

billboard Country Update

BILLBOARD.COM/NEWSLETTERS

SEPTEMBER 18, 2026 | PAGE 1 OF 12

BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

Tom.Roland@billboard.com



Americana's Annual Conference Addresses Music's Mission In Divisive Times

When **Sheryl Crow** received the BMI troubadour award on Sept. 14, she broke into tears as she revealed that her mother no longer recognizes her.

But, she added, when Crow sings something from the Great American Songbook, her mom perks up and sings every word. Her reveal unwittingly set up some of what was to come when

to learn resilience on the fly once they went professional; still others adapted it to their work after developing that trait in their personal lives. One example came with artist-writer **Amanda Shaw**, who survived Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005.

"That's something that has stuck with me — not just as

the annual AMERICANAFAEST opened the next day in Nashville. Between the songs and the personal stories of the genre's artists, it tackled a bundle of difficult issues, including suicide, climate change, Hurricane Helene, wildfires, dementia, deportations, artificial intelligence and the loss of **Dolly Parton**. No conclusions emerged, but the topics seemed less depressing than they might otherwise be, reflecting music's power to inspire resilience, a trait that's required for the artists to move forward.

Nearly every good story has at least one character who grows stronger by beating back challenges, and in an underdog genre, resilience is a valuable tool. Some artists have had

an artist, but as a human being," she said in the "Whose Roots? Expanding the Americana Music Narrative" panel. "I think it has helped me so much in this industry because you can create something, you can do the best thing that you think you've ever done, but you cannot control the outcome at all. But when you are authentic to who you are and what you do, there is nothing that can truly knock you down."

Americana, now more than 25 years into its journey, remains a somewhat nebulous catch-all format. It grew originally as a bit of a country music subgenre, consisting of sounds that were influenced by country's roots but were not connect-

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Stella Lefty's 'Boston': Wicked Good Week
>page 4

Remembering Former Billboard Editor Ed Morris
>page 8

Country Coda: Cyndi Thomson's Impressive Debut
>page 12

Billboard will be closed on Monday, Sept. 21, in observance of Yom Kippur. The *Country Update* will publish on Sept. 22.



DECISIVE INTELLIGENCE.
DELIVERED DIGITALLY.

billboard
DIGITAL NEWSLETTERS

CLICK HERE
FOR FREE
DELIVERY

ing with what was then considered commercial country. As it has evolved, Americana has embraced all sorts of roots music — blues, bluegrass, gospel, soul, rock, zydeco and rockabilly, for example.

It has developed its own core set of stars, with several of them claiming trophies at the Americana Honors & Awards on Sept. 15: **Molly Tuttle** took artist of the year, **Gillian Welch & David Rawlings** earned duo/group, **Tyler Childers** claimed album of the year for *Snipe Hunter* and **Brandi Carlile** walked off with song of the year for “Returning to Myself.”

Since the genre is a hard-to-define umbrella for multiple styles, its artists have an enormous amount of freedom to experiment as they fulfill their musical goals. That also gives them leeway to tackle tougher topics than many competing genres.

Case in point: **Jesse Welles**, who’s emerged as this generation’s **Woody Guthrie**, commenting at will through music on the state of America’s citizens, its government and the American dream. For example, the pointedly titled “Good vs. Ice” tackled one of the Minneapolis shootings, cleverly rhyming bits of real-life tragedy in a way that informs and inspires in a succinct one minute and 19 seconds. His work and his activism are inextricably linked.

“It can be tricky trying to tie those things together,” **Margo Price** said in an interview presented at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, “but it’s also completely difficult to separate them because art is supposed to reflect the times and show people how to feel things.”

The tendency, of course, is to shy away from the hard things and embrace the easy feelings. But life doesn’t always allow that. **Wynonna** — in an AMERICANA Conference interview that advanced her forthcoming album, *The Hard Truth*, due Oct. 2 — ran through a series of challenges that dogged her personal world: her mother’s suicide in 2022, the night before their family duo **The Judds** was to be inducted in the Hall of Fame; her daughter’s incarceration in a Memphis prison; adopting her granddaughter; and processing information she learned about her biological father, who she never knew.

“All I knew to do was sing,” she said, “and so that became our motto, sort of ‘shut up and sing.’”

Digging into the emotional mysteries in her story seems to have provided Wynonna some healing, while her artistic rendering of that story is likely to aid some fans in their own efforts at self-repair. If nothing else, it will remind those listeners that their personal pain is a communal condition.

“What music does,” said Crow, “is it finds you and it makes you feel like you’re not alone.”

Amid the cultural divisions that strain America in 2026, connection with others has arguably greater value than at any time in current generations’ memories, and for those who connect on shared experiences over hard issues, artists’ willingness to make themselves vulnerable is gold. It’s one positive reason to address difficult topics, though it creates a conundrum for associates in music and broadcasting who may not be as passionate about the subject.

“You do run the risk of alienating [some] listeners if you’re really focusing on a particular side [of an issue],” said **WNCW** Asheville, N.C., music director/morning personality **Martin Anderson** during a Sept. 17 panel, “When the Song Matters: Radio’s Role in Moments of Cultural Change.” “At the same time, I do think we have a responsibility to lead, to champion an artist who has something to say, and to try not to be afraid to make those choices and take chances in that regard.”

Many programmers remember — or, at least, are aware of — the threats that angry listeners lobbed during **The Chicks**’ public statement on the Iraq War in 2003. Country famously abandoned the act at the time, and broadcasters now operate with some fear of getting “Dixie-Chicked” over controversial content. However, recording artist **Jobi Ricci** noted on that same “Radio’s Role” panel that many of the naysayers’ attacks are typically confined to phone calls or social media.

“Often, they’re not brave enough to interface with you one-on-one,” she noted. “I’m kind of aggressive with the message, too, and I like to stand in the power of, you know, ‘Fuck big oil, fuck this,’ because I think it’s powerful to see a young, small, feminine person saying that. Generally, those people don’t want to come to the merch table and be like, ‘I don’t like that you said that.’ So it’s worth it to me.”

Americana acts’ use of music for a purpose beyond commerce drew applause more than once, including at the Price Q&A.

“What’s happening right now is not right,” she said, eliciting that laudatory ovation by alluding to the government’s current deportation program. “I wish more people would say things about it.” ●



Sheryl Crow received the BMI troubadour award during a Sept. 14 dinner at the performing rights organization’s Nashville office. From left: BMI Nashville VP of creative Clay Bradley, Crow, BMI chief revenue & creative officer Mike Steinberg and BMI Nashville VP of creative, partnerships & events Mason Hunter.



John Mayer made a surprise appearance to perform “Phone, Keys, Wallet” live with Lainey Wilson for the first time on Sept. 17 during the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum’s All for the Hall Los Angeles benefit at The Novo. From left: Mayer, Lukas Nelson, Wilson and Jelly Roll.



Chris Stapleton performed “Tennessee Whiskey” to close the T.J. Martell New York Honors Gala as Red Light Management founder Coran Capshaw received a lifetime music industry award Sept. 15. The event raised more than \$3.2 million. From left: Stapleton, Capshaw, Dave Matthews and Trey Anastasio.



Miranda Lambert stopped in at the SiriusXM/Pandora office in Nashville on Sept. 16. With her: SiriusXM/Pandora VP of country music programming Johnny Chiang (left) and MCA Nashville VP of promotion & strategy David Friedman.

ERIKA GOLDRING

JOHN SHEARER/GETTY IMAGES

KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES

DREW BALDRIDGE

FARM FAITH FAMILY



ALBUM AVAILABLE NOW



billboardCountry Airplay

AIRPLAY
MONITORED BY
LUMINATE

ON THE CHARTS RUSS PENUELL rpenuell@billboard.com

Ticket Stamped To No. 1: Stella Lefty's 'Boston'

Stella Lefty earns her first No. 1 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart as “Boston” (Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost) rises a spot in its 22nd week to lead the list dated Sept. 26. The song also gives Atlantic Outpost, which **launched** in July 2025, its first No. 1 with its first single to have made the chart.

“Boston” drew 34.2 million in audience (up 8%) Sept. 11-17, according to Luminate.

Lefty is the first solo-billed woman to reach No. 1 with her first Country Airplay entry since **Lainey Wilson**, whose “Things a Man Oughta Know” led in 2021, in its 39th week. Meanwhile, “Boston” completes the fastest run to No. 1 for a debut hit by a woman with no credited collaborators in more than 22 years, since **Gretchen Wilson’s** “Redneck Woman” (12 weeks in March-May 2004).

The pace is especially notable in a slower era: “Boston” tops Country Airplay 10 weeks faster than the 32-week average climb in the 2020s. Among solo-billed women with first entries, Lefty’s song claims the sixth-fastest ascent to No. 1 in the chart’s 36-year history, behind only **Wynonna’s** “She Is His Only Need” (nine weeks, 1992); “Redneck Woman”; **Faith Hill’s** “Wild One” (12, 1993-94); **Trisha Yearwood’s** “She’s in Love With the Boy” (12, 1991); and **Deana Carter’s** “Strawberry Wine” (15, 1996).

“Boston” ranked at No. 2 on the Sept. 19-dated *Billboard* Hot 100, behind **Ella Langley’s** “Choosin’ Texas,” which tied for the chart’s **longest rule** of all time. Meanwhile, Lefty’s “Something To Lose,” with boyfriend **Vincent Mason**, climbs 47-45 on Country Airplay (1.7 million, up 18%). Lefty’s two tracks are on her debut EP, *Is This Heaven?*, and first full-length, *Long Way Home*, both of which debuted in the Top Country Albums top 10.

NEW TOP 10s **Dan + Shay’s** “Say So” (Warner Records Nashville/WRN) vaults three spots to No. 9 on Country Airplay (17.3 million, up 18%). It becomes the duo’s 13th top 10.

Plus, **Zach John King** earns his first top 10 with his first Country Airplay entry, “Get To Drinkin’ ” (Sony Music Nashville/SMN) (17.1 million, up 8%). The Fayetteville, Ga., native signed with the label in early 2025. ●



CRIS SLATER AND J GOFF MAU

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)	
LOVING LIFE AGAIN SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	+3.440	
BEEN BY NOW Mercury/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+3.325	
KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan	+2.706	
SAY SO Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Dan + Shay	+2.620	
BOSTON Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost	Stella Lefty	+2.468	
JADED YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel & Ella Langley	+2.001	
RETHINK SOME THINGS Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+1.903	
MEDICINE Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	+1.342	
ANYTIME SOON Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+1.291	
GET TO DRINKIN' Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Zach John King	+1.262	

MOST INCREASED PLAYS			
TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN	
LOVING LIFE AGAIN SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	+939	
RETHINK SOME THINGS Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	+672	
BEEN BY NOW Mercury/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	+661	
BOSTON Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost	Stella Lefty	+605	
SAY SO Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Dan + Shay	+600	
KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan	+470	
ALL MY EXES Mercury/Big Loud	Lauren Alaina Featuring Chase Matthew	+395	
ANYTIME SOON Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+362	
JADED YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel & Ella Langley	+337	
COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Row Crop/MCA Nashville	Luke Bryan	+335	

RECURRENTS			
THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	CHOOSIN' TEXAS SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	19.064
2	DON'T TELL ON ME Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	18.923
3	CHEVY SILVERADO Atlantic/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Bailey Zimmerman	18.368
4	DON'T WE Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	18.009
5	HATE HOW YOU LOOK The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	17.521
6	I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE SAWGOD/Columbia/Big Loud/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley & Morgan Wallen	15.817
7	BE HER SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	14.122
8	WOMAN Zone 4/RCA Nashville/SMN	Kane Brown	11.475
9	AFTER ALL THE BARS ARE CLOSED Fifty-One/Forty-Nine/Valory	Thomas Rhett	9.732
10	SLEEPLESS IN A HOTEL ROOM Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	9.509



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 17, 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	18	HIGH NOON (Leo33) ★★ 1 Week at 1 ★★	Jenna Pautette	1943	86	11	10	24	YOU AND WHISKEY (Independent)	Chuck Wimer & Brandi Behlen	1344	-57
2	3	22	THAT'S WHAT COWBOYS DO (Lonely River)	Curtis Grimes	1863	48	12	12	15	HOWDY MA'AM (T3R Music Group)	Caleb Sutton	1333	15
3	4	16	HIGHWAY ROBBERY (Leo33)	Jason Scott & The High Heat	1778	-28	13	13	19	AIN'T THAT A DRINK (Soundline Management)	Ronnie Bowen	1329	24
4	6	12	FEELIN' GOOD AGAIN (Bossier City/Thirty Tigers)	Turnpike Troubadours w/Sierra Hull	1765	157	14	15	15	CHEAT ON YOU (Independent)	Amanda Kate Ferris	1224	-11
5	5	20	GUINEVERE (T3R Music Group)	Sundance Head	1652	-4	15	16	7	DOWN FOR THE RIDE (Independent)	Tristan Roberson	1195	83
6	7	23	I DON'T DRINK ANYMORE (Independent)	Timothy Howls	1577	-7	16	17	13	HONEYSUCKLE (Big Loud Texas/Mercury Records)	Dylan Gossett	1120	33
7	9	14	WOULDA BEEN IT (River House)	Tyce Delk	1564	71	17	18	15	WHAT DO YOU PRAY FOR (Erskine Entertainment)	Sheila Marshall	1066	30
8	8	20	THIRD ROW GEORGE STRAIT (Independent)	Frank Ray	1520	-24	18	22	7	GOOD TIME (Independent)	William Clark Green	1064	129
9	11	22	MIDNIGHT BLUES (Independent)	Selestial Alcoser	1414	14	19	20	12	DAY DRINKIN' (Independent)	AJ Vallejo	1045	54
10	14	9	FAN OF YOU (Pretty Damn Tough)	Josh Abbott Band	1346	51	20	19	17	CITY COWGIRL (Independent)	Lani Butler	1019	19

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

AIRPLAY
MONITORED BY
LUMINATE

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
1	2	22	BOSTON Sandlot/Atlantic/Atlantic Outpost	Stella Lefty	34.228	+2.468	8902	605	1
2	1	25	BE BY YOU Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	32.753	-0.344	8443	-262	2
3	4	8	BEEN BY NOW Mercury/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	26.396	+3.325	7175	661	3
4	3	19	CARRY ON Warner/HEY NOW	Kenny Chesney	24.999	+1.021	6903	254	4
5	6	63	KID MYSELF Night Train/Broken Bow	John Morgan	24.529	+2.706	6642	470	5
6	8	11	LOVING LIFE AGAIN SAWGOD/Columbia/Triple Tigers	Ella Langley	22.087	+3.440	6042	939	6
7	9	54	ALL MY EXES Mercury/Big Loud	Lauren Alaina Featuring Chase Matthew	19.724	+1.231	5668	395	7
8	10	25	COUNTRY AND SHE KNOWS IT Row Crop/MCA Nashville	Luke Bryan	17.924	+0.871	5081	335	8
9	12	24	SAY SO Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Dan + Shay	17.255	+2.620	4875	600	9
10	11	30	GET TO DRINKIN' Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Zach John King	17.090	+1.262	4805	330	10
11	13	17	THINK AS YOU DRUNK Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	14.693	+0.666	4290	119	11
12	15	15	PHONE, KEYS, WALLET Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson & John Mayer	14.046	+0.973	4168	189	12
13	14	40	SOUTH OF SANITY Leo33	Zach Top	14.026	+0.537	3827	100	14
14	17	10	RETHINK SOME THINGS Seven Ridges/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Luke Combs	12.950	+1.903	3836	672	13
15	19	6	JADED YellaBush/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Koe Wetzel & Ella Langley	12.434	+2.001	3039	337	19
16	16	13	HANDS UP Bailee & Buddy/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	11.758	+0.642	3396	18	16
17	18	30	PAINTED YOU PRETTY River House/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Hudson Westbrook	11.427	+0.836	3563	315	15
18	20	35	BOOTS OFF Capitol Nashville/MCA Nashville	Jon Pardi	9.954	+0.035	3086	-57	18
19	21	33	MCARTHUR Mercury/Big Loud	HARDY, Eric Church, Morgan Wallen & Tim McGraw	9.141	+0.111	3377	39	17
20	22	39	WATER AT A WEDDING Nashville Harbor	Greytan James	8.414	+0.460	2893	115	20
21	23	38	WORTH YOUR WILD Triple Tigers	Russell Dickerson	8.281	+0.735	2676	230	21
22	24	22	MEDICINE Megan Moroney/Columbia/Columbia Nashville/SMN	Megan Moroney	7.955	+1.342	2575	293	23
23	25	32	LET HIM IN ANYWAY Ten Point/Wheelhouse	Blake Shelton	6.737	+0.293	2586	86	22
24	26	6	ANYTIME SOON Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	6.231	+1.291	2077	362	25
25	28	16	EMPTY WORDS Sony Music Nashville/SMN	Corey Kent	5.730	+0.859	1887	192	28
26	27	34	HOLDIN' IT DOWN Chase Matthew/Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Chase Matthew	5.342	+0.411	2257	98	24
27	29	23	MOVE ON American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Kevin Powers & Shaboozey	5.088	+0.254	1953	189	26
28	30	14	HORSEBACK CoJo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Cody Johnson	4.969	+0.202	1922	116	27
29	31	30	KILLIN' ME MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	4.698	+0.147	1618	-83	29
30	32	29	NEVER COMIN' BACK Lost Highway	Flatland Cavalry	3.639	+0.266	1465	52	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
MONITORED BY
LUMINATE

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
31	33	10	WHO TOLD YOU THAT Tucker Wetmore/Back Blocks/Mercury/Mercury Nashville	Tucker Wetmore	3.544	+0.235	1268	159	34
32	35	21	WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG Goat Island Sound/Mercury Nashville	Jacob Hackworth	3.416	+0.263	1440	47	31
33	34	6	COWGIRL American Dogwood/EMPIRE/Magnolia Music	Shaboozey	3.411	+0.139	1407	124	32
34	36	18	DRY SPELL Kacey Musgraves/Lost Highway	Kacey Musgraves	3.378	+0.298	1212	86	36
35	38	14	I DIDN'T COME HERE TO LEAVE Boss Moves/Black River/Akando	Chris Young	2.823	+0.198	1133	80	37
36	37	19	WANNABE Thrivin Here/Warner Records Nashville/WRN	Gavin Adcock	2.742	+0.055	1119	-5	38
37	39	26	GOOD DAMN Wheelhouse	Brantley Gilbert	2.610	+0.354	1387	67	33
38	40	17	LAND Hubbard House/Mercury Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	2.328	+0.149	1080	37	39
39	42	26	IF I DON'T LEAVE I'M GONNA STAY Stoney Creek/Nashville Harbor	Carly Pearce & Riley Green	2.091	+0.192	1044	123	40
40	41	13	GIRL DAD Warner Records Nashville/WAR	Cole Swindell	2.079	+0.164	1044	58	41
41	43	13	STRING BY Mack Geiger/RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Mack Geiger	1.884	+0.159	553	42	54
42	44	20	LOVE IS BLIND WEST TO THE REST/Triple Tigers	Ian Munsick	1.823	+0.102	998	-5	42
43	46	7	DAMNED IF I DO Music Soup/Interscope/Lost Highway	Vincent Mason	1.809	+0.215	618	34	52
44	45	24	BACK IN THE BOTTLE Magnolia Music	Randy Houser	1.795	+0.181	1217	85	35
45	47	4	SOMETHING TO LOSE Sandlot/Atlantic/Lost Highway/Atlantic Outpost	Stella Lefty Featuring Vincent Mason	1.716	+0.256	517	85	56
46	51	3	BET ON THAT Enchntmnt/Warner/WAR	Blake Whiten	1.622	+0.353	772	127	45
47	49	18	BETTER THAT WAY Mercury/Big Loud	Charles Wesley Godwin & Luke Combs	1.402	+0.036	801	22	44
48	50	11	DEAR BIG CITY Curb	Dylan Scott	1.351	+0.033	864	17	43
49	48	3	SON OF JOLENE Deluge Nashville/East Music Row/New Revolution	Belles With Dolly Parton	1.300	-0.158	507	-3	57
50	53	11	BABY BLUES Back Blocks/Mercury/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	1.241	+0.102	730	75	46
51	54	8	NOTHIN' BETTER TO DO Gatsby/MCA Nashville	Carter Faith & Wyatt Flores	1.176	+0.041	682	31	49
52	55	9	DONE FOR Fugitive Recordings/Magnolia Music	Max McNown	1.166	+0.077	705	46	47
53	57	3	SAY LA V Quartz Hill	Joe Nichols	1.123	+0.086	583	24	53
54	56	2	HOWDY Big Machine	Cole Goodwin	1.107	+0.062	692	37	48
55	52	15	GOD KNEW BETTER Stoney Creek	Parmalee	0.964	-0.261	657	-4	51
56	NEW		TAKE ME BACK (LEAVE METHERE) CoJo/Warner Records Nashville/WRN ★★ Hot Shot Debut ★★	Cody Johnson	0.950	+0.545	96	44	-
57	58	10	YOU'RE IT FOR ME, HONEY True To The Song/Nashville Harbor	Caroline Jones	0.828	-0.058	676	9	50
58	60	2	TALKIN BOUT Galaxy Label Group	LOCASH	0.749	+0.166	546	76	55
59	59	5	SEARCHLIGHT Atlantic	Shinedown	0.650	+0.043	506	52	58
60	NEW		THE YEARS ARE SHORT Curb	Rodney Atkins	0.550	+0.057	472	49	59



Apple Music unveiled a "This is Country Music" mural, created by Nashville artist Christian Green, on the city's United Pressing facility on Sept. 14. The image features Linda Martell and Charley Pride along the Chestnut Avenue side of the building.



Country Music Association execs attended the Brooks & Dunn concert at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena on Sept. 12, two days before announcing the duo will receive the organization's Willie Nelson lifetime achievement award during the 60th annual CMA Awards on Nov. 18. From left: CMA director of awards stewardship Brenden Oliver, the duo's Ronnie Dunn, CMA CEO Sarah Trahern and the duo's Kix Brooks.

BRADEN CARNEY & JOSEPH CHEONG

A photograph of Riley Green, a man with a mustache and goatee, wearing a dark cowboy hat and a light blue and white striped button-down shirt. He is sitting in the driver's seat of a truck, with his hands on the steering wheel. The background shows a blurred landscape with a rainbow visible through the windshield.

Riley Green

That's Just Me

THE NEW ALBUM FEATURING THE SMASH HIT "THINK AS YOU DRUNK" Out Now!

"From a highly successful artist best known for plain-spoken songs celebrating traditional values into **a shooting star.**"

billboard

"That's Just Me is a deeply personal body of work that **captures the many sides of Green** as an artist as well as a songwriter,"

MUSICROW

"The 19-song collection reflects the same **mix of traditional country, humor, nostalgia, and Alabama pride** that fills his farm."

Country Living

"It's **a mix of inspirations**, both sonically and lyrically."

songwriter
the craft - music

"At its core, That's Just Me is **a songwriter's album**"

ALL COUNTRY NEWS

NASHVILLE
Harbor
RECORDS &
ENTERTAINMENT

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

Dan + Shay welcomed Audacy regional brand manager/WUSN Chicago PD Marci Braun to the venue when they headlined Sept. 12 at the Credit Union 1 Amphitheatre in Tinley Park, Ill. From left: Warner Records Nashville regional manager of radio & streaming Justin Newell, the duo's Dan Smyers, Braun and the duo's Shay Mooney.

BILLBOARD VET ED MORRIS REMEMBERED

Veteran Nashville entertainment journalist **Ed Morris**, 90, a former *Billboard* editor, died Sept. 17, leaving more than 50 years of country music coverage behind.

He spent 14 years at *Billboard*, ending his tenure as the publication's country music editor, a role in which he applied a dry wit and fierce integrity as a reporter, even at times when it was inconvenient.

Beginning in 1999, he spent 20 years as a columnist for CMT.com, a run that ended during a pandemic-era down-sizing at the network.

Born Sept. 21, 1935, in Kanawha County, W.V., he married, in 1960, the former **Norma Chapman**, who would become a Nashville publicist after the couple moved to Tennessee in 1980, eight years after he became a *Billboard* freelancer.

He wrote eight books, including *Alabama* (1985), *Garth Brooks: Platinum Cowboy* (1993), *Edward Morris' Complete Guide to Country Music Videos* (1997) and a 2020 account of the final stages of his 61-year relationship with Norma, *Stardust: An Alzheimer's Love Story*.

One of his final Facebook posts, published on July 20, provides a glimpse into a driving force in his work, and his life in general: "Love feels so good I can't imagine why anyone chooses to hate."

Edward Morris is survived by three children, including **Erin Morris Huttlinger**, the owner of Morris Public Relations.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in his name to Planned Parenthood.

'ROUND THE ROW

- BMI Nashville promoted **Mason Hunter** to VP of creative, partnerships & events from assistant VP of creative.

- The International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) is actively seeking to fill its executive director position. Interested applicants are encouraged to submit materials to the IBMA by Nov. 4.

- Los Angeles-based **Jessica Nall** joined Full Coverage Communications as senior director after 20 months as a Jonesworks publicist. The Full Coverage roster includes **Tim McGraw**, **Carly Pearce**, **Carrie Underwood** and **Faith Hill**. Reach Nall [here](#).

- Midland renewed its publishing agreement with Warner Chappell Nashville.

- Songwriter **Johnny Clawson** ("Texas," "weren't for the wind") renewed his publishing deal with SMACKSongs.

- **Jeremy Lister** signed a songwriting deal with Jody Williams Songs (JWS) and Warner Chappell Nashville, becoming JWS' first dedicated sync writer. He boasts credits with *Grey's Anatomy*, the Hallmark Channel, Jeep, Toyota and T-Mobile.

- The MPI Talent Agency added **Brett Kissel** to its artist roster.

- The late **Jerry (J.I.) Allison** ("That'll Be the Day," "More Than I Can Say") was named a legacy inductee to the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame. His official installation takes place Oct. 26 at the Music City Center.

- **Sam Bush** and **Sierra Hull** will co-host the International Bluegrass Music Association's 37th annual IBMA Bluegrass Music Awards Oct. 22 at Soldiers

and Sailors Memorial Auditorium in Chattanooga, Tenn.

- The *Texas Regional Radio Report's* 17th annual T3R Awards are slated for March 29, 2027, at Texas Live! in Arlington.

- Neste Event Marketing co-founder **Gil Cunningham** and **Chubby Checker** will be inducted by the International Entertainment Buyers Association into the IEBA Hall of Fame on Oct. 6 at The Pinnacle in Nashville.

- Songwriters **Parker Welling** ("Country and She Knows It," "Blue Tacoma") and **Lydia Vaughan** ("Friends Like That," "Empty Words") debuted a new songwriting podcast, *Women's Writes*, on Sept. 17 with **Lauren Alaina** as their first guest.

- The Nashville Chamber of Commerce honored **Dolly Parton** as an icon during an event at Nissan Stadium where the organization also recognized Country Music Association CEO **Sarah Trahern** with a changemaker award. Parton will be more widely celebrated when numerous cities and organizations observe Dolly Parton Day on Sept. 25, a date chosen because its numerical representation — 9/25 — resembles the title of the Parton hit "9 to 5." Nashville officially joined the list of celebrants, as did the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, which is presenting a free screening of *9 to 5* in its CMA Theater. A national tour for *Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol* is also set to launch Nov. 14 in Princeton, W.V., visiting 20 cities before its Dec. 23 conclusion in Indianapolis.

- Ian Munsick's Cowboy Bar & Western Grill was set to open Sept. 18 inside the Landmark Hotel & Casino in Deadwood, S.D.

- **Brad Paisley** wrote and recorded "We are South America" for the Sept. 16 episode of Comedy Central's *South Park*, which has been satirically renamed *South America*.

- The Nashville Musicians Union pays tribute to seven late members of the city's music community Sept. 24 at 3rd & Lindsley to raise money for the AFM Local 257 Funeral Fund. Honorees include **Kris Kristofferson**, songwriters **Don Schlitz** ("The Gambler," "On the Other Hand") and **Ronnie Bowman** ("Nobody to Blame," "Never Wanted Nothing More"), drummer **Craig Krampf**, pianist **David Briggs** and guitarists **Wayne Moss** and **Jerry Kennedy**. Performers include **Suzy Bogguss**, **Linda Davis** and **Sweethearts of the Rodeo**.

- The WHO KNEW The Smartest People in the Room webinar series features mtheory CEO **Cameo Carlson** and CLLD owner **Chris Lisle** at 1 p.m. CT on Sept. 24. Go [here](#) to register for free.

- **Bri Bagwell** will be recognized as entertainer of the year when the Country Music Association of Texas holds its awards show Oct. 14 in The Woodlands, Texas. The Sgt. 2Step Foundation will honor U.S. Army veteran **John "Swat" Swantner** for his military service and community activity during the event.

- Curb artist **Hannah Ellis** hosts her second annual Officer Down Golf Classic Oct. 19 in Nashville.

- **Hazel Johnson**, an unofficial crew member for **New Grass Revival** during the 1970s, died Sept. 13. The group was humorously impressed, according to bassist **John Cowan**, by her skills at replacing broken strings mid-show. Her husband, New Grass banjoist **Courtney Johnson**, died in 1996. 🍷



Joe Nichols (center) received an RIAA-certified triple-platinum plaque for his single "Tequila Makes Her Clothes Fall Off" when he performed Sept. 5 at Billy Bob's Texas in Fort Worth. He's flanked by manager Mike Nash and BSB Management director of artist relations Kendra Whitehead.

JESSICA CRANS

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.

CONTACT

Southeast Alex Parry | alex@stellasales.solutions

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

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/Hoops Don't Lie Publishing, BMI/Modern Arts Songs, BMI/Music By Work Of Art, BMI (Lauren Alaina, J.A.Gutch, B.Johnson, W.Philips) **7**

ANYTIME SOON Makena Cove Music, ASCAP/BMG Gold Songs, ASCAP/Triple Play Music, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Irishsonmusic, BMI (K.M.Allison, J.Edwards, T.Kennedy, J.Morgan) **24**

B

BABY BLUES Not Listed (A.Cooke, J.Clawson, S.W.Ennis, J.A.Fox, K.Sturrock) **50**

BACK IN THE BOTTLE Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/I'm Your Huckleberry Music, BMI (R.Houser) **44**

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) **2**

BEEEN BY NOW Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Honey Hole Publishing, BMI/Long And Curly Entertainment, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/John Byron Music, BMI/Rarre Publishing Worldwide, BMI/Songs Of Back Block Publishing, BMI/TDP Publishing, BMI/Hits From The Tape Room, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI (M.C.Wallen, R.H.Block, J.Byron, B.Pendergrass, T.Philips, Charlie Handsome) **3**

BET ON THAT Blake Whiten Publishing Designee, BMI/Gold Room Special Music, BMI/Hipgnosis Beats, BMI/Hotsecks Songs, BMI/Songs On The Range, BMI/Where It Begins, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/London Margate Songs, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI (B.White, G.Averill, Hoskins, J.M.Spargur) **46**

BETTER THAT WAY Charles Wesley Godwin Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Endurance Alligator Quatro, ASCAP/Scrambler Music, ASCAP/Music Garden Studies Publishing, BMI (C.W.Godwin, Scooter Carouse, A.Torrence) **47**

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) **18**

BOSTON 13117 Music, ASCAP/Kobalt Songs Music Publishing LLC, ASCAP/Grace Enger Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Joey Reeves Publishing, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/LMC Is The Place For Me Publishing, ASCAP/Secret Meadow Songs, ASCAP/Sony Allegro, ASCAP/Stella Lefty Music, ASCAP (G.Enger, J.K.Hindlin, J.Reeves, N.Kahan, S.Lefty) **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) **4**

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.Welling, M.Dragstrem) **8**

COWGIRL EMPIRE SF, ASCAP/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Works by Range Music Partners, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Essency Music Publishing, ASCAP/BABAPUBISHER, ASCAP/Collins Chibueze Publishing Designee, ASCAP/Jared Lincoln Couter Pub Designee, BMI/Timothy Whitfield Kane Pub Designee, ASCAP/Pipeline Global Publishing, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI (C.O.Chibueze, S.C.Cook, A.A.Pauti, T.W.Kane, M.R.Stevens, N.Sastry, J.L.Cotter) **33**

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) **43**

DEAR BIG CITY Anthem Music Publishing II, SESAC/Brooks Money Songs, SESAC/Anthem Music Publishing I, BMI/Single Life Music, BMI/Patrick89 Publishing, BMI (M.Alderman, N.Kenyon, J.Paulin) **48**

DONE FOR Max McOwn Music, BMI/Fugitive Songs Publishing, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Adam Yaron Music, BMI/Songs With A Pure Tone, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Music Of Big Family, BMI/In Honor Of Alice Publishing, BMI (M.McOwn, A.Yaron, Mags Duval) **52**

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

EMPTY WORDS Songs Of Combustion Five, BMI/ Corey Kent Music, BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/Lightning 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.Roy, J.Taylor, L.Vaughan) **25**

G

GET TO DRINKIN' Warner-Tamela 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) **10**

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) **40**

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.McSwain, 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 (G.Gilbert, B.Berryhill, M.W.Hardy, T.Philips) **37**

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/Philippians 4:7 Songs, BMI (J.B.DeFord, R.H.Block, J.A.Fox, M.W.Hardy, R.C.McGill) **16**

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 Beadum Publishing Designee, BMI/Evan Christian Mayo Publishing Designee, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI (Chase Matthew, E.Escue, A.Maxwell, Presley Aaron, E.C.Mayo, J.Center) **26**

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 Soperman Music Publishing, ASCAP (R.Montana, W.McCubbin, P.Sikes) **28**

HOWDY Justin Dukes Publishing Designee, NS/Davis Loose Publishing Designee, NS/Carson Peters Publishing Designee, NS/Ethan Phillips Publishing Designee, NS (J.Dukes, D.Loose, C.Peters, E.Philips) **54**

I

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) **35**

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) **39**

J

JADED Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Langley Publishing, BMI/Yellabush Music, BMI/Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Endurance Music Group, BMI/Em Dog Music, BMI/Big Loud Mountain LLC, BMI/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Demo Jail Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI (E.Langley, R.Wetzel, J.M.Schmidt, E.K.Smith) **15**

K

KID MYSELF Triple Play Music, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/T Tree Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Endurance Alpha, ASCAP/Total Schmidt Songs, ASCAP (J.Morgan, T.R.Hubbard, J.M.Schmidt) **5**

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.McCollum, R.Rogers, M.Criswell) **29**

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 Works, ASCAP/I Of 6, ASCAP/Endurance Music Group, ASCAP (T.R.Hubbard, Z.Aband, G.J.Egan, C.Smith) **38**

LET HIM IN ANYWAY Deemer Camp Publishing, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Relative Red Music, BMI/Bigger Bendable Music, BMI/Best Damn Music, BMI (M.W.Hardy, Z.Aband, K.S.Clark, C.Wallace) **23**

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.Musick, R.Tyndell, J.N.Spillman) **42**

LOVING LIFE AGAIN Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Langley Publishing, BMI/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) **6**

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/Philippians 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/Triple Rae Creative Inc, BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/Big Ass Pile Of Dimes Music, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Where I Started Music Publishing, ASCAP (M.Moroney, C.R.Harrington, J.J.Dillon, J.L.Alexander) **22**

MOVE ON Sony Songs LLC, BMI/Cabrera Music, BMI/EMPIRE Strikes First, BMI/Neairs Publishing, SESAC/EMPIRE San Francisco, SESAC/Kreshendo, ASCAP/Songs Of 78, BMI/Warner-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.Chibueze, S.Sanchez, D.R.Stevens, A.Cabrera, J.Torrey) **27**

N

NEVER COMIN' BACK ONE TOOTH PRODUCTIONS, BMI/Invoked Lamb Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Sony Lyric Music Publishing, GMR/CN Songs From 1508, GMR/Crawford Mercer Music, GMR (C.Cordera, L.Laird, A.Rettere) **30**

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/Samuel Tyler Johnson Publishing Designee, BMI (C.F.Jones, V.Mason, S.McAnally, J.J.Dillon, S.T.Johnson) **51**

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) **17**

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/Dtown Boogie Music, BMI/Songs Of Wild Gat Well Music, BMI/Native Notes Music, BMI/Thomas Hull Publishing Designee, PRS/Universal Music Publishing Ltd. (UK), PRS (L.Wilson, J.Decious, D.Pellarin, D.Wilson, T.Anderson, S.Oversstreet, T.E.Phill) **12**

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) **14**

S

SAY LA V Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/DanielW25 Songs, BMI/N Chapel Songs, ASCAP/Endurance Music Group, ASCAP/TriplesSongs, ASCAP (B.D.Warren, J.D.Sellers, L.Miller) **53**

SAY SO Beats And Banjos, ASCAP/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Shay Mooney Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Eleventh Wave Music, BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Cinq Trax, ASCAP/Lyridridge Music, ASCAP/Cascade Road Songs, ASCAP (D.Smyers, S.Mooney, D.H.Hodges, J.Robbins) **9**

SEARCHLIGHT Driven By Music, BMI/Echo Bravo Music LLC, BMI/BMG Platinum Songs US, BMI/Know Your Writies, ASCAP/Sony Tunes LLC, ASCAP (B.Smith, D.R.Bassett, E.Bass) **59**

SOMETHING TO LOSE Reservoir 416, BMI/Songs Of One Riot Music, BMI/Copyright Control (J.Decious, G.Enger, S.Lefty, C.D.Clark) **45**

SON OF JOLENE Not Listed (Not Listed) **49**

SOUTH OF SANITY Rio Bravo Music, Inc., BMI/Zach Top Music, BMI/Major Bob Productions, BMI/Too Broke To Quit Music, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Doan What I Do, BMI/Getysome Music, BMI (Z.Top, C.Chamberlain, R.Nesler) **13**

STRING BY Mack Geiger Publishing Designee, APRA (M.Geiger) **41**

T

TAKE ME BACK (LEAVE ME THERE) Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Red White And Sony Blue Songs, BMI/Songs In The Key Of Eh, BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/LuVegas Publishing, BMI/W.C.M. Music Corp., SESAC/King Pen Songs, SESAC/Smack Attack Music, SESAC/Sienna Dawn Songs, SESAC/Melodies Of CTM Outlander, SESAC (K.Archer, T.Cartwright, P.Good) **56**

TALKIN BOUT Edgehill Music Publishing LLC, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Mandy's Favorite Songs, BMI/Single Life Songs, BMI/Combuster Bluth, SESAC/LIKE BIG CUTS PUBLISHING, SESAC (P.C.Brust, C.Lucas, N.Kenyon, W.B.Bolinger) **58**

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/W.C.M. Music Corp., 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) **11**

W

WANNABE Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Good Cack 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.Adocek, J.R.Durrett, B.Clawson, E.K.Smith, M.C.Wallen) **36**

WATER AT A WEDDING Relative Red Music, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/Super Big Music, ASCAP/M Drag Songs, ASCAP/Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/Philippians 4:7 Songs, BMI/Songs For Knox, BMI (G.J.Egan, M.Dragstrem, R.C.McGill) **20**

WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG Speakers Go Boom Songs, BMI/Goat Island Bay Music, BMI/T Villi Music, BMI/Warner-Tamela Publishing Corp., BMI/Big Music Machine, BMI/I Finally Got Some Publishing, BMI/Songs By 10K HRS Publishing, BMI/Goat Island Palms, LLC, BMI/Smells Like Good Music, ASCAP/Reservoir Media Music, ASCAP (J.A.Hackworth, D.Ross, J.Fee, S.Jones) **32**

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.Phelips, A.G.Gorley) **31**

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.Welling, C.Brown) **21**

Y

THE YEARS ARE SHORT Not Listed (Not Listed) **60**

YOU'RE IT FOR ME, HONEY Bare Feet Publishing LLC, BMI/RobMadeIt's, 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) **57**

BILLBOARD IS THE ONLY PUBLISHER AUTHORIZED BY THE RECORDING ACADEMY® TO OFFER THIS EXCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITY.

2026 billboard GRAMMY® CONTENDERS ISSUE

GET IN FRONT
OF GRAMMY
VOTERS!

14,000+

RECORDING ACADEMY
VOTING MEMBERS WILL
RECEIVE THIS SPECIAL
DIGITAL AND PRINT ISSUE.

Get ready for Billboard's annual Grammy Contenders special digital and print issue showcasing the music and creators that made an impact during the eligibility period for the 69th Grammy Awards®.

This special digital and print feature will showcase the artists, songwriters, producers, engineers and additional creators whose work is in contention for

Record Of The Year • Song Of The Year • Album Of The Year •
Best New Artist • Songwriter Of The Year, Non-Classical •
Producer Of The Year, Non-Classical and more.

As Voting Members prepare to cast their First Round ballots, take advantage of your only opportunity to get directly in front of Grammy Voters and showcase your music!

INDEPENDENT CREATORS

Independent artists and labels receive special discounted ad rates. **Submit your inquiry today!**

ISSUE DATE 10/3

AD CLOSE 9/22

MATERIALS DUE 9/24

DIGITAL VERSION DELIVERED 10/9

PRINT ISSUE SHIPPED BY 10/12

CONTACTS

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

Southeast: Alex Parry | alex@stellasales.solutions

West Coast: Aki Kaneko | moishekaneko@gmail.com

Latin: Marcia Olival | marciaolival29@gmail.com

West/Midwest: Cynthia Mellow | cmellow615@gmail.com

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



GRAMMY
AWARDS®

25 Years Ago

Cyndi Thomson's 2001 Debut Single Was 'Meant' For No. 1

After her impressive debut, she walked away from the business for more than two decades

Tifton, Ga., native **Cyndi Thomson** experienced a series of firsts in 2001 thanks to “What I Really Meant To Say”: In May, she heard herself on the radio for the first time; in July, she released her first album, *My World*; in August, she sang “Meant To Say” in her Grand Ole Opry debut; and in September, she took the single to No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Hot Country Songs chart dated Sept. 22.

It all emanated from an awkward encounter Thomson had with an ex at a party

just a few weeks after a breakup. She smiled but never spoke to the guy, but when she turned that event into a song, she imagined having a conversation with him. Even in that scenario, she kept her feelings to herself, setting up the song's premise. Thomson penned "Meant To Say" with **Chris Waters** ("Better Things to Do," "You Really Had Me Going") and **Tommy Lee James** ("She's My Kind of Rain," "All the Pretty Girls"), who co-produced it with **Paul Worley** (**Lady A**, **The Chicks**).

Thomson shocked many in the music industry a year later when she walked away from her Capitol recording contract after just one album, saying she was unable to commit to the volume of work expected of a new artist. Thomson flirted with recording again a few years later, but never issued new music until this year. Thus far, she's released two songs and joined **Vince Gill** as a vocal partner and co-writer on "Eighteen Summers," the title track to his Aug. 4 EP.

—TOM ROLAND

Thomson performs on NBC's
*The Tonight Show with Jay
Leno* on Oct. 1, 2001.

REWINDING THE COUNTRY CHARTS

SONGWRITER				SONG LABEL		
NUMBER 1				1 Week at Number 1		
1	3	4	26	WHAT I REALLY MEANT TO SAY P. Winkey, T. James (C. Thompson, C. Winkey, T. James)	Cyndi Thomson Capitol 5687	1
2	1	2	18	I'M JUST TALKIN' ABOUT TONIGHT J. Stroud, J. Keith (J. Keith, S. Emmons)	Toby Keith DreamWorks ALBUM CUT	1
3	2	1	22	AUSTIN B. Blackstock (D. Karkis, Manna)	Blake Shelton Capitol 5697/6974	1
4	7	9	13	WHERE I COME FROM K. Singal (A. Jackson)	Alan Jackson Arista Nashville ALBUM CUT	4
5	6	6	25	I WOULD'VE LOVED YOU ANYWAY M. Wright, T. Yearwood (M. Danna, T. Vengas)	Trisha Yearwood MCA Nashville 17251	5
6	5	5	14	ONLY IN AMERICA	Brooks & Dunn	5