music, BMI/TDP Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI (B.Gilbert, B.Berryhill, M.W.Hardy, T.Phillips) **51**

H

HATE HOW YOU LOOK Songs Of Combustion Five, BMI/Me Gusta Music, BMI/Round Hill Verses Publishing, BMI (N.Sainato, C.McKenna, J.Farren, C.Yancey) **8**

THE HELL YOU ARE Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Two Twelve 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/WeisUdd, ASCAP (A.Cooke, S.W.Ennis, J.A.Fox, R.C.McGill, E.L.Weisband) **44**

HIGHS & LOWS Songs Of North Chapel Music, BMI/Endurance Music Group, BMI/318 Records Publishing, BMI (M.Cooper) **52**

HOLDIN' IT DOWN Chase Matthew Music Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane 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) **42**

I

I AIN'T COMING BACK Honey Hole Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane 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/Redneckr Music, BMI (M.C.Wallen, L.B.Bell, M.W.Hardy, A.R.Post, E.K.Smith, Charlie Handsome) **14**

I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Bridge 1 Music, BMI/Songs Of Combustion Five, BMI/Me Gusta Music, BMI (E.Langley, A.Goodloe, J.Taylor) **18**

IF I DON'T LEAVE I'M GONNA STAY Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Black Jeans Music, BMI/Neon Cross Music, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Crazy Baby Songs, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Turtle Garden Publishing, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Mouth Feel Music Publishing, ASCAP (D.Dawson, S.W.Ennis, J.T.Minton, J.Reynolds) **57**

K

KEEPS ME SANE Anthems Of Platinum Grammer, ASCAP/Sony Tunes LLC, ASCAP/Copyright Control (C.T.L.Nance, D.Napier, B.McCollough) **55**

KID MYSELF Triple Play Music, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/T Tree Music, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Endurance Alpha, ASCAP/Total Schmidt Songs, ASCAP (J.Morgan, T.R.Hubbard, J.M.Schmidt) **22**

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 Countrywide, BMI/Songs Of Riser House, BMI (M.D.Whitworth, J.D.Conrad, T.Carterwright, C.B.Baldwin) **50**

KILLIN' ME Parkermac Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane 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) **48**

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.Wallace) **34**

LONELIEST GIRL Recordings Of Cosmic Intent, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Sony Lyric Music Publishing, GMR/CN Songs From 1508, GMR/Crawford Mercer Music, GMR/Smackworld Music, GMR/Art Of CTM Music Outlander LP, GMR/Warner Geo Met Ric Music, GMR/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Songs For Indy And Owl, ASCAP (K.Musgraves, L.Laird, S.McAnally, J.Osborne) **54**

LONG LIVE COUNTRY Shane Proffitt Publishing Designee, BMI/Zippizip Music, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Rudy Rocks The USA, BMI (S.Proffitt, M.J.Rogers, L.Rimes) **33**

LOVE IS BLIND Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Crawbaby Music, BMI/Little Louder Songs, BMI/Harolds Purple Heart Music, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Abundantiam Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Harpeth Valley, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI (L.Musick, R.Tyndell, J.N.Sullivan) **59**

M

MAKE A LIAR Little Louder Songs, BMI/Emileon Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Full Draw Publishing, BMI (J.Dean, C.L.Dick, R.Montana) **47**

MCARTHUR Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Relative Music Group Family, ASCAP/Head Coach Music, ASCAP/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Philippians 4:7 Songs, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Old Bandana, BMI (M.W.Hardy, R.C.McGill, J.Rogers, J.Thompson) **21**

ME & A BEER Anthem Red Vinyl Music, BMI/Buckkilla Music, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP/Poppy's Picks, ASCAP/TDP Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI/Firebird Country Tunes, BMI/Oakdale Market Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Sony Tunes LLC, ASCAP (C.Janson, T.Phillips, A.G.Gorley, A.Sheridan) **13**

MEDICINE Universal Tunes, SESAC/Georgiamo, SESAC/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Triples 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) **46**

MOVE ON Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Cabrera Music, BMI/EMPIRE Strikes First, BMI/Neairs Publishing, SESAC/EMPIRE San Francisco, SESAC/Kreshendo, ASCAP/Songs Of 78, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Beat Stars Publishing, ASCAP/Torrey Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI (T.W.Kane, K.J.Powers, C.O.Chibweze, S.Sanchez, D.R.Stevens, A.Cabrera, J.Torrey) **45**

N

NEVER COMIN' BACK ONE TOOTH PRODUCTIONS, BMI/Invoked Lamb Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Sony Lyric Music Publishing, GMR/CN Songs From 1508, GMR/Crawford Mercer Music, GMR (C.Cordero, L.Laird, A.Retiere) **43**

P

PAINTED YOU PRETTY Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Tuckaway Music, BMI/Saxet HW Music, BMI/Tape Room Music Round Two, BMI/Myron Bailey Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/FBRL Country Tunes, BMI (H.Westbrook, Lukas Scott, B.Bailey) **35**

PSYCHOLOGICAL Smack Back Music, BMI/Concord Bartone C1, BMI/Midtown Mistake Publishing, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Colton Venner Publishing, BMI (C.Park, G.Tyler, C.Verner) **58**

R

RIDE, RIDE, RIDE Big Music Machine, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/T Tree Music, BMI (G.C.Birge, T.R.Hubbard, C.Brown, P.Welling) **19**

ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW Songs Of Combustion Five, BMI/Corey 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) **11**

S

SAY SO Beats And Banjos, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Shay Mooney Music, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Eleventh Wave Music, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Cing Trax, ASCAP/Lyridge Music, ASCAP/Cascade Road Songs, ASCAP (D.Smyers, S.Mooney, D.H.Hodges, J.Robbins) **30**

SLEEPLESS IN A HOTEL ROOM Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Bootleg Lyrics, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane 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) **2**

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/Doan What I Do, BMI/Getysosome Music, BMI (Z.Top, C.Chamberlain, M.Nesler) **23**

STRAIGHT FOR THE HEART Cing Trax, ASCAP/Lyridge Music, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Cascade Road Songs, ASCAP/Karley Scott Collins Publishing Designee, ASCAP/Susan Perb Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Mod Junkie, BMI (J.Robbins, K.S.Collins, Sasha Alex Sloan) **37**

T

TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND Anthem Music Publishing II, ASCAP/Jordan Davis Music, ASCAP/Neon Cross Music, BMI/Black Jeans Music, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/MVZ Music, BMI/Red Bandana Publishing, BMI/Sony Countrywide, BMI/Songs Of Riser House, BMI/Jake Mitchell Publishing Designee, BMI (J.Davis, D.Dawson, J.Mitchell, J.Thompson) **7**

W

WANNABE Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Good Cock Tunes, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/Bo Wallace Publishing, BMI/Murphy The Wolf Music, BMI/Mandy's Favorite Songs, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Jimmy Sad Publishing, BMI/Ernest Music Publishing Designee, BMI (G.Adoock, J.R.Durrett, B.Clawson, E.K.Smith, M.C.Wallen) **60**

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/Philippians 4:7 Songs, BMI/Songs For Knox, BMI (G.J.Egan, M.Dragstrom, R.C.McGill) **32**

WHAT IF WE DON'T Beejo Fetch Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Song Factory, BMI/Merf Music Publishing LLC, BMI/Colton Slays, BMI/Songs Of Merf Music LLC, BMI (A.McBryde, T.J.Box, R.Clay) **39**

WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG Speakers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Goat Island Bay Music, BMI/T Vill Music, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/I Finally Got Some Publishing, BMI/Songs By 10K HRS Publishing, BMI/Goat Island Palms, LLC, BMI/Smells Like Good Music, ASCAP/Reservoir Media Music, ASCAP (A.Hackworth, D.Ross, J.Free, S.Jones) **53**

WHEN A COWBOY PRAYS Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Brandon Lake Music, ASCAP/All Essential Music, ASCAP/Pravin 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.Southern) **49**

WISH YOU WELL Big Music Machine, BMI/Works By Range Music Partners, BMI/Warbaner Publishing, BMI/Big Ass Pile Of Dimes Music, BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI (G.Warburton, J.J.Dillon, B.Pendergrass, C.LaCorte) **17**

WOMAN Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Family Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/John Byron Music, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP/Poppy's Picks, ASCAP/Tape Room Hits, BMI/Copyright Control/TDP Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI (K.Brown, J.Byron, A.G.Gorley, B.J.Johnson, T.Phillips) **15**

WORTH YOUR WILD Concord Copyrights, BMI/Big Hits N Gravy, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane 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) **41**

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/Drug Drag Music, ASCAP/Round Hill Songs II, ASCAP (P.C.Brust, C.Lucas, M.Dragstrom, J.Thompson) **26**

2026 billboard GRAMMY® FIRST LOOK

On July 18, Billboard will publish a Grammy First Look special feature showcasing the artists, producers and other creative professionals whose music was released during the **eligibility period of Aug. 31, 2025, to Aug. 30, 2026.**

The issue will look at the early contenders for the **69th Annual Grammy Awards®** in the categories of Record Of The Year, Song Of The Year, Album Of The Year and Best New Artist.

7/15 ONLINE ENTRY PROCESS OPENS

8/28 ONLINE ENTRY PROCESS CLOSES

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30 Years Ago When Jo Dee Messina Turned 'Heads' With Her First Hit

Her near-No. 1 indirectly brought her awards nominations more than 25 years later

It somehow seems appropriate that a guy with the last name of Nichols wrote an impactful song about a coin toss.

"Heads Carolina, Tails California" — which emerged as **Jo Dee Messina's** first single in 1996 — drew its inspiration from the **Robert James Waller** novel *Border Music*, in which the lead character flips a coin to decide where he should move. **Tim Nichols** ("Live Like You Were Dying," "I Never Lie") suggested a song built around the same dynamic to co-writer **Mark D. Sanders** ("I Hope You Dance," "Blue

Clear Sky"), and they came up with the "Carolina" story featuring a young couple deciding where their next adventure should take them.

Messina cut it with producers **Byron Gallimore (Faith Hill, Sugarland)** and **Tim McGraw**, and Curb made it her inaugural release, debuting on *Billboard's* Hot Country Songs chart dated Jan. 27, 1996. The "Carolina" trip ended at No. 2 on the May 18, 1996, list, just behind **Brooks & Dunn's** "My Maria." Six of Messina's singles eventually travelled all

the way to the top, beginning with "Bye Bye" in 1998 and ending with "My Give a Damn's Busted" in 2005.

Her "Carolina" journey extended further into the future. **Cole Swindell** and three co-writers interpolated it for "She Had Me at Heads Carolina," which rose to No. 3 in 2022. Swindell's solo hit was ultimately remixed as a collaboration with Messina, and the duet brought awards nominations to both artists from the Country Music Association and the Academy of Country Music. —TOM ROLAND

Messina performs Oct. 4, 1997, at Shoreline Amphitheater in Mountain View, Calif.

REWINDING
THE
COUNTRY
CHARTS

	T	W	L	W	2	W	AG	W	CH	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	LABEL & NUMBER/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	W	CH
										*** No. 1 ***			
1	2	2	7							MY MARIA D. COOK, K. BROOKS, R. DUNN (D. MOORE, B. W. STEVENSON)	◆ BROOKS & DUNN (C) (V) ARISTA 1-2993	1	
2	3	4	17							HEADS CAROLINA, TAILS CALIFORNIA B. GALLIMORE, T. MCGRAW (T. NICHOLS, M. D. SANDERS)	◆ JO DEE MESSINA (C) (D) (V) CURB 76982	2	
3	5	8	7							BLUE CLEAR SKY T. BROWN, G. STRAIT (M. D. SANDERS, J. JARRARD, B. DIPIERO)	GEORGE STRAIT (V) MCA 55187	3	
4	6	9	13							SOMEONE ELSE'S DREAM S. HENDRICKS, F. HILL (C. WISEMAN, T. BRUCE)	FAITH HILL WARNER BROS. ALBUM CUT	4	
5	4	7	12							LONG AS I LIVE S. HENDRICKS (R. BOWLES, W. ROBINSON)	JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY ATLANTIC ALBUM CUT	4	
6	9	12	16							IT'S WHAT I DO	◆ BILLY DEAN	6	

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