

billboard Country Update

BILLBOARD COUNTRY UPDATE

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Now That Country Has Gone Digital, So Has The Corner Office At Some Country Labels

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When **Annie Ortmeier** was appointed co-president at Triple Tigers in September, one of the programs she undertook was retooling **Scotty McCreery's** online presence.

One person, rather than an independent firm, was devoted to the singer's social media, and in the first six months, his email list doubled in size alongside growth in his streaming and his online followers. When McCreery received the trophy for CMT digital-first performance prior to the CMT Music Awards on April 7, it marked his first win at that ceremony in 12 years, and Ortmeier took it as a sign that their revised marketing efforts are working.

"We made voting a part of our social media strategies since the nominations came out," she says. "I can't help but think that had a lot to do with him winning that award."

Ortmeier and Warner Music Nashville co-president/co-chair **Ben Kline** are the first two country label heads whose paths to leadership included working full time in digital marketing. Ortmeier's journey started in 2004 at CMT.com, where she ventured into ecommerce for CMT, VH1, VH1 Classic and Comedy Central. She segued into digital marketing for Universal Music Group Nashville.

Kline started more traditionally in the 1990s with the pop divisions of PolyGram and Island before joining UMG in 1997, staying in Nashville for a dozen years. By the end of that run, new media had become part of his job title. He left to work for three years at InGrooves, a company focused strictly on distributing

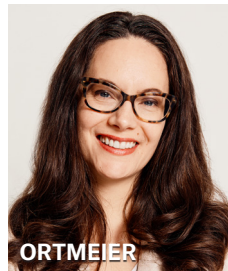
and marketing music online. It was a key piece of his development as a 21st-century music executive prior to his 2014 return to Nashville with WMN.

"Every decision we made [at InGrooves] was viewed through the digital lens, and we were raising money and going through a couple rounds of funding, and the conversations all were digital: 'What's the future? What's next? What are the growth patterns?'" he recalls. "It was a digital-driven business, and you had to understand the ins and outs of how to speak to consumers and speak to partners in that space."

Both Kline and Ortmeier first devoted their efforts to digital music and promotion full time in an era when CDs and airplay were still the primary vehicles for the country genre. Their early commitment to then-new platforms uniquely positioned them to take label reins once the industry's drivers flipped.

"I was working in streaming when it was 15% of the business," Ortmeier recalls of her earlier UMG work. In more recent years, "it was 85% of the business. So it completely inverted."

Label leadership has changed dramatically in Nashville. In the earliest years of the business, record company heads — including **Chet Atkins** at RCA, **Owen Bradley** at Decca and **Ken Nelson** at Capitol — tended to be producers. It made sense; labels earned their money by selling singles and albums that were exposed through radio, and producers generally had a handle on the sounds that worked on-air. But as the industry increasingly



ORTMEIER



KLINE

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relied on the sales of more expensive albums, record companies more frequently gave the top position to promotion and marketing execs, including **Joe Galante** at RCA, **Bruce Hinton** at MCA and **Rick Blackburn** at CBS.

Now that artists and labels reach listeners through virtual platforms, the industry’s central companies are turning to people who were on the front lines as those new avenues emerged, providing more data than was ever available before. Understanding that information is key to every modern marketing plan. But knowing when to apply humanity to the numbers is just as important.

“Data can make smart people look dumb or make dumb decisions,” Kline reasons. “Analytics and data help inform, but it can’t be how your decisions are all based. Gut and instinct and knowledge and past experience — they all have to play a role.”

One of the key lessons of past experience, however, is that the past may not be much of a predictor for how to reach fans in the future. **Taylor Swift** famously built some of her earliest fan base on Myspace, which is now a quaint relic with outdated accounts. **Luke Combs** came to prominence by introducing his music on Vine, which was shut down in 2017.

“Whatever is working today, enjoy it today, because it may not work tomorrow with the digital world,” Kline says.

That same digital environment has radically changed the way that labels and artists find one another. In another era, artists’ consumer marketing started primarily after they signed a recording deal and started releasing music. Now the artist already has a fan base before labels will even consider a signing, and the act is usually savvier about how to interact with that audience. Thus, meetings with an artist in 2024 are different than they would have been in, say, 1994.

“They’re creating fans, they’re talking to them, they’re sharing music, they’re getting their music heard,” says Kline. “Think about the stories that artists bring by the time they go sign deals versus what it was 30 years ago. I mean, it’s unbelievable, so the conversation has to change.”

Similarly, that overall country audience is different. Streaming platforms make more artists and more genres available, so even core country listeners are likely to ingest a wider range of music. Similarly, the genre is accessible to a much larger slice of the population. Thus, the current **Beyoncé** moment is possible, in part, because of streaming. *Cowboy Carter* is connecting because she was able to harness her established audience in addition to appealing directly to country fans. Had she attempted to cross over in ’94, her primary options of exposure would have been late-night TV appearances, prominent in-store placement and whatever radio play she could muster. PDs who were protective of country’s identity would have felt reluctant to give a playlist slot to a pop singer who was likely to stick around for only one album.

“It does open up a consumer who never thought they were a country fan, much like **Garth Brooks** did 30-plus years ago,” Ortmeier suggests.

The shift to digital marketing and distribution in country directly aided the rise of Kline and Ortmeier to label leadership. Streaming is here to stay, so it’s a good bet that these two execs are setting what could be a long-term precedent.

“I do think,” predicts Ortmeier, “that there will be others behind us.” ●



HunterGirl (center) visited with the hosts of Audacy’s syndicated *Rob and Holly*, Rob Stone and Holly Hutton, when she performed April 5 at the Tortuga Music Festival in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.



Corey Kent was among four acts who performed April 9 at the Meyer Theatre in Green Bay, Wis., for the WNCY St. Jude Jam. With him are afternoon host Hannah Damas (left) and morning personality Charli McKenzie.



Eclipse Music Group acquired Dean Dillon’s share of “Tennessee Whiskey,” recorded by George Jones and Chris Stapleton. From left: Eclipse creative coordinator Anna Thiel and partner Kurt Locher, Dillon and Eclipse partner Penny Gattis.

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ON THE CHARTS **JIM ASKER** jim.asker@billboard.com

Morgan Wallen, Eric Church 'Bar' Hop To No. 1 On Country Airplay Chart

Morgan Wallen's "Man Made a Bar" (Mercury/Republic/Big Loud), featuring Eric Church, ascends 2-1 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart (dated April 20). The single gained by 14% to 31.1 million impressions April 5-11, according to Luminate.

Rocky Block, Jordan Dozzi, Larry Fleet and Brett Tyler co-wrote and Joey Moi produced the track from Wallen's 36-song album *One Thing at a Time*. The set has dominated Top Country Albums for 45 frames and the all-genre *Billboard* 200 for 19—the most ever for a country title—since its March 2023 release.

Wallen tallies his 12th Country Airplay leader. It's his fifth No. 1 on the chart from *One Thing at a Time*, following "Thinkin' Bout Me," which ruled for five frames beginning in October 2023; "Last Night" (eight, starting in May 2023); and two singles released before the album, "Thought You Should Know" (three, beginning in February 2023) and "You Proof" (a record 10, starting in October 2022). The set has also spun off top 10s in the title track (No. 8, May 2023) and "Everything I Love" (No. 3, December). He last led Country Airplay as featured on Thomas Rhett's "Mamaw's House" for one week in March.

Meanwhile, Church earns his 11th leader. He tops Country Airplay for the first time since May 2021, when "Hell of a View" led for one week.



CAMERON BAIRD, PRESS 2024

MOST INCREASED AUDIENCE

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN (IN MILLIONS)
LOVE YOU, MISS YOU, MEAN IT Row Crop/Capitol Nashville	Luke Bryan	+4.752
MAN MADE A BAR Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Eric Church	+3.769
WHERE IT ENDS Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	+2.313
OUTSKIRTS MCA Nashville	Sam Hunt	+1.917
HALFWAY TO HELL Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+1.700
LET YOUR BOYS BE COUNTRY Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	+1.371
WE RIDE Average Joes	Bryan Martin	+1.358
CAB IN A SOLO Triple Tigers	Scotty McCreery	+1.323
TUCSON TOO LATE MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+1.308
DIRT CHEAP CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	+1.301

MOST INCREASED PLAYS

TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	GAIN
LOVE YOU, MISS YOU, MEAN IT Row Crop/Capitol Nashville	Luke Bryan	+1123
MAN MADE A BAR Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring Eric Church	+1021
WHERE IT ENDS Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	+570
OUTSKIRTS MCA Nashville	Sam Hunt	+534
WE RIDE Average Joes	Bryan Martin	+441
TUCSON TOO LATE MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	+434
HALFWAY TO HELL Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	+387
BACK THEN RIGHT NOW Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	+383
BULLETPROOF RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	+340
YOUNG LOVE & SATURDAY NIGHTS RCA Nashville	Chris Young	+325

RECURRENTS

THIS WEEK	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	TOTAL AUD. (IN MILLIONS)
1	TRUCK BED Big Loud	HARDY	20.267
2	FAST CAR River House/Columbia Nashville	Luke Combs	17.430
3	THINKIN' BOUT ME Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	16.436
4	SAVE ME Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll With Lainey Wilson	15.464
5	MAMAW'S HOUSE Valory Thomas Rhett Featuring Morgan Wallen	Morgan Wallen	14.442
6	LAST NIGHT Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen	13.566
7	23 19/BMG/Wheelhouse	Chayce Beckham	10.182
8	NEED A FAVOR Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	9.628
9	DANCIN' IN THE COUNTRY Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	9.408
10	SHE HAD ME AT HEADS CAROLINA Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cole Swindell	8.630



TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO REPORT

WEEK ENDING APRIL 11, 2024

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	11	MISS THANG (Deep Frey'd Music) ★★ 1 Week at 1 ★★	Kylie Frey	1510	57	11	12	13	ALL THE ANGELENOS (Boo Clap/Thirty Tigers)	Uncle Lucius	968	61
2	3	13	WAY IT GOES (Independent)	Mike Ryan	1410	68	12	6	25	THE GREYS BETWEEN (Independent)	Shane Smith & The Saints	954	-185
3	5	22	PROMISE YOU ME (Independent)	Grant Gilbert	1245	-11	13	4	13	I WON'T GIVE UP (Independent)	Randy Rogers Band	941	-345
4	8	17	RIGHT NOW KINDA GIRL (Get Joe)	Billie Jo Jones	1134	37	14	18	16	HELLO TEXAS (Flying C)	Brooke Graham	890	80
5	9	20	TEQUILA & JESUS (Independent)	Amanda Kate Ferris	1097	89	15	16	12	NEON (Independent)	Mikayla Lane	870	38
6	1	14	ELLE (Underground Sound)	Cody Canada & The Departed	1084	-404	16	17	10	\$10 COWBOY (Son of Davy/Thirty Tigers)	Charley Crockett	862	46
7	7	18	SOMEBODY'S BABY (Independent)	Jon Stork	1073	-41	17	15	23	TINY TOWN (Independent)	Howard County	855	5
8	14	6	RUNNING OUT OF TIME (Almost Country) Casey Donahew ft. Pat Green, Randy Rogers & Wade Bowen		1053	182	18	20	11	SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING (Independent)	James Robert Webb	836	47
9	10	20	HE SINGS FOR MARY (Independent)	Hayden Haddock	1035	31	19	22	13	8 SECONDS AT A TIME (Independent)	Ryder Grimes	813	75
10	13	10	MILWAUKEE (Island/DJMG)	Wyatt Flores	985	82	20	21	7	THE RESCUE (Independent)	Bri Bagwell	813	40

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 2024, Texas Regional Radio Report

billboard Country Airplay

AIRPLAY
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THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS ON CHART	TITLE Imprint/Label	Artist	AUDIENCE (IN MILLIONS)		PLAYS		
					THIS WEEK	+/-	THIS WEEK	+/-	RANK
1	2	24	MAN MADE A BAR Mercury/Republic/Big Loud ★★ No. 1 (1 Week) ★★	Morgan Wallen Featuring Eric Church	31.067	+3.769	8198	1021	1
2	3	38	OUTSKIRTS MCA Nashville	Sam Hunt	28.878	+1.917	7682	534	2
3	1	45	BURN IT DOWN MCA Nashville	Parker McCollum	23.980	-3.535	6502	-866	3
4	4	44	WORLD ON FIRE RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	22.943	-1.323	5100	-333	10
5	7	31	BACK THEN RIGHT NOW Hubbard House/EMI Nashville	Tyler Hubbard	22.566	+1.137	6266	383	4
6	8	34	TUCSON TOO LATE MCA Nashville	Jordan Davis	22.427	+1.308	6033	434	5
7	9	34	CAB IN A SOLO Triple Tigers	Scotty McCreery	21.693	+1.323	5696	262	6
8	6	40	PRETTY LITTLE POISON 717/Warner/WEA	Warren Zeiders	21.517	-0.302	5127	-72	9
9	13	28	WHERE IT ENDS Elektra/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Bailey Zimmerman	19.519	+2.313	5401	570	7
10	11	22	WILDFLOWERS AND WILD HORSES Broken Bow	Lainey Wilson	18.349	-0.146	5334	-91	8
11	12	22	TAKE HER HOME Blue Chair/Warner Music Nashville/WEA	Kenny Chesney	18.149	+0.454	4919	227	11
12	15	13	HALFWAY TO HELL Bailee & Buddy/Broken Bow/BMG/Stoney Creek	Jelly Roll	16.212	+1.700	4276	387	12
13	14	63	FEARLESS (THE ECHO) Big Machine	Jackson Dean	14.703	+0.157	4111	-4	14
14	16	17	YOUR PLACE Back Blocks/Big Loud	Ashley Cooke	14.437	+0.366	4140	12	13
15	17	43	WE DON'T FIGHT ANYMORE Big Machine	Carly Pearce Featuring Chris Stapleton	12.791	+0.278	3796	-2	15
16	18	20	LET YOUR BOYS BE COUNTRY Macon/Broken Bow	Jason Aldean	12.713	+1.371	3395	233	16
17	19	28	WE RIDE Average Joes ★★ Airpower ★★	Bryan Martin	10.957	+1.358	3174	441	17
18	21	45	OUT OF THAT TRUCK Capitol Nashville	Carrie Underwood	9.203	-0.008	2705	-63	20
19	23	31	YOUNG LOVE & SATURDAY NIGHTS RCA Nashville	Chris Young	9.034	+1.157	2667	325	21
20	20	36	I'M NOT PRETTY Megan Moroney/Columbia/Arista Nashville	Megan Moroney	9.032	-0.187	2803	-11	18
21	22	29	CAN'T BREAK UP NOW Columbia Nashville	Old Dominion & Megan Moroney	8.724	+0.279	2722	-10	19
22	24	9	BULLETPROOF RCA Nashville	Nate Smith	8.114	+1.170	2393	340	23
23	25	46	LOVE YOU AGAIN Chase Matthew/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Chase Matthew	7.819	+0.881	2457	134	22
24	26	13	DIRT CHEAP CoJo/Warner Music Nashville/WMN	Cody Johnson	6.154	+1.301	1503	269	32
25	28	18	CHEVROLET Broken Bow	Dustin Lynch Featuring Jelly Roll	4.946	+0.627	1739	200	26
26	27	26	COWBOYS AND PLOWBOYS Capitol Nashville	Jon Pardi & Luke Bryan	4.847	+0.372	1742	78	25
27	NEW		LOVE YOU, MISS YOU, MEAN IT Row Crop/Capitol Nashville ★★ Hot Shot Debut/Breaker/Most Increased Audience ★★	Luke Bryan	4.755	+4.752	1124	1123	38
28	29	23	RODEO MAN Pearl/Big Machine	Garth Brooks & Ronnie Dunn	4.474	+0.226	1866	68	24
29	30	34	DANCE WITH YOU Nashville Harbor	Brett Young	4.340	+0.181	1547	106	29
30	33	12	ONE BAD HABIT McGraw/Big Machine	Tim McGraw	4.297	+0.568	1694	135	27

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 © 2024, 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. A song will also receive a bullet if its percentage loss in audience does not exceed the percentage of monitored station downtime for the format. 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-bullethead) 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	32	23	GONNA LOVE YOU Stoney Creek	Parmalee	4.051	+0.105	1542	35	30
32	36	24	SHE'S SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER (REIMAGINED) Patoka Sounds/Lyric Ridge	Drew Baldridge	3.959	+0.692	1410	138	34
33	35	22	THIS IS MY DIRT Valory	Justin Moore	3.934	+0.464	1509	166	31
34	31	6	MESSED UP AS ME Hit Red/Capitol Nashville	Keith Urban	3.905	-0.098	1360	90	35
35	34	40	DRINKIN' PROBLEMS Riser House	Dillon Carmichael	3.601	-0.047	1640	-32	28
36	38	10	BIGGER HOUSES Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Dan + Shay	3.074	-0.047	1193	22	36
37	37	9	TEXAS HOLD 'EM Parkwood/Columbia/Columbia Nashville	Beyonce	2.989	-0.194	1484	-28	33
38	39	14	SOUNDS LIKE THE RADIO Leo33	Zach Top	2.982	+0.002	1156	74	37
39	45	3	AUSTIN VERSION III/Warner	Dasha	2.686	+1.084	751	259	47
40	40	7	AMERICAN GIRL Tom Petty Legacy/Capitol Nashville/Valory	Dierks Bentley	2.664	-0.083	902	0	41
41	42	6	COWBOY SONGS RECORDS Nashville	George Birge	2.350	+0.279	856	84	42
42	41	24	FIND ANOTHER BAR Voyager/Red Street	Chris Lane	2.060	-0.028	978	50	39
43	43	14	BOYS BACK HOME PIA/Curb/Columbia Nashville	Dylan Marlowe & Dylan Scott	1.937	-0.014	822	54	43
44	51	5	THIS TOWN'S BEEN TOO GOOD TO US Curb	Dylan Scott	1.756	+0.381	659	111	49
45	44	29	IN YOUR LOVE Hickman Holler/RCA	Tyler Childers	1.644	-0.028	939	46	40
46	47	5	WHATCHA SEE IS WHATCHA GET Nashville Harbor	Chris Janson	1.611	+0.135	795	91	45
47	52	13	BREAKIN' IN BOOTS RECORDS/Columbia/RECORDS Nashville	Matt Stell	1.574	+0.239	812	104	44
48	54	20	LOVE YOU BACK Nashville Harbor	Lady A	1.415	+0.209	758	21	46
49	48	4	DAMN GOOD DAY TO LEAVE Nashville Harbor	Riley Green	1.284	-0.163	558	-10	51
50	50	8	I THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU Sound/Mercury Nashville	Chris Stapleton	1.279	-0.100	547	-9	53
51	49	26	I'M IN LOVE Songs & Daughters/Pigasus/Big Loud	Hailey Whitters	1.254	-0.127	620	18	50
52	53	10	ITRIED A RING ON Monument	Tigirlily Gold	1.209	-0.057	714	1	48
53	55	3	TIE UP Home Grown/Warner Music Nashville/WAR	Zac Brown Band	1.203	+0.074	508	65	54
54	NEW		COWGIRLS Mercury/Republic/Big Loud	Morgan Wallen Featuring ERNEST	1.034	+0.652	249	137	-
55	57	2	LIFE WITH YOU Curb	Kelsey Hart	1.017	+0.093	553	60	52
56	58	7	LAST RODEO 1021/RCA Nashville	Restless Road	0.825	-0.087	418	-15	57
57	RE-ENTRY		SINGLE AGAIN The Core/Universal Music Canada/Mercury Nashville	Josh Ross	0.822	+0.191	452	60	56
58	RE-ENTRY		KING OF COUNTRY MUSIC Red Street	Ryan Larkins	0.800	+0.118	393	15	58
59	59	3	CALLED CRAZY Interscope/MCA Nashville	Kassi Ashton	0.728	-0.159	187	-5	-
60	RE-ENTRY		AIN'T ABOUT YOU 19/Wheelhouse	HunterGirl	0.727	-0.069	482	-74	55



Anne Wilson (center) brought donuts branded in honor of her album *Rebel* when she visited April 5 with WKIS Miami assistant PD/music director Tim Conlon and morning personality Dina Bonanni at the Tortuga Music Festival in Fort Lauderdale.



LANCO bassist Chandler Baldwin signed a songwriting deal with Riser House Publishing. Standing, from left: Union Entertainment Group owner Bryan Coleman and Riser House director of A&R + publishing Kirby Smith and A&R/publishing coordinator Allison Pilotti. Seated are Riser House senior vp of A&R + publishing Brandon Perdew (left) and Baldwin.

SHANNON BRADLEY



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Crystal Gayle (center) performed “Sentimental Journey” and “Don’t It Make My Brown Eyes Blue” on April 6 as Nashville’s Sinatra Bar & Lounge celebrated its first anniversary. She’s joined by Icon Entertainment Group co-founder Bill Miller and Frank Sinatra Enterprises board member Tina Sinatra.

ELVIS ACT SEEDS AI BATTLE

“God bless Tennessee.”

RIAA chairman/CEO **Mitch Glazier** gave props to the state’s legislature during an April 3 panel on legal issues at Nashville’s Hutton Hotel amid a multiday songwriter celebration, Tin Pan South. Earlier this year, lawmakers had unanimously passed the Ensuring Likeness Voice and Image Security (ELVIS) Act, a piece of legislation that music executives view as a backstop to protect creators from having their livelihoods damaged by artificial intelligence.

The act recognizes ethereal parts of a creator’s personality, such as a singer’s tone of voice or the thought process a songwriter uses to generate a double entendre. It places legal guardrails on the ways in which AI can absorb public works and regurgitate the creativity behind them, making it harder for artificial entities to use an original artist’s innate qualities while competing against them.

Tennessee was targeted, Glazier said, as a piece of a bigger puzzle. The ELVIS Act gives the attorneys for the creative class a tool to move toward larger federal legislation, establishing the music industry’s stake in a much larger conversation about AI ownership and regulation.

“National security is a really big issue,” said National Music Publishers’ Association executive vp/general counsel **Danielle Aguirre**. “China is a really big issue. So even in the AI space, they’re trying to do something on a much bigger scale than our industry.”

The goal, Aguirre noted, is to have a voice in setting transparency and record-keeping guidelines that force the companies behind AI to document their sources, allowing creators to sue for abuses.

The ELVIS Act, said Glazier, is a “very broad law with really big penalties,” and the fear of lawsuits under that legislation has made AI firms more receptive to setting a national standard. Thus, the act is a steppingstone to protect Nashville’s songwriting community — which has already taken multiple hits during the digital era — and other creative groups, establishing an extra buffer to ensure their survival.

“Our goal has never been to sue companies,” Nashville Songwriters Association International executive director **Bart Herbison** said. “It’s been to have a thriving ecosystem where creators get paid fairly.”

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BBR Music Group/BMG Nashville hired marketing coordinator/executive assistant **Callie Babin**. She was previously a Warner Music Nashville brand partnerships intern. Reach Babin [here](#) ... Artist-writer **Noah Hicks** signed a recording contract with Nashville Harbor through a joint venture with Red Creative Records ... *American Idol* alum **Britnee Kellogg** signed with ONErpm and released her first track in the arrangement, “Hell in a Handbag,” on April 12 ... **WWWF** Farmingdale, N.Y., named **Alexa Neo** as midday personality, its first on-air talent revealed since the station flipped to country on March 20. The Long Island native is a former host at Nassau Community College outlet **WHPC**. **WWWF** is expected to announce other on-air talent in the coming weeks, but continues to search for an afternoon-drive personality. Interested applicants can send a résumé and demo to PD **Patrick Shea** [here](#) ... **WKDQ** Evansville, Ind.,

hired **Jake Foster** to work the afternoon shift. He was previously a morning talent for Western Kentucky University’s WKU Public Radio in Bowling Green ... **WMLL** Manchester, N.H., added morning co-host **Tommy Jordan**, **RadioInk.com** reported. He previously worked weekends and fill-in for adult contemporary **WBEB** Philadelphia ... **Bryan “B-Dub” Washington** moves into afternoons at **KPNW** Seattle, according to **RadioInsight.com**. His syndicated show, *B-Dub Radio* (distributed by Skyview Networks), will air on Saturday nights ... **WOKO** Burlington, Vt., raised more than \$350,000 for Vermont Children’s Hospital with its 19th annual Big Change Round Up for Kids radiothon April 1-5.

‘ROUND THE ROW

SESAC Music Group expanded its music services division with **Andy Bodkin** joining as president of international for the division. Bodkin was previously group CEO for the Out of the Ark publishing company. **Rose Cook** was also promoted to music services division COO from SESAC co-head of licensing, and **Monica Hertz** was elevated to senior director of operations from associate director ... The Recording Academy promoted **Adam Roth** to executive vp of global partnerships and business development from senior vp ... **Elizabeth Dewey** started April 1 as International Bluegrass Music Association administrative manager. She was previously general administrative assistant/traffic coordinator for Christian radio show *Keep the Faith!* ... Songwriter **Ben Stennis** (“’Til You Can’t,” “Holy Smokes”) extended his contract with Young Guns Publishing ... **Elvie Shane** joined the artist roster at WME ... Texas artist **Bri Bagwell** enlisted New Frontier Touring for representation. **Alex Fang** is her responsible agent ... **Payton Smith** signed a management contract with The Familie and released a new EP, *Up From Here*, on April 5 ... **Luke Combs** earned eight nominations to lead finalists in the Academy of Country Music Awards when the ballot was unveiled April 9. Other top candidates include six-time nominees **Megan Moroney** and **Morgan Wallen**, and five-time nominees **Cody Johnson**, **Chris Stapleton** and **Lainey Wilson**. Go [here](#) for the full nominations list ... CMT and mtheory named six candidates for its third edition of the Equal Access Development Program, welcoming artists **Carmen Dianne**, **Chris Housman** and **Julie Williams**, plus management professionals **Becky Parsons**, **Brittney Boston** and **Justin Tomlinson** ... **Lily Rose** will make her Grand Ole Opry debut on May 11 ... Amazon Music launched a new “bonfire” playlist on April 12, blending country and Americana acts. The company teed it up with an Amazon Music Original cover of **Gordon Lightfoot**’s “Sundown” by **Charles Wesley Godwin** ... **Kenny Chesney**’s Blue Chair Bay launched a new flavor, lime rum, with an April 12 event in Navarre, Fla. ... The Country Music Association is accepting nominations from members in seven categories for its industry honors — including the CMA Foundation humanitarian award and the CMA touring lifetime achievement award — through July 14. Go [here](#) to submit candidates ... *American Songwriter* and PlayMPE selected 11 first-place winners in the 2023 Song Contest. The first-place country title was “Comeback Kid,” penned by **Joey Hendricks**, **Andy Albert** and **Zach Abend** ... Songwriter **Jerry Abbott** died April 2 in Denton, Texas, **Blabbermouth.net** reported. He authored **Buck Owens**’ 1979 collaboration with **Emmylou Harris**, “Play Together Again Again,” which peaked at No. 11 on Hot Country Songs. Abbott also produced the first two albums by heavy metal band **Pantera**, whose lineup included Abbott’s sons, “Dimebag” **Darrell Abbott** and **Vinnie Paul Abbott**, who died in 2004 and 2018, respectively. ●



During the CMT Music Awards, which were held April 7 in Austin, **Ashley Cooke** (right) accepted the breakthrough female video of the year honor from last year’s winner, **Carly Pearce**. Meanwhile, **Jelly Roll** snagged three trophies as the biggest winner of the night.

GETTY IMAGES

MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY IMAGES

billboard



2024

COUNTRY POWER PLAYERS

Billboard's eleventh annual Country Power Players issue will profile the people who have driven another solid year for country music in sales, streaming and publishing. This special feature will highlight those who have had the greatest impact in the genre, including recorded music, live entertainment, publishing and more in the past year.

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

BONUS DISTRIBUTION

**Billboard Country Power Players
Cocktail Party & Awards
May 14th at Gilleys in Dallas**

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

ISSUE DATE 5/11 | AD CLOSE 4/30 | MATERIALS DUE 5/2

billboard Country Airplay Index

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

A

AIN'T ABOUT YOU BMG Gold Songs, ASCAP/19
Tunes, ASCAP/Huntergirlmusic, BMI (T.H.Wolkonowski) **60**

AMERICAN GIRL Almo Music Corp., ASCAP/Tarka
Music, ASCAP (T.E.Petty) **40**

AUSTIN ROSCAP Publishing, ASCAP/Travis
Heideman Music, BMI/Dash, BMI/Adam Wendler
Publishing Designee, GENA (A.D.Novotny, K.T.Heideman,
A.Wendler, C.R.Amspiger) **39**

B

BACK THEN RIGHT NOW T Tree Music, BMI/
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/Big Music
Machine, BMI/Big Ass Pile Of Dimes Music, BMI/Works
by Range Music Partners, BMI/Waronger Publishing,
BMI/Songs Of Spirit III Nashville, ASCAP/Spirit Vault
Songs, ASCAP/Ever Songs, ASCAP (T.R.Hubbard, J.J.Dillon,
G.Warburton, D.A.Garcia) **5**

BIGGER HOUSES Beats And Banjos, ASCAP/WC
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Is The Deepest Inc, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing
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BOYS BACK HOME Warner-Tamerlane Publishing
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BULLETPROOF Sony Cross Keys Publishing,
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II, ASCAP/Ben There Wrote That Publishing, BMI/Songs
Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc., BMI/Artist
101 Publishing Group, BMI/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/
Tape Room Hits, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Nontypical
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ASCAP/410 Music, ASCAP/Concord Copyrights, BMI/
BMCMD Songs, BMI/Creative Pulse Music, BMI/Songs
From The Sendero Music, BMI (P.M.Collum, H.Lindsey,
L.McKenna, L.Rose) **3**

C

CAB IN A SOLO Songs Of Universal, Inc., BMI/
Daqum Music, BMI/Songs Of Spirit II Nashville, ASCAP/
Fluid Tunes, ASCAP/Beats By Baby Brent, ASCAP/Spirit
Nashville Two Crescendo, ASCAP/Spirit Vault Songs,
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CALLED CRAZY Wolf Shirt Publishing, BMI/
Creative Pulse Music, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/
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Publishing, BMI/Concord Copyrights, BMI/Jozer The
Musical, BMI/Weistrobe Publishing, ASCAP/Sony Cross
Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Tevor's Advocate Publishing,
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T.Brown, E.L.Weisband) **21**

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Farm Songs, BMI/WC Music Corp., ASCAP/Where I
Started Music Publishing, ASCAP/Who Wants To Buy My
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D

DAMN GOOD DAY TO LEAVE Warner-
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Boy Music, BMI/Hits Songs Of 50 Egg Music, BMI/
Wildhawk Publishing, BMI/Spirit Nashville Two
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DANCE WITH YOU Super Big Music, ASCAP/
Calville Publishing, ASCAP/Here Comes The Boom
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FIND ANOTHER BAR Big Big Plans Publishing,
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G

GONNA LOVE YOU Sony Countrywide, BMI/Songs
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I

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M.Carpenter) **20**

IN YOUR LOVE Hickman Holler Songs, BMI/
Hares And Haints Publishing, BMI/Warner-Tamerlane
Publishing Corp., BMI (T.Chidlers, G.A.Seale, Jr.) **45**

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Stapleton) **50**

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BMI/Songs Of Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc.,
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SESAC/Smack Blue, LLC, SESAC/Kobalt Group Publishing,
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Tunes, SESAC/Songs Of Portered Music, SESAC/Allison
Veltz Sensations, SESAC/Peermusic III, Ltd., BMI/Sounds
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Big Ass Pile Of Dimes Music, BMI/Warner Geo Met Ric
Music, GMR/Tempo Investments, GMR/Smackstreet
Music, GMR/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., BMI/
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P

PRETTY LITTLE POISON Warner-Tamerlane
Publishing Corp., BMI/PA Cowboy Music, BMI/Twelve6
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TAKE HER HOME Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/
Relative Music Group, BMI/Redneck Music, BMI/Bigger
Bendable Music, BMI/Nontypical Music, ASCAP/Who
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Z.Aden) **11**

TEXAS HOLD 'EM Sony Tunes, ASCAP/Oakland
B Music, ASCAP/Artist Publishing Group West,
ASCAP/Kobalt Songs Music Publishing LLC, ASCAP/
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SOCAN/Heart And Art Music, SOCAN/Ujome Music,
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Countrywide, ASCAP/Spirit Music Group, ASCAP/
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M.Jenkins) **6**

W

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Music, ASCAP/Poppy's Picks, ASCAP/Warner-Tamerlane
Publishing Corp., BMI/TDP Publishing, BMI/Hits From The
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Y

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Music Publishing UK Ltd., PRS/BMG Rights Management
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BMI/Telemetry Rhythm House Music, BMI/Sony Cross
Keys Publishing, ASCAP/Michael Scott Paper Company
Publishing Company, ASCAP/Sony Tree Publishing, BMI/
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2024

I N T E R N A T I O N A L P O W E R P L A Y E R S

On April 27th, *Billboard* will publish its annual International Power Players list. This issue will profile the leaders in the global music industry including the label executives, live entertainment execs, managers, talent agents and lawyers, and recognize their achievements. Advertise and congratulate this year's International Power Players to

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ISSUE DATE 4/27 | AD CLOSE 4/16 | MATERIALS DUE 4/18

C
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45 Years Ago Barbara Mandrell's 'Wrong' Was 'Right' For No. 1

In 1979, the star banked her second of six Hot Country Songs leaders

On April 14, 1979, **Barbara Mandrell's** "(If Loving You Is Wrong) I Don't Want To Be Right" topped *Billboard's* Hot Country Songs chart, becoming the second of her six career No. 1s. Penned by **Homer Banks, Carl Hampton** and **Raymond Jackson**, the song has been recorded by artists including **Luther Ingram**, whose rendition hit No. 3 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 1972.

Mandrell was born on Christmas Day in 1945 and became skilled on multiple instruments as a teen. She signed with Columbia Records in 1969. Along with her younger sisters, **Irlene** and **Louise**, Mandrell hosted the popular NBC variety series *Barbara Mandrell & The Mandrell Sisters* in 1980-82.

Mandrell, who joined the Grand Ole

Opry in 1972, won the Country Music Association's entertainer of the year trophy in 1980 and 1981. She was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2009 and the Musicians Hall of Fame in 2014. After retiring from touring and recording in 1997, she returned to the Opry stage for her 50th-anniversary celebration in July 2022.

—JIM ASKER

Barbara Mandrell, circa 1981.

REWINDING
THE
COUNTRY
CHARTS



This	Last	W o n	TITLE—Artist (Writer), Label & Number (Dist. Label) (Publisher, Licensee)
1	3	9	(If Loving You Is Wrong) I DON'T WANT TO BE RIGHT — Barbara Mandrell (H. Banks, R. Jackson, C. Hampton), MCA 12451 (East Memphis/Klondike, BMI)
★2	4	9	ALL I EVER NEED IS YOU — Kenny Rogers & Dottie West (J. Holiday, E. Reeves), United Artists 1276 (United Artists/Racer, ASCAP)
★3	6	8	WHERE DO I PUT HER MEMORY — Charley Pride (J. Weatherly), RCA 11477 (Keca, ASCAP)
★4	5	10	SWEET MEMORIES — Willie Nelson (M. Newbury), RCA 11465 (Acuff/Rose, BMI)
★5	8	7	BACKSIDE OF THIRTY — John Conlee (J. Conlee), MCA 12455 (House Of Gold/Pommard, BMI)