

billboard Country Update

BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

Tom.Roland@billboard.com

Stephen Wilson Jr. Dismisses The Clock, Succeeding On A Trail Few Have Blazed



When boxer **George Foreman** claimed the world heavyweight title with a 10th-round knockout of **Michael Moorer** in November 1994, **Stephen Wilson Jr.** took note.

Foreman was just five days short of age 46, and Moorer was 20 years his younger in a sport where 30 is deemed “old.” Wilson Jr., 15 at the time, never forgot his dad’s reaction.

“You would have needed a shovel to have scraped his jaw off the floor because he couldn’t believe that a 46-year-old man just became the heavyweight champion of the world,” Wilson Jr. says. “That was probably one of the most impactful events I ever watched in my life. I watched a human defy the odds.”

Wilson Jr., now 46, is defying the odds as well. He won his first Academy of Country Music award when the rough-edged “Cuckoo” claimed video of the year on May 6. His solo performance of “Stand by Me” was one of the highlights of the Country Music Awards last November, and he has a slot on the satellite stage at Nissan Stadium during CMA Fest on June 7. Plus, his quirky “Gary” ranks No. 37 on *Billboard’s* Country Airplay chart dated May 30.

Wilson Jr., speaking with *Billboard Country Update* before headlining the Nashville Chapter of the Recording Academy’s annual Block Party May 12, was amused that his pursuit of an artist’s life in his mid-40s is unusual.

Time “only exists because we collectively choose to believe it exists,” he says, presumably drawing on theories from quantum mechanics. “The second we choose to believe it doesn’t exist is the second it becomes non-existent. And so I always had a weird

little issue with time.”

If he didn’t know it before, Wilson Jr. became acutely aware that his view of our chronological existence is different once he became a songwriter. After boxing in his Indiana youth, he spent several years as a guitarist in the indie rock band **AutoVaughn**.

He earned a degree in microbiology and chemistry at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tenn., then worked in research and development for Mars, Inc., but pulled away from the corporate world to become a songwriter in his late-30s. The age thing raised its head at that time, mostly because others had their own weird little issue with time.

“I remember artists being, like, 27 in the writing room with me, and being worried that they were becoming too old,” he says. “They would express their woes to me, like, ‘Oh, I’m getting close to 30 here.’ I’m 37 [at the time], I just quit [my job], I’m just starting my [writing] career. It’s

a little awkward, but I don’t tell them that. I just kind of sit there in the room and let them express their grievances.”

Wilson Jr. didn’t plan to go beyond writing songs at that point in his career, but he didn’t plan on the emotional journey that accompanied his father’s death, either. That life passage occurred when he was 39, and it spurred a new phase in his life.

“When my dad died, I died with him,” he says. “Everything that I was — and thought I was — died. And with that came a birth.”

The new Stephen Wilson Jr. was driven to write about the guy that raised him, and he ultimately created a double album, *son*



WILSON

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of dad, for his first full-sized package with Big Loud. The album is thematically deep, sonically heavy and way beyond anything a run-of-the-mill 27-year-old would dream up in country music. It's part of what's appealing about his emergence at this point in his time-defying term on Earth. His rise comes at a creatively ideal time.

"I have more to say at my age now than I did 20 years ago, and I'm a different person than I was 20 years ago," he says. "I'm not sure if I'd want to hear an album written by me 20 years ago."

He's not the first country artist to come of age in the marketplace a few decades after most people come of age. **Willie Nelson**, one of Wilson Jr.'s icons, was 42 when "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain" brought him into his commercial sweet spot. **K.T. Oslin** was 45 when "80's Ladies" introduced her sly, award-winning voice of experience. Early Grand Ole Opry star **Uncle Dave Macon** was past 50 when he made his first recordings and debuted on the **WSM-AM** Nashville show.

One of the benefits that accompanies an artist's rise in their 40s or beyond is a sense of self that makes them easy to manage.

"Everything is very intentional — what he records, how he records it, the hat that he wears, the style, the clothes that he wears, the guitar that he plays, the sound that that makes, and I just try to stay out of the way," says his manager, ALJ MGMT owner **Alicia Jones**. "He knows what he wants to do, and we're just there as managers to protect it — and not mold it or manufacture it — just to clear obstacles out of the way and support him."

His grainy vocal style and intense songs caught her attention immediately when she first heard him in 2021; after just a verse and a chorus, she wanted to work with him.

"I met him, and he was so fascinating," she says. "He's so smart, you know, and then I got to see him play, and I had absolutely no clue how old he was. Nor did I care."

His performances don't necessarily give that away either. His CMA appearance, in which he captivated an entire arena with just his voice and guitar while reinventing "Stand by Me," displayed a raw urgency. His set at the Recording Academy Block Party was raucous, and he physically owned the stage like a 20-something.

Life as an artist is far more taxing than most fans likely realize. The long hours of travel can lead to dehydration, jet lag, tight muscles and circulation issues. The actual performance, which is only a small part of the day, requires focus, deep breathing and a show of energy — even when the act has little in the tank.

Wilson Jr. still uses boxing exercises to stay in shape for the road. And, of course, neither the concerts nor the lifestyle around it are nearly as depleting — or painful — as going head-to-head with another fighter was when he was pursuing boxing. He's following a path that few — outside the likes of George Foreman or Willie Nelson — have forged. And he doesn't intend to turn back.

"I've been training for this for a long time," he says. "I didn't realize it — like, I've always been training hard for something, and now I know what it is. It just took a long time to figure it out." ●



JAMES COLETTA

Clint Black and Lisa Hartman Black attended as the Lifetime movie *When I Said I Do* premiered May 12 at the Franklin Theatre in Tennessee, ahead of its May 23 Lifetime debut. From left: actor Eric Johnson, Hartman Black, Black and executive producer Adam Reed.



RACHEL DEEB

BMI Nashville assistant VP of creative Mason Hunter hosted BMI's Rooftop on the Row on May 19, with Avery Anna among the night's performers.



Kylie Frey (left) discussed the Horses for Mental Health campaign with RFD-TV's *Market Day Report* host Suzanne Alexander on May 11.

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2026 ACM AWARDS
MUSICAL EVENT OF THE YEAR

D O N T M I N D I F I D O
F T . E L L A L A N G L E Y

billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY MONITORED BY **LUMINATE**

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

'Brunette' Brings Tucker Wetmore To No. 1 For First Time

Tucker Wetmore scores his first No. 1 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart as "Brunette" (Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Republic/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville) rises two spots to top the chart dated May 30. The song drew 30.8 million audience impressions May 15-21, up 11% week over week, according to Luminate.

The track is Wetmore's third Country Airplay top 10. "Wind Up Missin' You" and "3,2,1" each rose to No. 2 last year, in January and December, respectively.

Written by **Chris LaCorte, Chase McGill, Josh Miller** and **Blake Pendergrass**, "Brunette" reaches No. 1 in its 23rd week on Country Airplay, after Wetmore performed it on the Academy of Country Music Awards May 17. That pace is nearly even with the chart's 36-year average ascent, but it stands out in the modern era. No. 1s have averaged about 30 weeks to reach the summit in the last decade, and nearly two-thirds have taken longer.

For **Scott Roddy**, brand manager of Audacy's **KSON** San Diego, early belief in "Brunette" began outside the station. "It started when I saw the crowd's reaction to 'Brunette' at two different concerts," he tells *Billboard*. "Then I saw the streams and immediately jumped on the opportunity." "Brunette" has totaled 203.1 million on-demand official U.S. streams to date. Wetmore's catalog has generated 1.7 billion streams overall.

Adds Audacy country format captain **Tim Roberts**, who also leads programming for **WYCD** Detroit, "We had Tucker here on our WYCD Hoedown Festival show when he was brand new, so we could see how the audience was loving him from the beginning. And like Scotty, the immediate streaming data on the song was proof positive they were gonna eat it up! Besides, a tempo record less than three minutes is a gem."

The song hit even closer to home for Connoisseur's **KBAY** San Jose, Calif., operations manager **J. Love**. "The record connected instantly with our audience," he says. "Honestly, my wife sings it every single time it comes on." 🎵



MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)
BRUNETTE Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Republic/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	+3.132
DON'T TELL ON ME Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+2.447
HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	+2.418
BE HER SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	+2.322
DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+1.964
BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+1.702
I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Big Loud/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	+1.649
TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+1.489
CHANGE MY MIND Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	+1.197
SAY SO Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Dan + Shay	+0.853

MOST INCREASED PLAYS

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN
BRUNETTE Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Republic/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	+806
BE HER SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	+598
DON'T TELL ON ME Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+511
I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Big Loud/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	+473
DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+450
HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	+442
TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+350
BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+315
CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	+264
SAY SO Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Dan + Shay	+247

RECURRENTS

THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	AMEN American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll	16.073
2	AIN'T COMING BACK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Post Malone	14.193
3	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	12.480
4	20 CIGARETTES Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	11.983
5	DARLIN' Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	9.957
6	GOOD NEWS American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	9.132
7	DAYS LIKE THESE Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	8.011
8	HIGH ROAD YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel & Jessie Murph	7.620
9	HAPPEN TO ME Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	7.610
10	HOW FAR DOES A GOODBYE GO Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	7.340



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING MAY 21, 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	21	WHEN I THINK ABOUT YOU (Independent) ★★1 Week at 1★	Amanda Kate Ferris	1958	171	11	13	7	JUNE'S HONKY TONK MOON (CDX)	Sandee June	1294	45
2	3	18	HOW MANY SORRYS (Cameron Allbright Music)	Cameron Allbright	1764	99	12	12	12	LIVE FREE (SEE ME RUNNING) (Independent)	Shane Smith & The Saints	1271	-3
3	5	14	ONE WILD REASON (Independent)	Jesse Raub Jr.	1662	113	13	16	19	NEON NEVER LIES (Mirror Ball Records)	Caleb Young	1260	113
4	4	19	LONG WAY HOME (Independent)	Matt Daniel	1651	0	14	17	8	REASONS TO CALL (Get Joe)	Billie Jo	1235	94
5	6	16	GOING THROUGH (WHISKEY LIKE WATER) (Independent)	Tilluride	1531	57	15	15	19	BEAUTIFUL YOU (Prophets and Outlaws Music)	Prophets and Outlaws	1198	17
6	7	11	I CAN'T GET OVER YOU (Independent)	Tristan Roberson	1491	39	16	18	8	STUBBORN AND REMAINS (Independent)	William Clark Green	1183	109
7	8	18	BLESSING AND A CURSE (RedPlay Media)	Guy Vincent	1414	-16	17	19	8	HARD TO WRITE A LOVE SONG (Independent)	Mike Ryan	1134	124
8	9	11	SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE (Independent)	Jamie Richards	1395	85	18	14	27	COWBOY KINDA PARTY (Independent)	Caleb Sutton	1129	-79
9	10	15	DANCING WITH MY BABY TONIGHT (Independent)	Trevor Underwood	1353	54	19	21	8	WHISKEY AFTER WOMEN (Write On)	Adysen Malek	992	70
10	11	18	FOUND (Late August Records)	Cody Jinks	1346	54	20	24	14	IF YOU KNOW YOU KNOW (Synapse)	Derryll Perry	917	87

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	3	23	BRUNETTE Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Republic/EMI Nashville/Mercury Nashville ★ No. 1 (1 Week)/Most Increased Audience ★★ Tucker Wetmore		30.752	+3.132	8243	806	1
2	4	14	BE HER SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	28.897	+2.322	7345	598	2
3	5	31	CHOOSIN' TEXAS SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	25.838	-0.187	5620	-108	8
4	8	35	HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	25.715	+2.418	6649	442	5
5	2	19	SLEEPLESS IN A HOTEL ROOM Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	25.646	-2.846	6037	-1034	7
6	6	21	CHANGE MY MIND Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	25.631	+1.197	7071	174	3
7	7	30	TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	24.949	+1.489	6971	350	4
8	1	56	THE FALL CoJo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Cody Johnson	22.318	-7.246	6265	-1872	6
9	10	12	DON'T TELL ON ME Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	19.657	+2.447	5422	511	10
10	9	30	BEAUTIFUL THINGS Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	18.582	-0.096	5500	121	9
11	12	12	DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	17.986	+1.964	4872	450	11
12	11	24	ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW Combustion Masters/RCA Nashville/SMN	Corey Kent & Koe Wetzel	16.982	+0.077	4731	99	13
13	13	51	ME & A BEER Harpeth 60	Chris Janson	15.848	+0.049	4832	62	12
14	15	10	WOMAN Zone 4/RCA Nashville/SMN	Kane Brown	13.864	+0.551	4036	161	15
15	18	4	I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Big Loud/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	13.532	+1.649	3615	473	17
16	16	32	CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	13.103	+0.607	4087	264	14
17	17	63	WISH YOU WELL Music Soup/Interscope/MCA Nashville	Vincent Mason	11.897	-0.427	3655	-90	16
18	19	16	RIDE, RIDE, RIDE RECORDS/RECORDS Nashville	George Birge Featuring Luke Bryan	10.512	+0.263	3312	135	18
19	24	8	BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	10.211	+1.702	2551	315	23
20	22	46	KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan	9.453	+0.482	2850	12	20
21	21	16	MCARTHUR Mercury/Big Loud	HARDY, Eric Church, Morgan Wallen & Tim McGraw	9.313	+0.117	3016	69	19
22	23	23	SOUTH OF SANITY Leo33	Zach Top	9.057	+0.293	2746	-36	21
23	25	8	COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Row Crop/MCA Nashville	Luke Bryan	8.850	+0.378	2526	125	24
24	26	49	WRONG HEARTS BMG/Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	8.481	+0.253	2694	63	22
25	27	18	BOOTS OFF Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Jon Pardi	7.188	+0.343	2385	103	25
26	29	37	ALL MY EXES Mercury/Big Loud	Lauren Alaina Featuring Chase Matthew	7.086	+0.566	2280	45	26
27	28	13	GET TO DRINKIN' Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Zach John King	6.750	+0.213	2230	34	27
28	20	2	CARRY ON Warner/HEY NOW	Kenny Chesney	6.045	-3.850	1969	-733	29
29	30	7	SAY SO Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Dan + Shay	5.997	+0.853	2150	247	28
30	31	45	EASY TO LOVE Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch	4.916	+0.015	1946	10	30

COUNTRY AIRPLAY CHART LEGEND

RANKINGS

Country Airplay is ranked by total audience impressions for the week ending Sunday based on monitored airplay by Mediabase of 145 stations by Luminate. Audience totals on the chart are derived, in part, using certain Nielsen Audio-copyrighted Persons 12+ audience estimates (under license © 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	32	22	WATER AT A WEDDING Nashville Harbor	Greylan James	4.604	+0.610	1818	150	31
32	36	5	BOSTON Stella Lefty/Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost	Stella Lefty	4.099	+0.650	1187	246	40
33	33	34	LONG LIVE COUNTRY Triple Tigers	Shane Profitt	3.720	+0.004	1441	-5	34
34	34	15	LET HIM IN ANYWAY Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	3.600	-0.102	1530	20	33
35	39	12	WHAT IF WE DON'T Warner Music Nashville/WRN	Ashley McBryde	3.357	+0.235	1246	19	38
36	35	13	PAINTED YOU PRETTY River House/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Hudson Westbrook	3.307	-0.221	1265	-30	37
37	38	17	GARY Mercury/Big Loud	Stephen Wilson Jr.	3.150	-0.166	1321	38	36
38	41	21	WORTH YOUR WILD Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	3.136	+0.149	1220	-8	39
39	40	31	FIREWORKS Curb	Kelsey Hart	3.086	+0.032	1560	4	32
40	42	17	HOLDIN' IT DOWN Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	2.836	-0.143	1417	0	35
41	45	6	MOVE ON American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Kevin Powers & Shaboozey	2.728	+0.271	1159	94	41
42	43	17	NEVER COMIN' BACK Lost Highway	Flatland Cavalry	2.652	-0.222	1039	-41	44
43	47	18	MAKE A LIAR Blue Highway	Jackson Dean	2.541	+0.251	1067	51	43
44	46	5	MEDICINE Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	2.397	+0.102	858	34	47
45	44	30	THE HELL YOU ARE Back Blocks/Mercury/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	2.257	-0.216	1113	-62	42
46	48	13	KILLIN' ME MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	2.236	+0.095	1029	32	45
47	53	4	WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG Goat Island Sound/Mercury Nashville	Jacob Hackworth	1.653	+0.206	986	25	46
48	49	16	WHEN A COWBOY PRAYS Brandon Lake/Essential/SMN	Brandon Lake X Cody Johnson	1.451	-0.298	722	-29	52
49	51	9	GOOD DAMN Wheelhouse	Brantley Gilbert	1.426	-0.091	819	-29	48
50	52	19	HIGHS & LOWS Quartz Hill	Matt Cooper	1.368	-0.106	740	-26	51
51	54	4	LONELIEST GIRL Kacey Musgraves/Lost Highway	Kacey Musgraves	1.336	-0.084	543	15	57
52	55	12	KEEPS ME SANE Tyler Nance/Santa Anna/Akando	Tyler Nance	1.243	+0.087	687	-58	53
53	60	2	WANNABE Thrivin Here/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Gavin Adcock	1.064	+0.292	486	141	58
54	57	9	IF I DON'T LEAVE I'M GONNA STAY Blue Highway/Nashville Harbor	Carly Pearce & Riley Green	1.052	+0.163	618	49	54
55	56	7	BACK IN THE BOTTLE Magnolia Music	Randy Houser	0.983	+0.058	794	23	49
56	58	14	PSYCHOLOGICAL Nashville Harbor	The Band Perry	0.946	+0.080	746	3	50
57	59	3	LOVE IS BLIND WEST TO THE REST/Triple Tigers	Ian Munsick	0.802	+0.028	563	15	55
58	RE-ENTRY		REBEL Patoka Sounds/Stoney Creek	Drew Baldrige	0.698	-0.025	555	-53	56
59	RE-ENTRY		STRING BY Mack Geiger/RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Mack Geiger	0.656	+0.057	172	10	-
60	NEW		BETTER THAT WAY Mercury/Big Loud ★★ Hot Shot Debut ★★	Charles Wesley Godwin & Luke Combs	0.644	+0.643	212	211	-



George Strait was honored when he played the Moody Center in Austin, Texas, on May 15-16, as the venue's backstage lounge was renamed The Troubadour after one of Strait's iconic hits. From left: The Messina Group president Louis Messina, Moody Center GM Jeff Nickler, Strait, Moody Center assistant GM Casey Sparks and Moody Center director of branding Hannah Baker.



Madden Metcalf (left) visited with WCOL Columbus, Ohio, PD Dan Zuko during a May 20 radio promotion tour stop. With them: MCA Nashville director of Midwest promotion Donna Jo Passuntino.

JILL TRUNNELL

2026 billboard GRAMMY® FIRST LOOK

On July 18, Billboard will publish a Grammy First Look special showcasing the artists, producers, songwriters and other creative professionals whose music was released during the eligibility period of **August 31, 2025, to August 28, 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.

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CONTACTS

East Coast/Midwest: Joe Maimone | joe.maimone@billboard.com

Southeast: Lee Ann Photoglo | laphotoglo@gmail.com

Los Angeles: Aki Kaneko | moishekaneko@gmail.com

Latin: Marcia Olival | marciaolival29@gmail.com

Touring & West Coast: Cynthia Mellow | cmellow615@gmail.com

International: Ryan O'Donnell | rodonnell@pmc.com

ISSUE DATE: 7/18

AD CLOSE: 7/7

MATERIALS DUE: 7/9



GRAMMY
AWARDS®

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

Wendy Moten chatted with Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum writer-editor Jon Freeman on May 16 in the museum's *Nashville Cats* interview series.

RADIO & RECORDS®

Kenny Chesney's new HEY NOW label unveiled its three-person marketing team May 21: senior director of digital marketing **Melissa McGreevy**, director of marketing **Samantha Kane** and digital marketing coordinator **Aidan Brown**. McGreevy was previously Warner Records Nashville director of digital marketing, Kane was formerly Opry Entertainment Group artist relations manager, and Brown interned at Big Machine Label Group before his December 2025 graduation from the University of Miami ... Songwriter **Jon Stone** ("Me and My Gang," "A Woman Like You"), one-half of the duo **American Young**, formed BIA Records and signed **Nakessa** as the label's inaugural artist. Reach Stone [here](#) ... **Robert Earl Keen** partnered with Lost Highway for the reissue of *Gravitational Forces* on July 10, 25 years after the label initially released it ... Kentucky-bred artist-writer **Hunter Flynn** signed with Big Machine/Nashville Harbor through his own Appalachian Soul Music label ... The 3686 label, recently launched by **Levi Hummon** and **Eric Arjes**, signed artist-writer **Faith Schueler** to a recording deal ... **Michael Peterson** signed with StarVista Music to digitally release two of his albums, *Down on the Farm* and *We are Veterans*, which were previously available only on CD ... **Chuck Damico** assumes the PD role for **WXTU** Philadelphia on May 23, following the retirement of **Mark "Razz" Radziewicz**. Damico adds the job to his existing PD positions for sister rock stations **WMMR** and **WMGK** ... Beasley/Tampa brand manager **Rick Thomas** will leave his position June 1 to focus on family. He spent three years in the job, in which he was PD for country **WQYK** ... Beasley debuts a weekly podcast, *Backstage Country Uncut*, on May 29. Hosted by **Elaina Smith**, the initial episode features guest **Jordan Davis** ... The Museum of Broadcast Communications announced eight new Radio Hall of Fame members, including iHeartMedia chairman/CEO **Bob Pittman** and Sun & Fun Media/Key Networks COO **Dennis Green**. The induction takes place Oct. 8 at the Fairmont Hotel in Chicago ... **Graham Bunn** is returning to **WKKT** Charlotte, N.C., as morning personality, **RadioInsight.com** reported. With the move, **Sarah Lee Owensby** shifts to middays. Additionally, PD **Ashley Wilson** will host a one-hour show at 11 p.m. ahead of *After Midnight* ... The Core Entertainment's **Brittani Johnson** was named chair of the Country Radio Seminar Agenda Committee leading into the 2027 seminar, with BMG's **Krista Hayes** and Pamal Broadcasting's **Kevin Callahan** installed as vice chairs. The committee includes 17 new members ... Country Radio Broadcasters made its latest CRS360 web series installment, "DTS Autostage: The End of the Measurement Guessing Game," available for streaming [here](#).

'ROUND THE ROW

The Results Global marketing firm hired three employees and promoted three more. Account director **Katherine Birschbach** arrives from GMR Marketing, where she held a similar title; social media manager **Cara Fallon** formerly worked as director of marketing for Oklahoma-based TriCorps; and marketing and communications coordinator **Alex Hendl** is a 2026 University of Tennessee graduate who's interned with SiriusXM and MCA. The trio of promotions

includes **Aden Henke**, who rose to account manager from coordinator; **Cami Cradock**, boosted to marketing operations specialist from marketing assistant; and **Samantha Parrish**, who steps up to digital marketing specialist from coordinator ... Industry veteran **Alex Torrez** and **Emily Vincent** established Vincent Torrez Management, with six initial clients, including **Braxton Keith** and **Sophie Gault** ... The Music City Power Company, a marketing division of **LOCASH's** Galaxy Music Group, signed its inaugural client: the **Six One Five Collective**, consisting of **Nicole Witt**, **Michael Logen**, **Sarah Darling** and **Aaron Goodvin** ... Songwriter **Neil Medley** ("House Again," "Country Song Came On") renewed his publishing contract with River House and Sony Music Publishing Nashville ... Artist-writer **Davis Cook** reached a co-publishing agreement with Warner Chappell Nashville and Twelve6 Entertainment ... MCA recording artist **Kenny Whitmire** tapped The Neal Agency for booking ... The International Bluegrass Music Association added four new board members: artists **Amanda Cook** and **Kristy Cox**, Connecticut Bluegrass Association founder **Austin Scelzo** and Upton Bass String Instrument Company founder **Gary Upton** ... **Brandi Carlile**, **Charley Crockett**, **Margo Price**, **Molly Tuttle** and **Jesse Welles** contend for artist of the year in the 25th annual Americana Honors & Awards, slated for Sept. 16 in Nashville. The final ballot was unveiled May 21. Go [here](#) for the full list ... **Vince Gill** will receive the Kris Kristofferson Lifetime Achievement Award and **Paul Williams** will be honored with the President's Keystone Award during the Nashville Songwriter Awards Sept. 22 in Nashville ... The Human Artistry Campaign and the RIAA have officially supported the NO FAKES Act, which strengthens individuals' right to prevent having their likeness or voice from being used without consent in AI-generated content ... Black River VP of philanthropy and social impact **Dawn Delvo** publishes a book, *My Greatest Solo: Accompanied by Grace*, June 2 through her company Loved by Delvo Publishing ... **Parker McCollum** signed a multi-year agreement as a brand ambassador for Under Armour ... Numerous developments have been announced in conjunction with CMA Fest June 4-7. Four high schools have performance roles during the event; **Carly Pearce** plans her fifth Carly's Closet wardrobe sale, with proceeds benefiting the CMA Foundation; the Dustin Lynch Pool Situation will take place at the Margaritaville Hotel June 4; Downtown club Jon Bon Jovi's Nashville has a range of events slated with rock bands, country acts and reality TV stars; and The Ryman & BMI Block Party returns with 16 acts, including **Kat Luna**, **Colton Dawson** and **Tenille Arts** ... The Randy Rogers Family Foundation presented a \$400,000 check to the Comal Country Senior Citizens Foundation on May 19. The funds stem from an April golf tournament ... Musicians On Call raised more than \$700,000 with Music Heals Live!, a May 20 event that honored **Reba McEntire** and RIAA chairman/CEO **Mitch Glazier**, with performances by **Vince Gill**, **Wynonna** and **Charles Esten** ... **Rascal Flatts** vocalist **Gary LeVox** slated the BIRDI Celebrity Golf Invitational Aug. 11 in Old Hickory, Tenn., with proceeds earmarked for Folds of Honor. ●



AJ MAST

Big Machine Label Group president/CEO **Scott Borchetta** (left) attended the May 19 premiere of *Bobby Rahal: True American Racer*, which Borchetta produced, at the Tobias Theater in Indianapolis. He's joined by Rahal.



ETHAN DSA

Vincent Mason (left) was surprised with an RIAA-certified gold single for "Damned If I Do" when he performed it May 13 on NBC's *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. With him: Champ Management founder **Matt Musacchio**.



TOP MUSIC LAWYERS

Behind every artist, songwriter and music producer is a trusted group of advisers who provide guidance, advice and negotiate deals. *Billboard's* 10th annual Top Music Lawyers list will recognize the biggest names and most prominent legal minds in the world of music law. They are the deal-makers behind the major contracts and lawsuits in the music industry.

This feature will also include a round-up of premier law schools attended by the notable alumni on the Top Music Lawyers list.

Join us in congratulating the 2026 most powerful music lawyers. Advertise to present your law firm to *Billboard's* influential subscribers, which include A-list artists, artist managers, business managers and label, publishing and touring executives.

CONTACTS

East Coast/Midwest Joe Maimone | joe.maimone@billboard.com

Southeast Lee Ann Photoglo | laphotoglo@gmail.com

Latin Marcia Olival | marciaolival29@gmail.com

Touring & West Coast Cynthia Mellow | cmellow615@gmail.com

International Ryan O'Donnell | rodonnell@pmc.com

R&B/Hip-Hop/Los Angeles Aki Kaneko | moishekaneko@gmail.com

PICTURE THIS

ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS

Ella Langley and Cody Johnson made the biggest splashes during the 61st annual Academy of Country Music Awards as the May 17 show returned to the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. Langley claimed seven trophies in five categories, while Johnson walked off with entertainer and male artist of the year. Here is a smattering of photos related to the event, streamed live on Amazon's Prime Video:



Lainey Wilson performed "Can't Sit Still" in the show's opening number.



"Choosin' Texas" co-writers (from left) Joybeth Taylor, Miranda Lambert and Ella Langley juggled trophies backstage after the cut won single and song of the year.



Cody Johnson said he intends to "promote positivity" as he accepted the entertainer of the year trophy.



Culture at Large podcast host Marcus Dowling emceed "I'm Just Me: A Charley Pride Celebration of Inclusion," with MØRIAH among the honorees, May 15 at the Luchini Italian Restaurant.



Parker McCollum (left) accepted album of the year for his self-titled project, along with producers Eric Masse (center) and Frank Liddell.



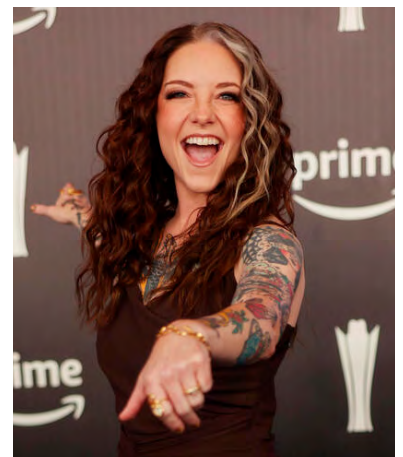
Riley Green headlined "ACM Lifting Lives Country on the Green: Riley Green & Friends" May 15 at Topgolf Las Vegas.



Keith Urban headlined "ACM Next Wave: Country's Beach Bash" May 16 at Mandalay Bay Beach.



Bradley Gaskin (left) interviewed with Country Top 40 with Fitz host Cory "Fitz" Fitzner (center) on May 15 during the ACM Awards Radio Remote. They're joined by Hubbard/Seattle operations manager Scott Mahalick.



Ashley McBryde walked the red carpet before presenting male artist of the year.

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.Phillips) **26**

B

BACK IN THE BOTTLE Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/I'm Your Huckleberry Music, BMI (R.Houser) **55**

BEAUTIFUL THINGS Sony Timber Publishing, SESAC/Georgiamo, SESAC/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Trip/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) **10**

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) **19**

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/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Langley Publishing, BMI/Ross & Rae Music, ASCAP/Relative Rights, ASCAP (E.Langley, S.Anquist, J.M.Schmidt, M.W.Hardy) **2**

BETTER THAT WAY Not Listed (Not Listed) **60**

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.McCubbin, L.Laird) **25**

BOSTON 13117 Music, ASCAP/Kobalt Songs Music Publishing LLC, ASCAP/Grace Enger Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Joel Reeves Publishing, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/LMC Is The Place For Me Publishing, ASCAP/Secret Meadow Songs, ASCAP/Sony Allegro, ASCAP/Stella Letty Music, ASCAP (G.Enger, J.K.Hindlin, J.Reeves, N.Kahan, S.Lefty) **32**

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-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI (C.LaCorte, R.C.McGill, J.L.Miller, B.Pendergrass) **1**

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) **28**

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, I.Juber, G.Lucas, A.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) **3**

COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Concord Copyrights, BMI/Jomil 10 Music, BMI/Traller Parker Twang 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.Dragstrem) **23**

D

DON'T TELL ON ME Makena Cove Music, ASCAP/BMG Gold Songs, ASCAP/Trip Play Music, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Irishsonic, BMI/Kwasy Publishing, BMI/WritersonthecornPublishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI (K.M.Allison, T.Kennedy, J.Morgan, L.Vaughan) **9**

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.Black, J.Byron, A.G.Gorley, B.Pendergrass, Charlie Handsome) **11**

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/PTNB Publishing, ASCAP (D.Lynch, B.J.Johnson, J.R.Hall, H.Pheips, Z.Crowell) **30**

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) **8**

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) **39**

G

GARY Poems On Junk Mail, SESAC/BMG Cicada, SESAC (S.L.Wilson Jr.) **37**

GET TO DRINKIN' Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Works By Kinda Country Songs, BMI/Speakers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Brody James Music, BMI/Akin For Jonas Music, BMI/8 Publishing, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/ERN's Cadillac Music, BMI/Songs Of Combustion Five, BMI/Beats Building Fences, BMI/Universal Music Corp., ASCAP/Kyle Sturrock Music, ASCAP (Z.J.King, R.Akins, T.Archer, K.A.Fishman, K.Sturrock) **27**

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/Rednecker Music, BMI/TDP Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI (B.Gilbert, B.Berryhill, M.W.Hardy, T.Phillips) **49**

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) **4**

THE HELL YOU ARE Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/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/Weis Owl, ASCAP (A.Cooke, S.W.Ennis, J.A.Fox, R.C.McGill, E.L.Weisband) **45**

HIGHS & LOWS Songs Of North Chapel Music, BMI/Endurance Music Group, BMI/318 Records Publishing, BMI (M.Cooper) **50**

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.Centers) **40**

I

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) **15**

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) **54**

K

KEEPS ME SANE Anthems Of Platinum Grammer, ASCAP/Sony Tunes LLC, ASCAP/Copyright Control (C.T.L.Nance, D.Napier, B.McCollough) **52**

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) **20**

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) **46**

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.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 CDM Music Outlander LP, GMR/Warner Geo Met Rick Music, GMR/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Songs For Indy And Owl, ASCAP (K.Musgraves, L.Laird, S.McAnally, J.Osbome) **51**

LONG LIVE COUNTRY Shane Proffitt Publishing Designee, BMI/Zizipmusic, 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 Harroth Valley, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI (L.Munick, R.Tyndell, J.N.Spillman) **57**

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) **43**

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.Rodgers, 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/Sony Songs LLC, 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/Trip/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) **44**

MOVE ON Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Cabrera Music, BMI/EMPIRE Strikes First, BMI/Nearis 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) **41**

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) **42**

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) **36**

PSYCHOLOGICAL Smack Back Music, BMI/Concord Baritone C1, BMI/Midtown Mistake Publishing, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Cotton Vanner Publishing, BMI (C.Park, G.Tyler, C.Vanner) **56**

R

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

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) **18**

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 CDM Outlander, SESAC/Michael Tyler Music, SESAC/MT Room, SESAC/Young Guns Tunes, SESAC (Corey Kent, T.Archer, A.Goodloe, M.Tyler) **12**

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/Cinq Trax, ASCAP/Lyridoge Music, ASCAP/Cascade Road Songs, ASCAP (D.Smyers, S.Mooney, D.H.Hodges, J.Robbins) **29**

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) **5**

SOUTH OF SANITY Rio Bravo Music, Inc., BMI/Zach To Music, BMI/Major Bob Productions, BMI/Too Broke To Quit Music, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Doon What I Do, BMI/Getysosome Music, BMI (Z.Top, C.Chamberlain, H.Nester) **22**

STRING BY Mack Geiger Publishing Designee, APRA (M.Geiger) **59**

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/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) **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) **53**

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.Egan, M.Dragstrem, R.C.McGill) **31**

WHAT IF WE DON'T Beejo Fetch Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Song Factory, BMI/Merf Music Publishing LLC, BMI/Cotton Sounds, BMI/Songs Of Merf Music LLC, BMI (A.McBryde, T.J.Box, R.Clay) **35**

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/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 (J.A.Hackworth, D.Ross, J.Fee, S.Jones) **47**

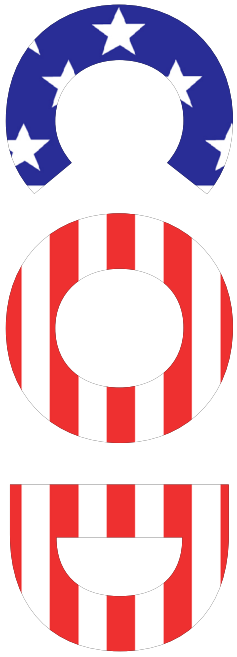
WHEN A COWBOY PRAYS Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Brandon Lake Music, ASCAP/All Essential Music, ASCAP/Pravin Cowboy Publishing, SESAC/So Essential Tunes, SESAC/Songs By That Dog Will Hunt, BMI/Capitol CMG Paragon, BMI/Sugar Rain Music, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI (B.M.Lake, J.Sooter, H.Bentley, D.Southerland) **48**

WISH YOU WELL Big Music Machine, BMI/Works By Range Music Partners, BMI/Warbranger 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) **14**

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) **38**

WRONG HEARTS BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Webstring 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.Dragstrem, J.Thompson) **24**



50 Years Ago When Merle Haggard's Bicentennial 'Freedom Train' Rolled

The audio history lesson tracked America's story from the Revolution through the Civil Rights Era

When America approached its Bicentennial in 1976, the country's celebrations included the Freedom Train, two locomotives that visited all 48 contiguous states to give citizens a close-up view of important documents and artifacts.

In a nod to the attraction, **Merle Haggard** recorded "Here Comes the Freedom Train," a song steeped in two centuries of history, on April 1, 1976. It entered *Billboard's* Hot Country Songs chart dated May 22 at No. 59, and would peak at No. 10 on the July 4 list.

The song was written by **Stephen H. Lemberg**, who had composed some the-

atrical pieces and wrote and produced a series of *Spider-Man* albums. "Freedom Train" used railroad metaphors to address America's past — **George Washington** was the engineer, **Benjamin Franklin** the conductor. The song referenced 11 or 12 presidents ("Roosevelt" could mean **Teddy** and/or **Franklin D.**), several wars and movements, plus three more sociopolitical figures, including Civil Rights leader **Martin Luther King**.

Porter Wagoner & Dolly Parton recorded it with **Chet Atkins** first for the American Freedom Train Foundation, but Haggard — already noted for the pa-

triotic singles "Okie From Muskogee," "The Fightin' Side of Me" and "I Wonder If They Ever Think of Me" — recorded the version Capitol released to radio and retail.

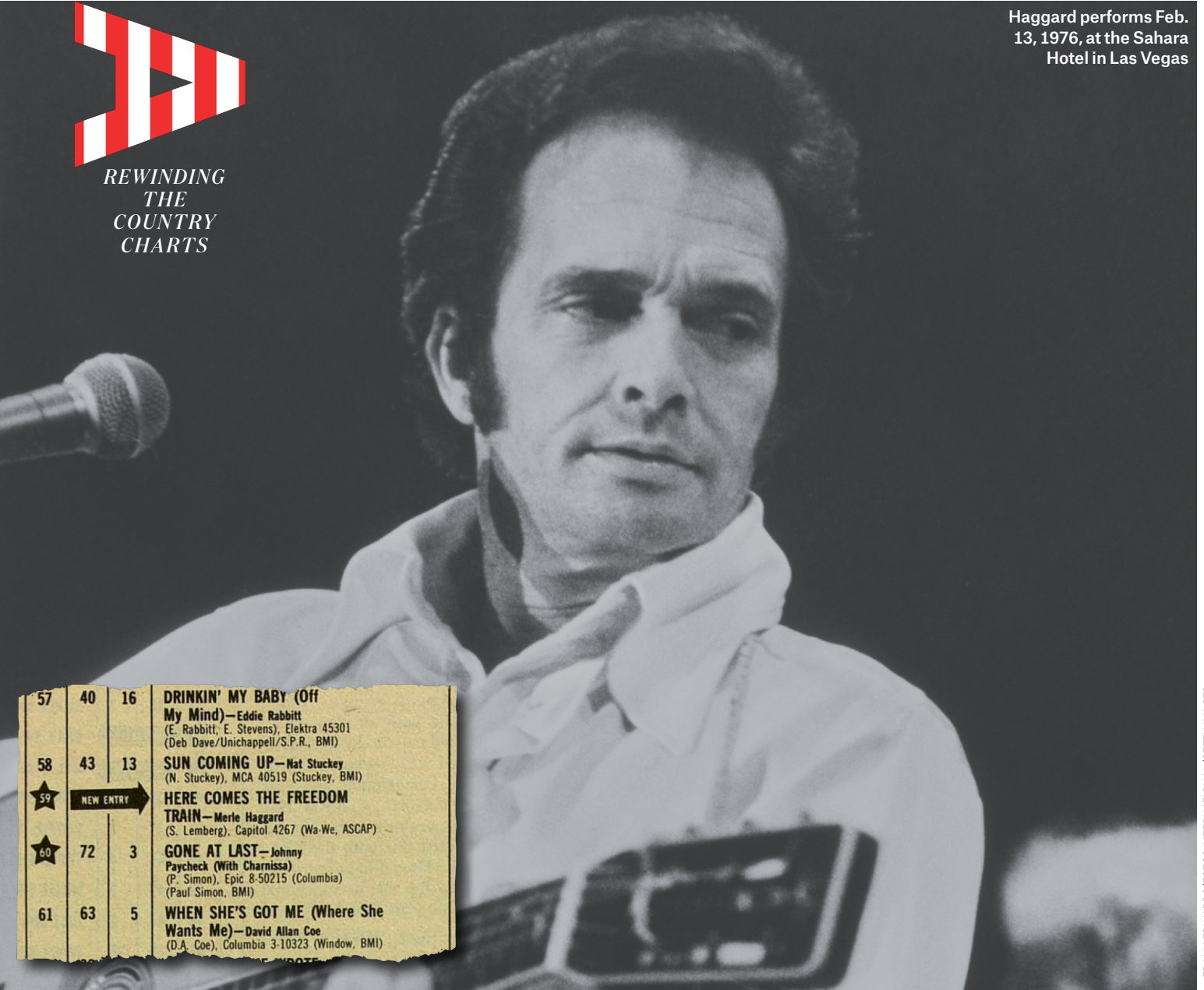
Fifty years later, at least two country artists are participating in America's Semiquincentennial. **Trace Adkins** will appear on PBS' *A Capitol Fourth: 250th Weekend Celebration* on July 3, and **Gretchen Wilson** takes part in a Freedom 250 National Memorial Day Candlelight Tribute on May 25 at Arlington National Cemetery.

—TOM ROLAND



REWINDING
THE
COUNTRY
CHARTS

Haggard performs Feb. 13, 1976, at the Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas



57	40	16	DRINKIN' MY BABY (Off My Mind) —Eddie Rabbitt (E. Rabbitt, E. Stevens, Elektra 45301 (Deb Dave/Unichappell/S.P.R., BMI)
58	43	13	SUN COMING UP —Nat Stuckey (N. Stuckey), MCA 40519 (Stuckey, BMI)
★ 59	NEW ENTRY		HERE COMES THE FREEDOM TRAIN —Merle Haggard (S. Lemberg), Capitol 4267 (Wa-We, ASCAP)
★ 60	72	3	GONE AT LAST —Johnny Paycheck (With Charnissa) (P. Simon), Epic 8-50215 (Columbia) (Paul Simon, BMI)
61	63	5	WHEN SHE'S GOT ME (Where She Wants Me) —David Allan Coe (D.A. Coe), Columbia 3-10323 (Window, BMI)