

billboard Country Update

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BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

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Three Chords And The Truth About Lies In Country Music

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The truth hurts.

Sometimes it's the listener who feels it, sometimes it's a third person who's victimized by the pain, and sometimes the truth-teller suffers worse than anyone else for having to say it.

But people lie. Regardless of their reasons or their intent, that creates drama. And that drama is ripe for country songs.

Lying is an enormously popular topic in country. It was in the music even before **Hank Williams** blasted a dishonest lover in "Your Cheatin' Heart" in the 1950s. Lies remain at the core of the genre now.

"I think you always come to country music when your heart is broken, and lying is usually the biggest reason that a heart gets broken," suggests **The Band Perry**'s lead vocalist, **Kimberly Perry**. "We have those standard topics in our format. We write love songs to beer. We have a lot of gospel-adjacent themes in our music, and then cheating and lying and heartbreak would have to be the third tier of that trilogy."

Or, perhaps, the third tear.

Lies are, once again, earning attention in the genre. The Band Perry's "You Lie" has been reimaged as a new collaboration with **Kaitlin Butts**. **Morgan Wallen**'s "Lies Lies Lies" and **Jelly Roll**'s "Liar" both topped *Billboard*'s Country Airplay in the last 20 months. And **Zach Top**'s "I Never Lie" peaked at No. 2 while snagging two nominations each in the Country Music Association,

Academy of Country Music and Grammy Awards shows.

Corey Kent's current "Empty Words," at No. 39 on the Country Airplay list dated Aug. 1, provides a particularly detailed understanding of lies and their consequences. Its protagonist has shape-shifted his stories so much that now "even the truth sounds like a lie." The guy is left to himself, forced to wallow in his self-created, negative consequences. The scenario in "Empty Words" doesn't match Kent's experiences exactly, but he's been banished to the couch in his marriage, so the song is based in a reality he's lived.

"Contrary to popular belief, I think that truth still sells," he says. "Making up a story about meeting a girl in a bar, when you clearly didn't live like that, that still works, but I think this works on a deeper level. Like, everybody's been there, even if it's not this exact storyline, even if you didn't mess up to the point where she left forever."

A night or two on the couch may be a transitory condition in an otherwise stable relationship, but when lying becomes a long-term problem, it also

yields long-term results.

"Trust is a toothpick," "Empty Words" co-writer and co-producer **Austin Goodloe** suggests. "It is very easy to break, and when you put it back together, it doesn't really go back the same."

That's an issue in interpersonal relationships, but this current round of country hand-wringing about truth and lies may



KENT



BUTTS



PERRY



ANDREWS

KENT: DAYNA WHITE; BUTTS: NICKI FLETCHER; PERRY: NICKI FLETCHER; ANDREWS: CLAIRE SCHMITT

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symbolize a greater urgency in the country at large.

"I'm a big believer that whatever's happening in culture, music is just the mirror of that," Perry says.

Dishonesty is arguably pulling the country apart. An *Economist/YouGov* poll released July 21 found that only 24% of Americans view the current president as honest. In perhaps his most divisive issue, President **Trump** still claims he won the 2020 presidential election, though courts have determined otherwise. Still, through constant repetition of the story—frequently referred to as the Big Lie—a chunk of the American public has been persuaded to support the narrative, creating enormous tension as the U.S. looks to an important election in November.

"That's kind of what's been in the zeitgeist," notes **Chad Karger**, co-executive director of Porter's Call, a Franklin, Tenn.-based non-profit that provides counseling for recording artists. "We have a president who seems to play pretty loose and fast with the facts. And in his case, all these [supporters] who espouse some sort of Christian belief [are] making accommodations for that... but in their personal life, they probably don't tolerate the same [behavior] as they do [from] their president."

No artist is grappling with the trust issue more than **Bryan Andrews**, an independent act whose first album, *Independence Day*, employs the word "truth" three times across eight tracks filled with political vitriol. Most of it is directed at the president, but some is also focused on the system at large. As a 20-something progressive from red-state Missouri, he shares a frustration that crosses party lines in his age group, as current economics make it difficult for many young Americans to see a future as promising as their parents' lives. As he intimates in "The Older I Get," the first political song he released last fall, the life he anticipated turned out to be a lie.

"You expect to have transparency with people that you trust, because at the end of the day, whether it's your government or your partner or your family, they're supposed to want to have your best interests at heart," Andrews says. "It hurts to find out that sometimes they don't."

Trust is a fragile state that develops differently based on childhood dynamics. Children who grow up in dishonest households have difficulty trusting as adults, while kids who come from homes where their parents were honest and reliable frequently go through painful adjustments once they're out on their own. They may be misled by phony romantic partners or acquaintances when they simply don't anticipate lies.

"Because my mom ingrained that into me, I would forget that people could do that," "You Lie" collaborator Butts concedes. "Like, that wasn't an option [for me], and so I get taken advantage of or lied to... I had no idea that people did that."

As a teenager, Butts was particularly drawn to The Band Perry's original version of "You Lie," belting it frequently around the house, even though she didn't have firsthand experience with a conniving boyfriend at the time. The song contains plenty of humor, enough to offset some of the more pointed anger in the second verse that now features Butts as the soloist.

"I love that it's tongue-in-cheek," she says, "a little bit of murder, a little bit of everything."



Bobby Bones (left) and **Eddie Garcia**, from iHeartMedia's *The Bobby Bones Show*, sport yellow sunglasses for the July 20 announcement of the show's participation in the Dollar General Literacy Foundation's Yellow Glasses Project.

Humor, it turns out, is a great way to address deception in art. **Terri Clark**'s "That's My Story," **Colli Clark**'s "Girls Lie Too," **Kenny Chesney**'s "Out Last Night" and **Lefty Frizzell**'s "Saginaw, Michigan" all weave some form of deceit into a lighthearted plot. They can be thought of as the country music version of a sitcom, a TV format that often relies on miscommunication and/or lies to set up the schtick.

Andrews is taking that humor to heart as he creates new music. He's spent several days in Nashville writing new songs in July, and suggests that his next round of material may be less harsh than the current release. *Independence Day*, a mix of metal and country, is notably biting, but it also couches some of its anger in clever wordplay. He's purposely attempted

to approach this new music with a lighter touch, believing it will make a better connection as he continues to deliver his message.

"Truth looks a lot different to everybody," he says. "It's a subjective term. But for me, especially when I was seeing other artists speak about things that they were passionate about, even though I disagreed with them, it gave me conviction to be able to speak my truth, you know, and talk about the world that I see around me, and it ain't so great right now. Truth hurts sometimes."

Part of what has made perceptions of the truth so volatile lies in the skills of public figures and digital creators. *The Oxford Dictionary* named "post-truth" the word of the year a decade ago, recognizing the proclivity of people to ignore provable reality and believe in fluid narratives—such as conspiracy theories—that mirror a gut feeling, even if there's little factual support for the position.

"We're in a post-truth era," author **Will Kaufman** says. "So how can you claim to be singing three chords and the truth when nobody knows what the truth is anymore?"

Kaufman's next book—*American Song and Struggle from World War II to MAGA: A Cultural History* (Oct. 31, Cambridge University Press)—has an entire chapter titled "What is Truth," named after **Johnny Cash**'s 1970 Vietnam War commentary. As in the current cultural scenario, that era had a conservative president overseeing an unpopular war while using heavy-handed tactics to vilify his critics. Cash played the White House at the time, and President **Richard Nixon** requested he play "Welfare Cadillac" and "Okie from Muskogee," songs by other artists that supported Nixon's politics. Cash declined and instead closed his set with "What is Truth," which includes a verse in which a hippie is required to tell the truth under oath in a courtroom. The substance of his words, however, is missed by observers focused on his appearance.

"It's really interesting that [Cash is] speaking truth to power by letting power know that truth itself is open to question," Kaufman says. "It's okay to question someone's version of truth."

The truth one interprets from the world may vary, but the underlying reality does not. Whether it's a politician, a stranger on a dating app or a country artist presenting themselves on social media, a lie is an attempt to make someone else believe in something that isn't real. And many lies—perhaps most—are destined to be revealed.

"Is there a difference between truths and facts?" Kaufman asks rhetorically. "Maybe there are competing truths, but I don't think there are competing facts. A fact is, you know, two and two is four. When **Kellyanne Conway** says there are alternative facts, a fact is a fact."

Still, not all lies are the same. While **Miranda Lambert**'s "White Liar" is bitter, a typical white lie is more likely well-intended.

"I feel like lies are on a scale," says songwriter **Matt Alderman**, a co-writer of **Mitchell Tenpenny**'s "Truth About You," which peaked at No. 2 on Country Airplay in 2022. "Not all lies are bad. Like, if your wife asks you if she looks pretty in a dress, and you don't think she looks pretty, you lie. I would say that that's a good lie. You don't want to just insult people all the time."

Arguably, the worst lies are the ones directed at ourselves. **George Jones**' "She Thinks I Still Care," **Deborah Allen**'s "Baby I Lied," **Alan Jackson**'s "Someday," **Ricky Van Shelton**'s "Somebody Lied" and **Clint Black**'s "We Tell Ourselves"—much like Wallen's "Lies Lies Lies"—capture an inner voice that has denied a deeper reality.

"Over time, one of the most detrimental lies that we can tell is the one that we keep telling ourselves," Karger says. "Whether it be a counselor, or a guide, or a coach, or a friend, or a pastor, a spouse or whatever—having someone who has the fortitude to speak to that and to call it out is, I think, incredibly important to having a really happy and well-adjusted life."

The truth is elusive. But it's worth seeking it out, which is why country songwriters devote three chords or more in search of it.

"Yeah," Alderman says. "People want to hear songs about it." ●



Songwriter **Phil Barton** ("A Woman Like You") (left) made his 500th appearance at The Listening Room in Nashville on July 21. He's pictured with The Listening Room owner/founder **Chris Blair**.

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‘Don’t We’ Becomes Milestone Seventh No. 1 From Morgan Wallen’s *I’m the Problem*

Morgan Wallen secures his 21st No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Country Airplay chart as “Don’t We” (Mercury/Republic/Big Loud) rises a spot to the top of the tally dated Aug. 1. It earned 33.6 million audience impressions (up 5%) July 17-23, according to Luminate.

The song makes history as the seventh leader from Wallen’s 2025 album *I’m the Problem* — which becomes the first set to have spun off that many Country Airplay No. 1s via only an original version. Luke Combs’ *What You See Is What You Get* also contains seven, earned in 2019-21, combining its original and deluxe editions.

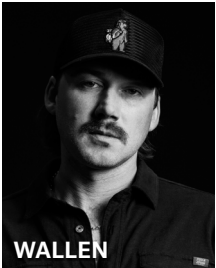
“Don’t We” follows previous *I’m the Problem* No. 1s “20 Cigarettes,” “I Got Better,” “Just in Case,” the title track, “Love Somebody” and “Lies Lies Lies,” which began the run in November 2024. The album outperforms his six chart-toppers from 2023’s *One Thing at a Time*.

I’m the Problem has led the Top Country Albums chart for 45 weeks, dating to its debut in May 2025. It has earned 7.5 million equivalent album units to date.

Meanwhile, Wallen is among 10 artists with 21 or more leaders since Country Airplay began in January 1990. Kenny Chesney leads all acts with 33, followed by Blake Shelton (30), Tim McGraw (29), Jason Aldean (27), Luke Bryan, Alan Jackson, George Strait (26 each), Thomas Rhett, Keith Urban and Wallen (21 each).

Also notably, Wallen’s pace of chart-topping success has increased considerably. He has notched 16 of his 21 Country Airplay No. 1s since July 2022, including 10 since April 2024. He logged a career-best five in 2024, followed by four in 2025, while “Don’t We” becomes his second of 2026.

‘BOSTON’ RIDES TO TOP 10 Newcomer Stella Lefty earns her first Country Airplay top 10 as “Boston” (Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost) lifts two places to No. 9 (19 million, up 12%). Maren Morris is the only other woman in the last 10 years to enter the top 10 with a debut single in 14 weeks or fewer, as she did so in 11 weeks with “My Church” in 2016. ●



SPIDEY SMITH

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)	
LOVING LIFE AGAIN SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	+2.607	
BOSTON Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost	Stella Lefty	+1.969	
BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+1.730	
RETHINK SOME THINGS Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+1.724	
CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	+1.692	
I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Big Loud/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	+1.671	
DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+1.513	
COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Row Crop/MCA Nashville	Luke Bryan	+1.254	
WOMAN Zone 4/RCA Nashville/SMN	Kane Brown	+1.115	
HANDS UP Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+0.992	

MOST INCREASED PLAYS			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN	
LOVING LIFE AGAIN SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	+758	
BOSTON Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost	Stella Lefty	+656	
RETHINK SOME THINGS Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+466	
WOMAN Zone 4/RCA Nashville/SMN	Kane Brown	+440	
DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+436	
I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Big Loud/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	+435	
COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Row Crop/MCA Nashville	Luke Bryan	+373	
BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+359	
CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	+335	
HANDS UP Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+331	

RECURRENTS			
THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	BE HER SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	21.079
2	CHOOSIN' TEXAS SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	20.365
3	SLEEPLESS IN A HOTEL ROOM Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	13.273
4	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	12.591
5	I AIN'T COMING BACK Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Post Malone	9.476
6	AMEN American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll	9.023
7	DARLIN' Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	8.893
8	TURN THIS TRUCK AROUND MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	8.781
9	CHANGE MY MIND Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	8.483
10	BEAUTIFUL THINGS Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	8.421



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING JULY 23, 2026

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE (Label)	ARTIST	TW SPINS	SPINS +/-	THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE (Label)	ARTIST	TW SPINS	SPINS +/-
1	3	17	STUBBORN AND REMAINS (Independent) ★★ 1 Week at 1 ★★	William Clark Green	2081	184	11	13	14	THAT'S WHAT COWBOYS DO (Lonely River)	Curtis Grimes	1379	74
2	2	17	REASONS TO CALL (Get Joe)	Billie Jo	1972	74	12	10	14	ON AGAIN TONIGHT (Pickup Man Records)	Case Hardin	1357	-124
3	4	17	HARD TO WRITE A LOVE SONG (Independent)	Mike Ryan	1850	84	13	15	9	UNCERTAIN, TX (Lost Highway/Interscope)	Kacey Musgraves feat. Willie Nelson	1309	113
4	5	11	RAIN (Bowen Sounds/Thirty Tigers)	Wade Bowen	1758	62	14	16	16	YOU AND WHISKEY (Independent)	Chuck Wimer & Brandi Behlen	1250	65
5	6	13	DOWN BY THE RIVER (Independent)	Seth Candan	1707	112	15	17	12	THIRD ROW GEORGE STRAIT (Independent)	Frank Ray	1209	71
6	7	15	FLOORBOARD FULL OF ROSES (Ranger Music Group)	David Lewis	1572	46	16	18	23	IF YOU KNOW YOU KNOW (Synapse)	Derryl Perry	1186	49
7	8	17	WHISKEY AFTER WOMEN (Write On)	Adysen Malek	1493	-6	17	23	8	HIGHWAY ROBBERY (Leo33)	Jason Scott & The High Heat	1172	158
8	11	11	TAKE IT EASY COWGIRL (Independent)	Aaron Loy	1460	47	18	20	12	GUINEVERE (T3R Music Group)	Sundance Head	1168	63
9	12	10	HIGH NOON (Leo33)	Jenna Paulette	1414	62	19	19	16	IT'S YOU (Independent)	Roses and Weeds	1162	31
10	14	15	I DON'T DRINK ANYMORE (Independent)	Timothy Howls	1384	81	20	21	14	MIDNIGHT BLUES (Independent)	Selestial Alcoser	1150	89

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

billboardCountry 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	2	21	DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	★★ No. 1 (1 Week) ★★ Morgan Wallen	33.560	+1.513	8809	436	1
2	3	13	I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Big Loud/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	31.580	+1.671	8187	435	2
3	1	21	DON'T TELL ON ME Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	31.569	-2.823	7788	-1223	3
4	4	17	BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	27.004	+1.730	7302	359	4
5	6	41	CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	24.354	+1.692	6828	335	5
6	5	44	HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	22.767	-1.445	5258	-487	8
7	8	19	WOMAN Zone 4/RCA Nashville/SMN	Kane Brown	20.232	+1.115	5921	440	6
8	7	7	I KNEW IT, I KNEW YOU Pixar/Walt Disney/Republic/MCA Nashville	Taylor Swift	19.770	+0.405	5608	109	7
9	11	14	BOSTON Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost	Stella Lefty	19.042	+1.969	5241	656	9
10	9	11	CARRY ON Warner/HEY NOW	Kenny Chesney	18.741	+0.705	5187	136	10
11	12	55	KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan	16.340	+0.456	4583	142	12
12	13	25	RIDE, RIDE, RIDE RECORDS/MCA Nashville/RECORDS Nashville	George Birge Featuring Luke Bryan	15.945	+0.506	4691	83	11
13	14	17	COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Row Crop/MCA Nashville	Luke Bryan	13.353	+1.254	3966	373	13
14	16	46	ALL MY EXES Mercury/Big Loud	Lauren Alaina Featuring Chase Matthew	12.084	+0.860	3375	150	14
15	15	32	SOUTH OF SANITY Leo33	Zach Top	11.663	+0.095	3194	45	18
16	18	9	THINK AS YOU DRUNK Nashville Harbor	★★ Airpower ★★ Riley Green	10.925	+0.661	2965	244	20
17	17	22	GET TO DRINKIN' Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Zach John King	10.910	+0.400	3238	84	17
18	19	16	SAY SO Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Dan + Shay	10.543	+0.571	3257	165	16
19	20	25	MCARTHUR Mercury/Big Loud	HARDY, Eric Church, Morgan Wallen & Tim McGraw	10.213	+0.319	3322	72	15
20	21	7	PHONE, KEYS, WALLET Broken Bow	★★ Airpower ★★ Lainey Wilson & John Mayer	9.832	+0.316	3024	95	19
21	22	27	BOOTS OFF Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Jon Pardi	8.573	+0.212	2770	3	21
22	23	54	EASY TO LOVE Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch	8.155	+0.284	2496	61	22
23	24	5	HANDS UP Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	8.150	+0.992	2429	331	23
24	32	3	LOVING LIFE AGAIN SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	★★ Most Increased Audience ★★ Ella Langley	6.203	+2.607	1728	758	29
25	27	22	PAINTED YOU PRETTY River House/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Hudson Westbrook	6.174	+0.604	1973	174	26
26	25	31	WATER AT A WEDDING Nashville Harbor	Greytan James	6.171	+0.131	2277	67	24
27	26	30	WORTH YOUR WILD Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	5.552	-0.039	1764	-46	28
28	28	24	LET HIM IN ANYWAY Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	4.933	+0.309	2010	185	25
29	29	26	HOLDIN' IT DOWN Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	4.137	-0.037	1817	65	27
30	30	43	LONG LIVE COUNTRY Triple Tigers	Shane Profitt	4.012	-0.067	1557	-6	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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THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
31	34	14	MEDICINE Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	3.775	+0.432	1298	85	34
32	31	15	MOVE ON American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Kevin Powers & Shaboozey	3.688	-0.055	1368	28	33
33	33	22	KILLIN' ME MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	3.678	+0.084	1419	-10	31
34	35	10	DRY SPELL Kacey Musgraves/Lost Highway	Kacey Musgraves	3.503	+0.239	1105	56	38
35	44	2	RETHINK SOME THINGS Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN ★★ Breaker ★★	Luke Combs	3.418	+1.724	1085	466	39
36	36	21	WHAT IF WE DON'T Warner Music Nashville/WRN	Ashley McBryde	3.192	-0.062	1377	4	32
37	38	6	HORSEBACK CoJo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Cody Johnson	3.091	+0.369	1135	97	37
38	41	13	WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG Goat Island Sound/Mercury Nashville	Jacob Hackworth	2.451	+0.302	1165	39	36
39	42	8	EMPTY WORDS Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Corey Kent	2.409	+0.270	823	68	44
40	39	26	GARY Mercury/Big Loud	Stephen Wilson Jr.	2.266	-0.293	1208	-89	35
41	45	25	WHEN A COWBOY PRAYS Brandon Lake/Essential/SMN ★★ Breaker ★★	Brandon Lake X Cody Johnson	1.976	+0.305	812	106	45
42	43	9	LAND Hubbard House/Mercury Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	1.885	+0.171	887	72	42
43	46	18	GOOD DAMN Wheelhouse	Brantley Gilbert	1.725	+0.088	943	27	41
44	37	2	WHO TOLD YOU THAT Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	1.574	-1.438	555	-318	56
45	47	11	WANNABE Thrivin Here/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Gavin Adcock	1.567	+0.020	799	0	47
46	48	8	HURTS LIKE YOU YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel	1.426	-0.038	554	-13	57
47	49	12	LOVE IS BLIND WEST TO THE REST/Triple Tigers	Ian Munsick	1.417	-0.045	830	20	43
48	51	5	GIRL DAD Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Cole Swindell	1.404	+0.182	727	21	48
49	53	6	I DIDN'T COME HERE TO LEAVE Boss Moves/Black River/Akando	Chris Young	1.400	+0.193	608	84	51
50	52	16	BACK IN THE BOTTLE Magnolia Music	Randy Houser	1.295	+0.077	956	59	40
51	50	21	KEEPS ME SANE Tyler Nance/Santa Anna/Akando	Tyler Nance	1.238	-0.174	721	-47	49
52	56	18	IF I DON'T LEAVE I'M GONNA STAY Stoney Creek/Nashville Harbor	Carly Pearce & Riley Green	1.222	+0.112	636	28	50
53	54	23	PSYCHOLOGICAL Nashville Harbor	The Band Perry	1.207	+0.012	800	-12	46
54	55	10	BETTER THAT WAY Mercury/Big Loud	Charles Wesley Godwin & Luke Combs	1.077	-0.038	607	-11	53
55	57	9	GOD KNEW BETTER Stoney Creek	Parmalee	1.016	+0.013	573	-10	54
56	58	4	BABY BLUES Back Blocks/Mercury/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	0.994	+0.078	545	41	58
57	NEW		DAMNED IF I DO Music Soup/Interscope/Lost Highway ★★ Hot Shot Debut ★★	Vincent Mason	0.989	+0.253	291	92	-
58	RE-ENTRY		YOU'RE IT FOR ME, HONEY True To The Song/Big Machine	Caroline Jones	0.961	+0.215	607	97	52
59	59	4	DEAR BIG CITY Curb	Dylan Scott	0.921	+0.035	507	89	59
60	NEW		NOTHIN' BETTER TO DO Gatsby/MCA Nashville	Carter Faith & Wyatt Flores	0.911	+0.113	487	6	60



Brothers Osborne, including lead vocalist TJ Osborne (left) and guitarist John Osborne, met up with KWEN Tulsa assistant PD Karla Cantrell when the duo played July 17 at the city's Hard Rock Hotel and Casino.



Bill Anderson celebrated 65 years as a Grand Ole Opry member during the July 18 edition of the WSM-AM Nashville show. From left: Adkins Entertainment management coordinator Rachael Nichols and president/CEO Scott Adkins, Anderson, Straight 8 Entertainment manager Lee Willard and CountryWired president Stephanie Orr.

CHRIS HOLLO

billboard

60TH CMA AWARDS

2026

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF THE CMA AWARDS

Please join *Billboard* as we celebrate 60 years of “Country Music’s Biggest Night.” For six decades, the CMA Awards have recognized the artists and industry professionals whose creativity and dedication continue to define country music. This special editorial feature honors the unforgettable performances, iconic moments, and lasting legacy of one of music’s most celebrated awards shows.

Founded in 1958, the Country Music Association became the first trade organization established to promote a single genre of music. Less than a decade later, the inaugural CMA Awards Banquet and Show was held in 1967, launching what would become country music’s highest peer-voted honor. First televised in 1968 and now the longest-running annual music awards program on network television, the CMA Awards have continued to recognize excellence across every facet of the industry.

Voted on by more than 7,000 CMA members, the awards celebrate the artists, musicians, songwriters, producers, broadcasters, touring professionals, executives, and countless behind-the-scenes contributors who shape the genre year after year. More than an annual awards show, the CMA Awards have become a reflection of country music’s evolution, honoring both its rich traditions and its next generation of stars.

As the industry celebrates this diamond anniversary, *Billboard* will look back at six decades of unforgettable performances, groundbreaking achievements, and the people who transformed the CMA Awards into the biggest night in country music. Join us in commemorating the legacy of an institution that has celebrated the very best of country music for 60 years.

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Southeast Alex Parry | alex@stellasales.solutions

ISSUE DATE 10/10 | AD CLOSE 9/29 | MATERIALS DUE 10/1

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

Morris Higham Management staff joined in the celebration of the new exhibit “Kenny Chesney: Living in Fast Forward” during a Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum opening party July 22 in Nashville. From left: Morris Higham senior director Kyle Quigley and VP of radio & marketing Buffy Cooper, Chesney and Morris Higham president Clint Higham.

CHESNEY HALL OF FAME EXHIBIT OPENS

The old blue chair, a symbol associated with **Kenny Chesney** since it appeared on the cover of a 2005 album, sits stationary behind glass, next to a row of four Academy of Country Music entertainer of the year awards.

The new Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum exhibit, “Kenny Chesney: Living in Fast Forward,” was the subject of a July 22 opening party that paired his work ethic with his familiar forms of retreat and relaxation.

The display, curated by Museum writer-editor **Jon Freeman**, pulls from numerous parts of his story. A series of flags commemorates the stadium tours that helped him earn membership last October in the Hall of Fame. His No. 7 football jersey points to the athletic pursuits that he envisioned as his future when he attended Gibbs High School in Eastern Tennessee. And a lined sheet of paper full of numbers written in pencil under the heading “You + Tequila” represents just one of many chord charts that have provided the musicians a map as they recorded the songs that turned Chesney into a stadium-level artist.

The exhibit gives an overview — from a box of his childhood possessions to the charcoal-blue suit he wore to his Hall of Fame induction — of a career that defied the odds that every artist encounters in Nashville.

Chesney, noted Museum CEO **Kyle Young** during a reception in the building’s Rotunda, took a hands-on role in the exhibit. Young indicated the museum has opened 225 such exhibits since it opened in 2001, and Chesney is the only artist to date who would not agree to an exhibit until he could participate in a meeting with Museum leaders. He asked all the pertinent questions, then pulled the trigger on the spot, convinced he could invest the time required to make it worthwhile.

“I didn’t want to do it if I couldn’t give it everything,” Chesney confirmed. “Everybody in my life will tell you that I if I can’t give it everything, then I don’t do it. But when I walked in that room today, I was really thrilled that we did this together.”

“Living in Fast Forward” will remain open until June 2027, giving visitors a small sense of the studios, the stadiums, the gridirons and the beaches where Chesney works and plays.

“It’s weird seeing your life behind glass like that,” he said, “but it’s really cool.”

RADIO & RECORDS®

Riser House hired **Paul Grosser** as director of regional promotion. He worked previously at Sony Music Nashville, where he advanced through the ranks to associate director of national promotion ... **Chris Palmer** starts July 27 as Triple Tigers/Akando VP of national promotion, replacing **Raffaella Braun** following her promotion to Triple Tigers co-president. He was most recently Valory VP of promotion. Reach him [here](#) ... **Jackson Wendell** signed a re-

cording contract with Sony Music Nashville and released his first track in the agreement, “East Texas Beauty Queen,” on July 24 ... Joan of Arc signed Nebraska-bred artist-writer **Evan Bartels** to a recording deal. His first song for the label, “Thunder,” arrives Aug. 14 ... **KBAY** San Jose expanded its reach in the Bay Area with a move to 98.5 FM, replacing classic rock **KUFX**, which relocates to an HD2 signal. Concurrently, **Brian “Fig” Figula** was promoted to Connoisseur/Bay Area regional operations manager, adding the KBAY PD role to his duties ... Connoisseur/Portland, Ore., operations manager **Ross MacLeod** added PD duties at country **KUPL** to his job description. MacLeod already programmed adult alternative **KINK** and news/talk **KUFO**. KBAY afternoon drive host **Emily Harlan** adds the KUPL midday shift to her routine, replacing **Jamie Tanchyk**, who moves to afternoons at top 40 sister **KBFF** ... **Kelly Ford** was hired as **WMZQ** Washington, D.C./**WPOC** Baltimore music director/afternoon host, RadioInk.com reported. She spent the last two years in a parallel role at **WWWF** Long Island.

‘ROUND THE ROW

The Academy of Country Music tapped **Andy Schuon** as CEO, bringing a wide range of experience to the position. Schuon’s resume includes work in radio, media, record companies and at Ticketmaster. He was most recently Anthem Sports & Entertainment president and Station Entertainment co-founder. He begins the new job Sept. 1 ... Music City Center hired **Anthony Lopez** as president for the Nashville-based convention center. He arrives from the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas, where he was GM. **Charles Starks** hands over the Music City Center president title but remains in place as CEO ... **Lakelin Lemmings** signed a booking agreement with Kinkead Entertainment ... Warner Records Nashville signee **Colton Dawson** aligned with WME for representation ... Songwriter **Adam James** (“Knowing You”) joined the roster at Sony Music Publishing Nashville ... Country-rock trio **DELTONA** agreed to a joint-venture publishing contract with Sony Music Publishing Nashville and The Core Entertainment ... Songwriter **Jerry Salley** (“Outlaw State of Mind,” “How Do You Sleep at Night”) signed a publishing deal with Tall Oaks Music ... The International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) named former executive director **Paul Schiminger** its new board chair. The IBMA also named Czech bluegrass musician and educator **Ondra Kozák** an international at-large board member ... Gibson is marking 100 years of flat-top acoustic guitar manufacturing with the release of five anniversary editions of the J-45, the Hummingbird, the SJ-200, the Dove and the Advanced Jumbo models. Each is limited to 100 guitars ... The Heartland Network will cover the Las Vegas Songwriters Festival Aug. 20-22 as its exclusive TV and digital streaming partner. The event features more than 40 composers ... SOURCE Nashville celebrated its 35th anniversary July 15 at Marathon Village. President **Mallory Mason Pascal** hosted with the organization’s two living co-founders, **Shelia Shipley Biddy** and **Judy Harris**, both in attendance ... KIT Plugins has introduced a new Blackbird Studio D Reverb Chamber software product that allows digital users to recreate the studio’s echo-related sonic characteristics. ●



Rosanne Cash (left) visited with Belmont Mike Curb College of Entertainment & Music Business dean Brittany Schaffer during a July 16 party celebrating an agreement with Johnny Cash’s estate to house his personal archives at Belmont, which will establish a Johnny Cash Learning Center.

billboard

2026

R&B / HIP-HOP POWER ISSUE



R&B/hip-hop dominates every other genre, claiming one-quarter of all music consumption, according to Luminate.

On Aug. 22, *Billboard* will publish its R&B/Hip-Hop Power Players issue showcasing the artists, producers and executives who have made R&B/hip-hop the hottest genre on earth.

Advertise and congratulate the people who are driving this industry and reach an influential audience of decision-makers in music and pop culture.

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billboard Country Airplay Index

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

A

ALL MY EXES lylas Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/These Are Pulse Songs, BMI/PASSTHEAT PUBLISHING, BMI/Only Legends Music, BMI/Ben There Wrote That Publishing, BMI/Artist 101 Publishing Group, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI/Crek James, ASCAP/Tape Room LLC, Series 1, ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/PTNB Publishing, ASCAP (D. Lynch, B.J. Johnson, J.R. Hall, H. Phelps, Z. Crowell) **22**

B

BABY BLUES Not Listed (A. Cooke, J. Clawson, S.W. Ennis, J.A. Fox, K. Sturrock) **56**

BACK IN THE BOTTLE Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/I'm Your Huckleberry Music, BMI (R. Houser) **50**

BE BY YOU Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Tuckaway Music, BMI/Songs By Porchlight, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Highway 75 Publishing, BMI/Duckman Publishing, BMI/Wildhawk Publishing, BMI (D. Alley, S. Banks, N. Walsh) **4**

BETTER THAT WAY Charles Wesley Godwin Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Endurance Alligator Quatro, ASCAP/Scrambler Music, ASCAP/Music Garden Studios Publishing, BMI (C.W. Godwin, Scooter Carouse, A. Torrence) **54**

BOOTS OFF Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI/50 Egg Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Crawford Mercer Music, GMR/Songs Of CN, GMR (J. Pardi, W. McCubbin, L. Laird) **21**

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) **9**

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) **10**

CHEVY SILVERADO Little Louder Songs, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Spoko Phone Music, BMI/Gavin J. Lucas Publishing, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Vacant Heart Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Bailey Zimmerman Publishing, BMI (T. Beathard, J. Iuber, G.J. Lucas, H. Warren, B. Zimmerman) **5**

COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Concord Copyrights, BMI/Jomil 10 Music, BMI/Trailer Parker Twang Lab, BMI/Hometeam Publishing LLC, BMI/Kilometre Music Group B, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Super Big Music, ASCAP/M Drag Songs, ASCAP (J.L. Miller, P. Well, M. Dragstrom) **13**

D

DAMNED IF I DO Concord Copyrights, BMI/Songs To Hang Your Hat On, BMI/Mississippi Street Light Publishing, BMI/Goat Island Bay Music, BMI/Speakers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/This Is Chromatic Music, BMI (V. Mason, J.A. Hackworth, L. Hungate) **57**

DEAR BIG CITY Anthem Music Publishing II, SESAC/Brooks Money Songs, SESAC/Anthem Music Publishing I, BMI/Single Life Songs, BMI/Pirate89 Publishing, BMI (M. Alderman, N. Kenyon, J. Paulin) **59**

DON'T TELL ON ME Makena Cove Music, ASCAP/BMG Gold Songs, ASCAP/Triples Play Music, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Irishsonic Music, BMI/Kwsay Publishing, BMI/Writersonthehorn Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI (K.M. Allison, T. Kennedy, J. Morgan, L. Vaughan) **3**

DON'T WE Honey Hole Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela 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/Rare Publishing Worldwide, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI (M. Waller, R.H. Block, J. Byron, A.G. Gorley, B. Pendergrass, Charlie Handsome) **1**

DRY SPELL 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) **34**

E

EASY TO LOVE Hit Train Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Ben There Wrote That Publishing, BMI/Artist 101 Publishing Group, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Tape Room Hits, BMI/HALLPASS, ASCAP/Turntable Music Pub, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Rocky Creek James, ASCAP/Tape Room LLC, Series 1, ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/PTNB Publishing, ASCAP (D. Lynch, B.J. Johnson, J.R. Hall, H. Phelps, Z. Crowell) **22**

EMPTY WORDS Songs Of Combustion Five, BMI/ Corey Kent Music, BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/Lighting Street Publishing, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Bridge 1 Music, BMI/Bada Bing Bada Boom Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI (Corey Kent, A. Goodloe, M. Ray, J. Taylor, L. Vaughan) **39**

G

GARY Poems On Junk Mail, SESAC/BMG Cicada, SESAC (S.L. Wilson Jr.) **40**

GET TO DRINKIN' Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Works By Kinda Country Songs, BMI/Speakers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Brady James Music, BMI/Akin For 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) **17**

GIRL DAD Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Colden Rainey Music, BMI/Michael Tyler Music, SESAC/MT Room, SESAC/Melodies Of CTM Outlander, SESAC/Young Guns Tunes, SESAC/Made A Huge Mistake Music, BMI/Dead Aim Music, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI (C. Swindell, M. Tyler, B.M. Stennis) **48**

GOD KNEW BETTER Concord Copyrights, BMI/Camp James Music, BMI/Reservoir 416, BMI/33 Creative, BMI/Concord Sounds, ASCAP/Tacklebox Publishing, ASCAP/8936 Music, BMI/Parmalee Music Publishing, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Matt Thomas Music Publishing, BMI (A. Dean, D. Fanning, J. Collazo, A. Albert, M. Thomas, B. Knox, J.M. Swain, S. Thomas) **55**

GOOD DAMN Indiana Angel Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Don't Be A Gypsy, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Relative Music Group, BMI/Redneck Music, BMI/TDP Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI (B. Gilbert, B. Berryhill, M.W. Hardy, T. Phillips) **43**

H

HANDS UP Bailee's Ballads, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Long And Curly Entertainment, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/Better Bad Songs, SESAC/Situation Songs, SESAC/W.C.M. Music Corp., SESAC/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Spirit Nashville One, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Philippines 4:7 Songs, BMI (J.B. DeFord, R.H. Block, J.A. Fox, M.W. Hardy, R.C. McGill) **23**

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) **6**

HOLDIN' IT DOWN Chase Matthew Music Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/The Big One, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Redd Up Publishing, BMI/Aaron Presley Beachum Publishing Designee, BMI/Evan Christian Mayo Publishing Designee, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI (Chase Matthew, E. Escue, A. Maxwell, Presley Aaron, E.C. Mayo, J. Centers) **29**

HORSEBACK Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Full Draw Publishing, BMI/Little Acre Music, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI/50 Egg Music, BMI/Endurance Alpha, ASCAP/Sounds Of Sopernam Music Publishing, ASCAP (R. Montana, W. McCubbin, P. Sikes) **37**

HURTS LIKE YOU Yellabush Music, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP/Poppy's Picks, ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Concord Sounds, ASCAP/These Are Songs Of Pulse, ASCAP/Gabe Simon Pub Designee, ASCAP/Smells Like Good Music, ASCAP/Reservoir Media Music, ASCAP (R. Wetzel, A.G. Gorley, G. Simon, C. Carie K, S. Jones) **46**

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) **2**

I DIDN'T COME HERE TO LEAVE Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Sir Reginald The Fifth, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Songs Of Flint River, BMI/Kyle Fishman Music, BMI/Play It Again Entertainment, BMI (C. Young, D. Davidson, K.A. Fishman) **49**

IF I DON'T LEAVE I'M GONNA STAY Warner-Tamela 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) **52**

I KNEW IT, I KNEW YOU Wonderland Music Company, Inc., BMI/Pixar Music, BMI/Walt Disney Music Company, ASCAP/Pixar Talking Pictures, ASCAP (T. Swift, J.M. Antonoff) **8**

K

KEEPS ME SANE Anthems Of Platinum Grammer, ASCAP/Sony Tunes LLC, ASCAP/Copyright Control (C.T.L. Nance, D. Napier, B. McCollough) **51**

KID MYSELF Triple Play Music, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/T Tree Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Endurance Alpha, ASCAP/Total Schmidt Songs, ASCAP (J.Morgan, T.R. Hubbard, J.M. Schmidt) **11**

KILLIN' ME Parkermac Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Endless Tour Music, BMI/Songs Of Spirit Nashville One, BMI/Tunes Of Fluid II, BMI/Heavy Lefty Music, BMI (P.M. Collier, R. Rogers, M. Criswell) **33**

L

LAND T Tree Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Relative Red Music, BMI/Bigger Bendable Music, BMI/Songs For Knox, BMI/HAYLO Music Songs, ASCAP/1 Of 6, ASCAP/Endurance Music Group, ASCAP (T.R. Hubbard, Z. Abend, G.J. Egan, C. Smith) **42**

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. Abend, K.S. Clark, C. Wallace) **28**

LONG LIVE COUNTRY Shane Proffitt Publishing Designee, BMI/Zippizmusic, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Rudy Rocks The USA, BMI (S. Proffitt, M.J. Rogers, L. Rimes) **30**

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-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI (L. Musnick, R. Tyndel, J.N. Spillman) **47**

LOVING LIFE AGAIN Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Em Dog Music, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI (E. Langley, E.K. Smith, D. Dawson) **24**

M

MCARTHUR Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Relative Music Group Family, ASCAP/Head Coach Music, ASCAP/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Philippines 4:7 Songs, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Old Bandana, BMI (M.W. Hardy, R.C. McGill, J. Rodgers, J. Thompson) **19**

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) **31**

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-Tamela 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) **32**

N

NOTHIN' BETTER TO DO Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Birds Of Biltmore Songs, BMI/Vincent Mason Publishing, BMI/Smackworld Music, GMR/Art Of CTM Music Outlander LP, GMR/Warner Geo Met Ric Music, GMR/Big Music Machine, BMI/Big Ass Pile Of Dimes Music, BMI/Samuel Tyler Johnson Publishing Designee, BMI (C.F. Jones, V. Mason, S. McAnally, J.J. Dillon, S.T. Johnson) **60**

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-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/FBRL Country Tunes, BMI (H. Westbrook, Lukas Scott, B. Bailey) **25**

PHONE, KEYS, WALLET Sony Countryside, BMI/Story Farmer, BMI/Songs Of One Riot Music, BMI/Reservoir 416, BMI/Matchless Publishing LLC Pub Designee, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Songs Of Riser House, BMI/Drown Boogie Music, BMI/Songs Of Wild Cat Well Music, BMI/Native Notes Music, BMI/Thomas Hall Publishing Designee, PRS/Universal Music Publishing Ltd. (UK), PRS (L. Wilson, J. Decius, D. Pellarin, D. Wilson, T. Anderson, S. Overstreet, T.E. Hull) **20**

PSYCHOLOGICAL Smack Back Music, BMI/Concord Baritone CC, BMI/Midtown Mistake Publishing, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Colton Venner Publishing, BMI (C. Park, G. Tyler, C. Venner) **53**

R

RETHINK SOME THINGS Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Show Me Your Titles LLC, BMI/Universal Music Corp., ASCAP/Bent Prop Publishing, ASCAP/Sony Countryside, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Racks And Plaques Publishing, BMI/Hit Songs Of 50 Egg Music, BMI (L. Combs, J. Davis, D. Isbell, R. Isbell) **35**

RIDE, RIDE, RIDE Big Music Machine, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/T Tree Music, BMI (G.C. Birge, T.R. Hubbard, C. Brown, P. Well) **12**

S

SAV SO Beats And Banjos, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Shay Mooney Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Elvenh Wave Music, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Cing Trax, ASCAP/Lilyridge Music, ASCAP/Cascade Road Songs, ASCAP (D. Smyers, S. Mooney, D.H. Hodges, J. Robbins) **18**

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/Doon What I Do, BMI/Getyasome Music, BMI (Z. Top, C. Chamberlain, M. Nesler) **15**

T

THINK AS YOU DRUNK Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Back 40 Publishing International, BMI/Flatland Boy Music, BMI/Hit Songs Of 50 Egg Music, BMI/Duckman Publishing, BMI/Little Acre Music, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI/50 Egg Music, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Where I Started Music Publishing, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Florida Cracker Music, BMI (R. Green, J.L. Alexander, Erik Dylan, W. McCubbin, S. Emerick, T. Keith) **16**

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-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Jimmy Sad Publishing, BMI/Ernest Music Publishing Designee, BMI (G. Adcock, J.R. Durrett, B. Clawson, E.K. Smith, M.C. Wallen) **45**

WATER AT A WEDDING Relative Red Music, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Super Big Music, ASCAP/M Drag Songs, ASCAP/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Philippines 4:7 Songs, BMI/Songs For Knox, BMI (G.J. Egan, M. Dragstrom, R.C. McGill) **26**

WHAT IF WE DON'T Beepo Fetch Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Song Factory, BMI/Merf Music Publishing LLC, BMI/Colton Sounds, BMI/Songs Of Merf Music LLC, BMI (A.M. Bryde, T.J. Box, R. Clay) **36**

WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG Speakers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Goat Island Bay Music, BMI/T Vill Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela 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. Free, S. Jones) **38**

WHEN A COWBOY PRAYS Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Brandon Lake Music, ASCAP/All Essential Music, ASCAP/Prayin' Cowboy Publishing, SESAC/SO Essential Tunes, SESAC/Songs By That Dog Will Hunt, BMI/Capitol CMG Paragon, BMI/Sugar Rain Music, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI (B.M. Lake, J. Sooter, H. Bentley, D. Southerland) **41**

WHO TOLD YOU THAT Endurance Alpha, ASCAP/Total Schmidt Songs, ASCAP/Melodies Of CTM Outlander, SESAC/Peertunes, Ltd., SESAC/Rocky Creek James, ASCAP/Tape Room 2.0, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Sony Cross Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Master Of My Domain Music, ASCAP/Poppy's Picks, ASCAP (J.M. Schmidt, M. Tyler, H. Phelps, A.G. Gorley) **44**

WOMAN Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Family Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela 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) **7**

WORTH YOUR WILD Concord Copyrights, BMI/Big Hits N Gravy, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Songs Of Home Team Music, BMI/Tunes Of TrailerParker, BMI/Track & Feels, SESAC/Tape Room Tunes, SESAC/W.C.M. Music Corp., SESAC (R. Dickerson, P. Well, C. Brown) **27**

Y

YOU'RE IT FOR ME, HONEY Bare Feet Publishing LLC, BMI/RobMadeThis, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Dark Bars Music, BMI/Haus Of Kings, ASCAP (C.D. Jones, R. Grimaldi, L. McLamb, B. Ratcliff) **58**

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The Inside ‘Dirt’ On
Jason Aldean’s No. 1 ‘Anthem’

The singer’s sixth summit visit reaffirmed his risk-taking swagger

When Broken Bow released **Jason Aldean**’s “Dirt Road Anthem” to country radio in 2011, the label took some flack from naysayers who thought the recitation in the verses wouldn’t work.

When it rose to No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Hot Country Songs on July 30, 2011, it supported Aldean’s predilection for pushing boundaries, becoming the sixth of his 10 singles to reach the top. He’s notched a total of 27 No. 1s on Country Airplay.

Aldean wasn’t taking as big a chance as some critics might have believed. He saw fans singing every word of it when

Colt Ford performed it during a tour in 2009. Ford had included it on his debut album, 2008’s *Ride Through the Country*, after writing “Dirt Road” with **Brantley Gilbert** at Gilbert’s Georgia home. Brantley fashioned most of the rock-leaning chorus, while Ford led the work on the rap-influenced verses, celebrating edgy backwoods lifestyles while cautioning the listener to “watch out for the boys in blue.”

Produced by **Michael Knox (Montgomery Gentry, Trace Adkins)**, “Dirt Road” further expanded Aldean’s stylistic imprint. He’d explored centrist

country in “Amarillo Sky,” used metal sonics in “She’s Country” and enlisted **Kelly Clarkson** on the pop-flavored ballad “Don’t You Wanna Stay,” establishing an enviable flexibility for his sound.

Aldean’s version of “Dirt Road” was certified quadruple-Platinum by the RIAA, while Ford’s collaboration with Brantley went Gold. It’s appeared on Ford’s *Country*, Aldean’s *My Kinda Party* and Gilbert’s *Halfway to Heaven*. It was also featured on Aldean’s *30 Number One Hits*, released last October.

—TOM ROLAND

Aldean at Shoreline Amphitheatre in Mountain View, Calif., on July 27, 2011

T.W.	LA	W	AG	W	OW	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	IMPRINT & NUMBER / PROMOTION LABEL	CE	PE	PO
1	3	4	26	#1	1 WK	DIRT ROAD ANTHEM M.KNOX (B.GILBERT,C.FORD)	Jason Aldean BROKEN BOW	1		
2	4	5	23			TOMORROW J.STROUD (C.YOUNG,F.J.MYERS,A.SMITH)	Chris Young RCA	2		
3	2	1	15			HONEY BEE S.HENDRICKS (B.HAYSLIP,R.AKINS)	Blake Shelton WARNER BROS./WMN	1		
4	5	8	14			KNEE DEEP K.STEGALL,Z.BROWN (Z.BROWN,W.DURRETTE,C.BOWLES,J.STEELE)	Zac Brown Band Featuring Jimmy Buffett SOUTHERN GROUND/ATLANTIC/BIGGER PICTURE	4		
5	1	3	23			IF HEAVEN WASN'T SO FAR AWAY J.STOVER (D.DAVIDSON,R.HATCH,B.JONES)	Justin Moore VALORY	1		
6	6	7	11			JUST A KISS	Lady Antebellum			