LEWIS CAPALDI

DIVINELY UNINSPIRED TO A HELLISH EXTENT

THE DEBUT ALBUM

OUT NOW

THE FASTEST SELLING UK ALBUM OF 2019

90K ALBUMS SOLD FIRST WEEK

“SOMEONE YOU LOVED”

#1 UK SINGLE FOR 7 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS • 400M+ GLOBAL STREAMS

U.S. SUMMER TOUR + UK & IRELAND ARENA TOUR SOLD OUT

1 BILLION STREAMS ACROSS ALL PLATFORMS
WORKING MAN ON THE RAGGING RAIL AGAINST AUTHORITY ON RIFF AFTER RIFF EVER THE RABBLE-GOOBER MELLencamp Railed AGAINST Authority ON LAWSLESS TIMES AND WE ARE THE PEOPLE AND WORKED OVERTIME FOR THE WORKING MAN ON THE RAGING RAIN ON THE SCAREGROW. HIS MOST OVERTLY ACTIVITY SONG BY FAR WAS 2017 S EASY TARGET WHICH TOUCHED ON LIVING WAGES AND BLACK LIVES MATTER AND ENDED WITH MELLencAMP THAT HERO OF FLYOVER COUNTRY, BENDING TO A KNEE AT CENTER STAGE.

- JAY CRIOLIN

MELLencAMP WHO S LOGED 22 TOP 40 HITS AND EARNED A GRAMMY AWARD HAS BEEN ROCKING HIS OWN BLEND OF BLUES ROCKABILLY AND SOLID ROCK N ROLL SINCE THE 1970S BUT HE BOUNCING AS FRESH AND AS POWERFUL AS EVER.

- SUSAN MCDONALD

THE SONGS THAT MELLencAMP SANG THE STORIES HE TOLD PRESENTED VIGNETTES AND VISTAS OF AN ALTERNATIVE AMERICA. ALTHOUGH MELLencAMP MADE ONLY ONE OVERTLY POLITICAL STATEMENT FROM THE STAGE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SEPARATE THE AMERICAN DREAM OF MELLencAMP S MUSIC FROM THE MONSTROSITY CURRENTLY TROUBLING THE COUNTRY.... MELLencAMP S STORY STANDS IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE CONTEMPORARY MUSICAL CULTURE OF FRIVOLITY AND FLIMSYNESS. IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE MANY OF THE CURRENT CROP OF HITMAKERS ROLLING INTO PEORIA 35 YEARS FROM NOW TO SING SONGS THAT MAKE PEOPLE RAISE THEIR FISTS SWING THEIR HIPS AND WIPe THEIR TEAR-FILLED EYES.

- DAVID MASCOTTA

UNLIKE MOST OF US REGULAR PEOPLE MELLencAMP HAS THE UNGAINLY ABILITY TO SAY THINGS IN A PLAINSPoken WAY THAT EXPRESS AND EXPLAIN our LIVES IN AN UNIVERSAL WAY. HE SINGS OUR STORIES. AND HE DID SO AGAIN MONDAY NIGHT IN OMAHA WHERE A SOLD OUT DRIVING THEATER SHARED HIM ON SANG HIS SONGS TO HIM AND DANCED. MELLencAMP S SONGS ARE THE ONES YOU KNOW BY HEART. MELLencAMP WAS ABLE TO TELL HIS STORY WHICH INCLUDED HIS POLITICAL LEANINGS. LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT FAR AND HIS CONFRONTATIONS WITH PEOPLE THAT TOLD HIM WHAT TO DO WITH HIS VOICE BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY MELLencAMP LET THE MUSIC SPEAK FOR HIM.

- NICOLE MARGONKOUS

WITHIN AMERICAN MUSIC MELLencAMP IS A PRIZEFIGHTER STILL PUNCHING HARD IN CHAMPIONSHIP BOUTS HE IS EVERY BIT AS REBELLIOUS AS HE WAS WHEN HE MADE HIS DEBUT HER ENGAGED AND IMPASSIONED DELIVERY OF "RAIN ON THE SCAREGROW" AND "PAPER IN FIRE" ESPECIALLY FOLLOWING "EASY TARGET" DEMONSTRATED AN AUTHENTIC FIGHTING SPIRIT OF PROTEST DESPERATELY NEEDED IN A MUSICAL CULTURE THAT HAS BECOME FAR TOO COMPLACENT.

- DAVID MASCOTTA

WHEN HE HIT HIS STRIDE WITH "RAIN ON THE SCAREGROW." "PAPER IN FIRE" AND "GOING DOWN." IT HAD ALL THE MAKINGS FOR AN IRELAND CONCERT. BUT WHAT A THREAT TO HAVE IT HAPPEN IN A THEATER. PERHAPS HIS CHOICE OF VENUES IS A NOD TO THE ADVANCE LEGENDARY FOLK SINGER PETE SEEGER ONCE GAVE HIM AND HE S NEVER FORGOTTEN "KEEP IT SMALL AND KEEP IT GOING." - KENDRA MEINERT

JOHN MELLencAMP IS STILL KIND OF A PUNK NOT A PUNK IN THE MIHOYAN SLAM-DAKING SEX PISTOLS WAY. BUT IN THE WAY OLD-TIMERS USED TO EYESBALL A CERTAIN SORT OF LONG-HAIRED CIGARETTE-SMOKING LOUDMOUTH AND MOTHER "DIY PUNK" AT WHAT HE SAW AS A HARMES OF SOCIETY S COLLAPSE. MELLencAMP PROVED TO STILL BE THE KIND OF GUY WHO REVEALS IN STIRRING SHIT UP "EASY TARGET" WAS BORDERLINE PERFORMANCE ART AS HE DELIVERED LINES ABOUT VAST SECTIONS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY WHO ARE LITTLE MORE THAN WHAT THE TITLE SUGGESTS... MELLencAMP STILL LOVES TO FIGHT AUTHORITY AND HE COMES OUT WINNING.

- DAN NALLEN

AFTER MORE THAN FORTY YEARS OF MAKING MUSIC JOHN MELLencAMP HAS BOLDLY COME INTO HIS OWN AS ENJOYABLE AS THE FULL BAND NUMBERS WERE THE SIMPLEST DAYS HIGHLIGHTED THE SIMPLE PURITY AND DISTILLATION OF A LIFETIME OF SONGWRITING. IT MADE ME WANT TO SEE HIM DO AN ENTIRE ACOUSTIC GIG DO JUST TO SEE HOW THE SHAPES OF THE SONGS CHANGE WHEN THEY ARE TRIPPED DOWN TO THEIR BARE ESSENCE.

- JOEY CALDERAS

JUDGING FROM THE CROWD THAT HUNG ONTO MELLencAMP S EVERY WORD JUST AS STRONG AS THEY WERE IN HIS YOUTH IT S CLEAR THE ORDINARY PEOPLE IN SPokane STILL APPRECIATE HIM FOR GIVING THEM A VOICE.

- AZARIA POPOLESKY

Thank you from
AEG presents
Nashville always looks good from the top.

Congratulations to Cindy Mabe (Executive of the Year), Scott Borchetta, Mike Dungan, Kent Earls, Jimmy Harnen, Allison Jones, Royce Risser and Brian Wright — from everyone at Universal Music Group.
Ava Max’s ‘Sweet’ Success

POP SINGER-SONGWRITER AVA MAX ACHIEVES HER first Billboard Hot 100 top 10 as “Sweet but Psycho” rises from No. 12 to No. 10, led by its No. 4 status on the Radio Songs chart (82.6 million audience impressions, up 2% according to Nielsen Music).

The track, which previously ruled multiple European charts, including the Official U.K. Singles survey for four weeks in January, completes the steepest climb — 23 weeks — to the Hot 100’s top 10 by a female soloist’s first entry (unaccompanied by another artist) since Anna Kendrick’s “Cups (Pitch Perfect’s When I’m Gone)” took 28 weeks in 2013.

Atop the Hot 100, Lil Nas X’s “Old Town Road” (featuring Billy Ray Cyrus) rules for an eighth week, logging the second-biggest streaming week to date — 130.7 million U.S. streams, up 27% — following the May 17 premiere of its official video. The track drew 143 million clicks (April 20) after the April 5 arrival of its remix with Cyrus. “Road” additionally matches the Hot 100’s longest reign this year: Ariana Grande’s “7 Rings” led for eight frames beginning with its debut at No. 1 on the Feb. 2 list.

Just beyond the Hot 100’s top 10, Tyler, the Creator earns his highest career rank as “Earthquake” rumbles in at No. 13. The song is from his new album, IGOR, which generates seven other debuts on the Hot 100.

— GARY TRUST
What inspired the song’s laid-back vibe?
**CAPÓ** We were trying to re-create this familiar scene (in Puerto Rico) where we go to the beach, disconnect and be present. The original demo was really slow, and the label wasn’t connecting with it. It was supposed to buy us time until the actual single, but once it dropped, we started seeing kids from Russia doing covers. That caught our attention.

How did you recruit Farruko and Alicia Keys for the “Calma” remixes?
Farruko sent me a DM on Instagram and said, “I personally connected with the song, it has world appeal, and we can make something special out of it.” Alicia heard it on vacation in Tulum (Mexico), inquired about it and (got in) contact with somebody at Sony. The fact that she came to Puerto Rico (for the music video) was pretty amazing.

“Calma” is your first Hot 100 hit. What does that achievement mean to you?
It’s an honor. The day we wrote it, I told my manager, “I feel like I wrote the most special song of my life.” To receive this (success) with a song that represents my people, our lifestyle, it’s what dreams are made of.

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### Billboard Hot 100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Peak</th>
<th>Length</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>DJ Khalid feat. J.周杰伦 &amp; J. Cole</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>High Hopes</td>
<td>Panic! At The Disco</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Going Bad</td>
<td>Meek Mill</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>God’s Country</td>
<td>Blake Shelton</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Eastside</td>
<td>benny blanco, Halsey &amp; Khalid</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Whiskey Glasses</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Con Calma</td>
<td>Daddy Yankee &amp; Karol G</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Pure Water</td>
<td>Mustard &amp; Migos</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Look Back At It</td>
<td>A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Khalid</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Pop Out</td>
<td>Polo G feat. Lil Baby</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>Sicko Mode</td>
<td>Travis Scott feat. Playboi Carti</td>
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<td>Please Me</td>
<td>Cardi B &amp; Bruno Mars</td>
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<td>Act Up</td>
<td>City Girls feat. Young Thug</td>
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<td>Girls Like You</td>
<td>Maroon 5 feat. Cardi B</td>
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<td>Shallow</td>
<td>Lady Gaga &amp; Bradley Cooper</td>
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<td>Good As You</td>
<td>Kane Brown</td>
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<td>Truth Hurts</td>
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<td>Emvy Me</td>
<td>Calboy</td>
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<td>When The Party’s Over</td>
<td>Billie Eilish</td>
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<td>Beer Never Broke My Heart</td>
<td>Luke Combs feat. Dierks Bentley</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>Beautiful Crazy</td>
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<td>Just Us</td>
<td>DJ Khalid feat. J.周杰伦</td>
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<td>You Stay</td>
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<td>Rumor</td>
<td>Lee Brice</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>A Lot</td>
<td>21 Savage feat. DaBaby</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>Hey Look Ma, I Made It</td>
<td>Panic! At The Disco</td>
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<td>Here With Me</td>
<td>Marshmello feat. Demi Lovato</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>Look What God Gave Her</td>
<td>Thomps Rhett</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Thotiana</td>
<td>Blueface</td>
<td>19</td>
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MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE

STACY VEE AND LOUIS MESSINA

CONGRATULATIONS to our COUNTRY POWER PLAYERS

From your friends

AEG PRESENTS GOLDENVoice MTG
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I Think</em></td>
<td>Tyler, The Creator</td>
<td>RCA</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Celebrate</em></td>
<td>DJ Khaled</td>
<td>UMG</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Homicide</em></td>
<td>Logic, Ty Dolla $ign &amp; Rich The Kid</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Eyes On You</em></td>
<td>Chase Rice</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Bury A Friend</em></td>
<td>Billie Eilish</td>
<td>Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Clout</em></td>
<td>Offset, Cardi B, Quavo, Takeoff</td>
<td>Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jealous</em></td>
<td>Logic, Sampha, &amp; Stintz, Don Toliver</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Walk Me Home</em></td>
<td>Pink, Manor &amp; Mooreman (Paul Hamill, R.Q.)</td>
<td>RCA</td>
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<td><em>Close Friends</em></td>
<td>Lil Baby</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Miss Me More</em></td>
<td>Kelsea Ballerini</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Mudter On My Mind</em></td>
<td>TYNW Mally</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Worth It</em></td>
<td>YK Osiris</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Sanguine Paradise</em></td>
<td>Lil Uzi Vert</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>Put A Date On It</em></td>
<td>Yo Gotti</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>Running Out Of Time</em></td>
<td>Tyler, The Creator</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>Love Ain’t</em></td>
<td>Eli Young Band</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>Igor's Theme</em></td>
<td>Tyler, The Creator</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>Cool</em></td>
<td>Jonas Brothers</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>GIRL</em></td>
<td>Maren Morris</td>
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<td><em>New Magic</em></td>
<td>Tyler, The Creator</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Boy With luv</em></td>
<td>BTS (ft. Envay)</td>
<td>Big Hit</td>
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<td><em>Big Ole Freak</em></td>
<td>Megan Thee Stallion</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Who Do You Love</em></td>
<td>The Chainsmokers</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>A Boy is A Gun</em></td>
<td>Tyler, The Creator</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Racks In The Middle</em></td>
<td>Nipsey Hussle (ft. Lil Skies, DJ Khaled)</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td><em>Soltars</em></td>
<td>Sunny, Daddy Yankee &amp; Bad Bunny</td>
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<td><em>Before I Let Go</em></td>
<td>Beyoncé</td>
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<td><em>Earth</em></td>
<td>Lil Dicky</td>
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<td><em>Don’t Call Me Up</em></td>
<td>Mabel</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Someone You Loved</em></td>
<td>Lewis Capaldi</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Knockin’ Boots</em></td>
<td>Luke Bryan</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Girls Need Love</em></td>
<td>Summer Walker &amp; Drake</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Love Someone</em></td>
<td>Brett Eldredge</td>
<td>Atlantic/Warner Bros</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Robbery</em></td>
<td>Juice Wrld</td>
<td>Atlantic/Warner Bros</td>
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<td><em>What’s Good</em></td>
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<td><em>What If I Never Get Over You</em></td>
<td>Lady Antebellum</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Shotta Flow</em></td>
<td>NLE Choppa</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>Puppet</em></td>
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<td><em>Talk You Out Of It</em></td>
<td>Florida Georgia Line</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Night Shift</em></td>
<td>Jon Pardi</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Weather The Storm</em></td>
<td>DJ Khaled</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>Go Loko</em></td>
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<td><em>All To Myself</em></td>
<td>Dan + Shay</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>Triggered</em></td>
<td>Jhene Aiko</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>On My Way To You</em></td>
<td>Cody Johnson</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td><em>Calma</em></td>
<td>Pedro Capo X Farruko</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td>feat. Elia Matarri, 6Lack &amp; T Pain</td>
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<td><em>Here Tonight</em></td>
<td>Brett Young</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Bella Bella</em></td>
<td>OZuna</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Te Robare</em></td>
<td>Nicky Jam X Ozuna</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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As the track holds at its No. 2 high on the Billboard Hot 100, it surges 13-10 on the Radio Songs chart, up 19% to 56.2 million audience impressions, according to Nielsen Music. Bieber adds his 12th top 10 on Radio Songs and Sheeran scores his eighth. On the Mainstream Top 40 airplay tally, the track blasts 13-9, while Sheeran’s “Cross Me” (featuring Chance The Rapper and PnB Rock) arrives at No. 38. Both songs preview Sheeran’s July 12 album, No.6 Collaborations Project, which includes 13 other duets with, as of now, secret partners.

*With 21.4 million U.S. streams, the song starts as the Highest of Khaled’s seven debut top 10 songs from parent album Father of Asahd. On Hot 100, Khaled’s Hip-Hop Songs, the track charted "higher" up his career count to 14 top 10s."
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR COUNTRY POWER PLAYERS

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CRIS LACY
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BEN VAUGHN
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AND CONGRATS TO OUR PARTNERS
GEORGE COURI, BRUCE KALMICK,
DAVID MACIAS, SHANE MCANALLY,
NORBERT NIX, JASON OWEN

FROM YOUR SONY MUSIC FAMILY
THE BEAT
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ON THE COVER
Luke Combs photographed by Sam DeWitt on May 15 in Dickson, Tenn. Combs wears a Filson jacket, Harbor Bay T-shirt and Levi’s jeans. For a behind-the-scenes look at the photo shoot, go to billboard.com/videos.
A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE.
A GIFTED SONGWRITER.
A VISIONARY LEADER.
THAT’S DEAN!

ASCAP CONGRATULATES DEAN KAY ON RECEIVING THE NMPA INDUSTRY LEGACY AWARD.
THANKS FOR 30 YEARS OF INCREDIBLE SERVICE ON THE ASCAP BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

YOUR ASCAP FAMILY
Hannah Karp  
**EDITORIAL DIRECTOR**

Robert Levine  
**INDUSTRY EDITORIAL DIRECTOR**

Ian Drew  
**CONSUMER EDITORIAL DIRECTOR**

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<td>MANAGING EDITOR</td>
<td>PHOTO AND VIDEO DIRECTOR</td>
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<td>SENIOR DIRECTOR, MUSIC</td>
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<th>Lella Cobo (Miami)</th>
<th>Gail Mitchell</th>
<th>Thom Duffy</th>
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<td>VICE PRESIDENT, LATIN INDUSTRY LEAD</td>
<td>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, R&amp;B / HIP-HOP</td>
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Congratulations, Cindy, on your Country Music Executive of the Year award.

Love,

Your UMG Nashville Family
CONGRATULATIONS MISSY ELLIOTT
FIRST FEMALE HIP-HOP ARTIST TO BE INDUCTED INTO THE SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME

LOVE CRAIG, JULIE, KYSER AND YOUR ATLANTIC RECORDS FAMILY
CMA’S MISSION IS TO HEIGHTEN THE AWARENESS OF COUNTRY MUSIC AROUND THE WORLD.

WE ARE PROUD TO CONGRATULATE THE 2019 COUNTRY POWER PLAYERS THAT TIRELESSLY WORK TO FULFILL THIS MISSION.
Twenty years ago, when she would ask publishers to license sheet music so her company, Musicnotes, could sell it online, Kathy Marsh would usually receive a two-word response: Forget it. “People will never buy digital sheet music”—that’s from a big publisher,” remembers Marsh, Musicnotes’ co-founder and CEO. Publishers overcame their early resistance, however, and today—thanks to online stores like Musicnotes, digital subscription services and music-notification formats for tablets and phones—sheet-music sales are booming. They generated $2.40 million in global revenue in 2018, according to Musicnotes—a tiny fraction of the overall publishing business. But the sheet-music sector is growing quickly: The National Music Publishers’ Association (NMPA) has said that sales were up 7% in 2017 compared with the previous year.

“I don’t believe we have a ceiling, really,” says Lorenzo Brewer, co-founder/CEO of Nkoda, a $10-a-month subscription service launched last year.

Some of this growth is fueled by musicals like Bohemian Rhapsody, A Star Is Born, The Greatest Showman and La La Land. “Five years ago, it slowed down a little bit—there wasn’t a lot of content that thrilled the audience,” says Marsh. “But the last couple of years, we’ve picked back up.” Sheet music is one of the original entertainment businesses—perhaps the first one that was scalable, since it didn’t involve live performances. Until phonographs came along in the early 1900s, sheet music was the main way consumers bought songs, which they could hear at live performances and then learn to play on living-room pianos. The business survived wax cylinders, vinyl records, cassettes, CDs and then downloads and streaming.

“I don’t think it ever went away,” says Janis Susskind, managing director of Boosey & Hawkes, an 89-year-old publisher that publishes the Rodgers & Hammerstein and Leonard Bernstein song catalogs and counts print-music sales and rentals as 40% of its business. “I’ve been in the business for 40 years, and it has been ever-present.”

The biggest players in sheet music are (and have been for decades) Hal Leonard, founded by a Winona, Minn., bandleader in the 1920s; and Alfred, the 1922 brainchild of a Tin Pan Alley violinist and silent film mood-music importer. And despite the rising popularity of online sheet-music stores, printed scores remain popular, partly because musicians like to scribble notes on the pages. “You’re a performing musician in a church and you get called to play a funeral and there’s a special song somebody wants—we get that all the time,” says Kathy Fernandes, chief marketing officer for retailer

**Hitting The Sheets**

Sheet music — one of the oldest entertainment businesses — is growing in the digital age

*BY STEVE KNOPPER*
JW Pepper, which opened in a Philadelphia family print shop in 1876. “Or you’re a school-band director and the principal called: ‘We’re doing this assembly, is there any way you can perform X?’”

The established sheet-music companies followed Musicnotes into the digital realm: Hal Leonard acquired the online notation service Noteflight in 2014 and sells scores through subsidiaries like the $10-a-month subscription service Sheet Music Direct. “All the formats drive one another,” says Hal Leonard executive vp Jeff Schroedl, adding that the company’s digital business has grown by nearly 32% over the past four years. “The more we can bring a musician from beginner to intermediate or advanced player, the more they’re going to consume music in a variety of ways.” At the same time, the market has been expanded by social media-focused startups, like Yousician, which posts step-by-step video tutorials of tablature for bedroom guitarists and local bands looking to learn how to play popular songs. The company has 16 million monthly users, $25 million in revenue and annual growth of 50%. “In the U.S., 12% of people actually play a musical instrument — our goal is to get that to 80 or 90%,” says Yousician co-founder/CEO Chris Thür. “That’s one way we think it could become a growth industry.”

This digital growth has forced some old-school mom-and-pop stores out of business, says Richard Rejino, executive director of the Retail Print Music Dealers Association. “Primarily their stores were full of print music, and those have fallen way down,” he says. Those stores also suffered from rampant sheet-music piracy online, but publishers say it has become less of an issue in the last few years. (“It’s a problem,” says Boosey & Hawkes’ Susskind, “but the photocopier was a problem.”)

NMCP president/CEO David Israelite says publishers have been aggressive about sending cease-and-desist notices to illegal sheet-music sites in recent years: “We’re driving traffic to the legal sites,” he says, “which is partly why we’re seeing growth.”

“The traditional sheet-music business is still very much about printing and binding paper,” says Susskind. JW Pepper has grown digitally, for example, but print remains its core business; the company added 125,000 out of its total of 250,000 titles over the past three years, and sales have doubled since it began offering digital scores in 2006.

During roughly the same period, Musicnotes built a database of over 300,000 downloadable song files. Dozens of arrangements, for different instruments and orchestras, of the most popular compositions account for 80% of sales — including, in recent years, “Bohemian Rhapsody,” “A Star Is Born’s” “Shallow” and La La Land’s “City of Stars.” Its website also lists Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America,” Lauren Daigle’s “You Say” and Kacey Musgraves’ “Rainbow” in the top five. The other 20% are obscure “backlist” titles, as Marsh calls them. “We’ve gone from zero in 1999 to the largest digital sheet-music publisher in the world,” says Marsh. “It has been a real trip along the way.”

**SPANISH COLLECTION SOCIETY**

**SGAE BOOTED FROM CISAC**

Complaints of “unfair practices” lead to temporary expulsion

**BY RICHARD SMIRKE**

S

ince 2013, the Spanish public performance collecting society SGAÉ has been plagued by accusations of misconduct. On May 30, the organization was temporarily expelled from CISAC, the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers, at its meeting in Tokyo. The decision, the result of a 3,580 to 346 vote by members, is “a very regrettable step,” says CISAC director general Gadi Oron. “But the board of directors felt there was no choice.”

The most egregious allegations concern SGAÉ’s involvement in a long-running royalty scam known as La Rueda (“The Wheel”), in which Spanish broadcasting companies that are members of SGAÉ play songs they own the rights to as background music on late-night Spanish TV to inflate their royalty payments. (In Spain, some music publishers are owned by TV stations, which pay a set annual fee to SGAÉ to license music from its catalog.)

In 2017, 18 people were arrested at SGAÉ’s headquarters in Madrid for their suspected involvement in La Rueda, while CISAC’s own 60-page review of SGAÉ’s business practices, published last year, found “serious concerns” about conflicts of interest and “inequitable distribution of royalties.” CISAC has barred SGAÉ for one year, although the expulsion could be lifted if the society makes changes. As a result, SGAÉ faces reputational damage as well as restricted access to CISAC’s legal, financial and operational services, which include global-rights databases. (Reciprocal licensing and cross-border collections will not be affected, nor any fines levied.)

“Our goal is not to punish anyone but to promote better practice and support reforms in the society,” says Oron. “We want SGAÉ to rebuild itself.”

In 2018, new regulations allowed private companies into the rights-management field, leading to the founding of Barcelona-based competitor Unison, set to launch in January 2020. CEO Jordi Puy tells Billboard that the company is “not cheering” CISAC’s decision, but adds, “Now that everyone knows the reality and risks of staying with or leaving SGAÉ, they can freely choose.”

In a statement, recently appointed SGAÉ president Pilar Jurado said the society’s expulsion “gives us the opportunity to decide about our future and leave this situation behind.”

Additional reporting by Judy Cantor-Nagas.
“BEER NEVER BROKE MY HEART”

11 MILLION STREAMS
FIRST WEEK STREAMING RECORD FOR A COUNTRY ARTIST

FIRST ARTIST EVER
TO SIMULTANEOUSLY TOP ALL 5 COUNTRY CHARTS FOR MULTIPLE WEEKS

BILLBOARD MUSIC AWARD WINNER
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THE PREQUEL | AVAILABLE JUNE 7

SONY MUSIC NASHVILLE IS PROUD TO BE YOUR PARTNER
‘We’re Ready For Battle’

In their first interview together since taking over, co-chairmen Aaron Bay-Schuck and Tom Corson talk rebranding Warner Records, the first overhaul of the iconic label since its founding in 1958

BY GAIL MITCHELL

On May 28, Warner Bros. Records officially became Warner Records, a global rebranding — complete with a new logo — intended to usher in a new era for the label that has been home to Prince, Fleetwood Mac, the Grateful Dead and others. In their first joint interview since they took the helm together in 2018, U.S. co-chairman/CEO Aaron Bay-Schuck, who started last October, and U.S. co-chairman/COO Tom Corson, who began in January 2018, discuss staffing up, signing urban acts and how they’re starting to turn the storied company around. “We stress-tested this company over the last 17 months, and it proved itself,” says Corson. “We’re ready for battle.”

How would you assess the changes you have made so far?

CORSON There was a lot of work to do when I got here, and there’s still a lot of work to do. But we’ve accomplished a lot, pretty much building a whole new team. We retained and promoted some great people. We’re bringing the best parts of this great label forward. The new building is a big part of that, too: It’s very important to have everybody on the same floor. It has minimized emails and meetings. It’s really productive.

BAY-SCHUCK Initially, knowing that Tom was going to start without me made me a little nervous. But I walked in unquestionably to a much healthier company than Tom did. I was able to just throw myself into the deep end of the company’s creative side. I was faced with an A&R team of maybe three to five people, tops, which is way too small. In seven to eight months, we’ve turned that A&R team into a real force of nearly 30. Then we dropped a large portion of the roster to make room for artists these 30 people are going to want to sign. In a year of volatile transition for Warner, we still had the biggest top 40 song of the year with [Dua Lipa’s] “New Rules” and two best new artist Grammy nominations for Bebe Rexha and [winner] Lipa. We had BlocBoy JB and Drake’s “Look Alive,” and Bad Bunny featuring Drake with “Mia.” That speaks volumes about what we’re going to be able to do moving forward if we were able to have that kind of success with that much volatility.

What is your philosophy on building the artist roster going forward?

CORSON The real takeaway isn’t what we dropped. The real takeaway is that there’s bandwidth here. This is our competitive advantage now. Many of our [joint] venture partners that are already here, like [Drake’s label] OVO and Think It’s A Game. We expect by the end of this year to have an urban division that’s defined by the people and artists in a way that sends a message to the community that we’re open for business.

BAY-SCHUCK We just want to be genuine about it. It doesn’t feel genuine to spend a bunch of money and all of a sudden say, “Hey, we’ve got these acts.” You’ve got to have the people inside the building, too. There are a lot of labels that have a real head start on us in the genre. Our job as A&R people is to look into the future and ask, “Where is urban music going?” Let’s try to predict where it might be going so we’re at the forefront of what urban music is in 2020 and 2021.

You both mention being cautioned about coming to Warner with warnings like, “It’s too far gone to turn around.” What was your response?

CORSON There were a number of strong artists that needed more focus when we arrived, whether that was Dua Lipa, Bebe Rexha or Mac Miller, God rest his soul; and we wanted to optimize projects that came through OVO and other partners.

BAY-SCHUCK That’s what made it the most exciting opportunity. We got the chance to rebuild a major company in 2019, when the business is finally like this. There’s a fire, a let’s-all-get-in-the-trenches mentality that we have to win and prove a lot of people wrong.

Is there a new mission statement?

CORSON “Art + Impact,” with the view that we are a major with the heart of an indie; the indie part representing artistry, integrity, freedom and accessibility but with the power, impact and ability to scale the major labels globally. There’s a fun slogan that we also dreamed up: “A label born in the California sun and at home everywhere on earth.” That’s a major part of our DNA. Warner Bros. Records always was the quintessential Los Angeles label, and Warner Records will continue to be that.

BAY-SCHUCK My heart sank a little when I initially heard that we were going to have to do this. But as we peeled back the onion and learned more about why and what was going to come along with changing the name and the new logo, we got excited. We are, with all respect, saying goodbye to the old and looking into the future of what this company is going to be all about.
CONGRATULATIONS

VIRGINIA DAVIS
G MAJOR MANAGEMENT

SETH ENGLAND
BIG LOUD MANAGEMENT

BRIAN O’CONNELL
LIVE NATION

CLARENCE SPAULDING
MAVERICK MANAGEMENT

CRAIG WISEMAN
BIG LOUD MANAGEMENT

2019 COUNTRY POWER HONOREES

LIVE NATION
Radio is still king when it comes to country music. But when a song isn’t connecting, the marketing plan doesn’t die — not on Shane Tarleton’s watch.

When Warner Music Nashville (WMN) released Devin Dawson’s last single, “Dark Horse,” to radio in November 2018, the title track of his debut album never reached the country charts. So Tarleton and his team looked at other avenues to keep the singer engaged with fans, such as partnering with online musical services and social media platforms.

“My approach is, ‘We are marketing this artist to the globe no matter what’s happening at radio,’” explains Tarleton, 44. “We’re going to go after brand alliances, and we’re going to make sure that every partner is aware of what our agenda is. This last tour, we were able to go in and hyper-serve his die-hard fans in small markets. We’re building fans one by one.”

Tarleton knew he wanted to work in music since age 8, when he would sit on his bedroom floor in rural North Carolina every weekend and write down each song and artist name on Bob Kingsley’s Country Top 40 countdown. His first internship while attending Nashville’s Belmont University included stuffing Kathy Mattea fan-club packets for a local management company; his bosses at the time, Bob Titley and Clarence Spalding, offered him a job upon graduation. The two men remain mentors. “[Relationships] are the most important thing in my entire career,” he says. “They really are everything.”

In 1998, Tarleton took a job in the creative department at RCA Records, where he worked for six years under the guidance of vp creative services Mary Hamilton. “I was her assistant for the first three years, literally getting her coffee, keeping her calendar,” he says. “But she allowed me in on meetings that were so above my hair. She was a calming presence in the entire company.”

When Hamilton retired in 2001, Tarleton found himself responsible for photo and video shoots with artists like Brad Paisley and Kenny Chesney. After leaving RCA in 2004, he became a renaissance man of sorts, writing, managing an artist and producing events in Las Vegas before joining WMN in 2010.

Now senior vp artist development, he oversees marketing, brand sponsorships, digital interactive and creative services for a roster including Blake Shelton, Dan + Shay and Ashley McBryde.

On May 31, he will receive Musicians On Call’s first-ever Lifetime Achievement Award commemorating over a decade of support for the nonprofit, which brings music to the bedsides of patients in health care facilities. Tarleton, an avid traveler, music lover and humanitarian, says his career trajectory is no coincidence: “I’ve never forgotten that I’m a music fan first and that’s why I’m here.”
ERIC CHURCH
DOUBLE DOWN TOUR
STAPLES CENTER - MAY 17 & 18, 2019

FINAL ATTENDANCE: 26,597
GROSS: $2,101,742.59
TWO SOLD OUT SHOWS

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO
ERIC CHURCH, LOUIS MESSINA, BRIDGET BAUER,
JOHN PEETS & JAY WILLIAMS
What’s a project from the past year that you’re especially proud of?
I’m overwhelmingly proud of the setup and execution of the launch of “God’s Country” for Blake. Sonically, when you hear it, you immediately realize this is new Blake Shelton music. He has never sung like this before. I’m also proud of the [amount] of content that we have [coming] on Blake. He has had such large success for so many years, and obviously the industry is changing day by day. The fact that people are consuming so much music on YouTube means we have to create more content. He’s very busy but he has leaned in, and all of the numbers reflect that: His YouTube numbers are great; his streaming numbers have grown week after week after week. It’s a testament not just to the song and the way he sang it, but to all the visuals around it.

How has the music marketing landscape changed since you started?
Working at RCA in the ’9os — when we spent megabucks on music videos — they were looked at as a necessary evil, and there weren’t really metrics to support [if they were] moving the needle. Then, probably a decade ago, when [album] sales were going down due to streaming, we had to start cutting music video budgets completely. Fast-forward to today, and we can’t create enough: Content is king. People are consuming music with their eyes, and they’re also making an assessment of your music based on all the visuals that we’re presenting. It’s so important that we capture as much quality video content as possible. While quantity is important, so is quality.

How do you consume music?
I’m a Spotify guy. I have memberships to Apple and all the premium services. [But] my go-to is YouTube because I’m a visual guy. My whole career, basically, has been based on visual content. If I’m looking for something, I’ll go to YouTube and dive down the rabbit hole and learn everything that’s on an artist’s YouTube channel. The stuff that I find very engaging is on fan channels because I personally like the more organic, less-produced [videos].

You are a big traveler. Does seeing the world help you do your job better?
Travel is really the only thing [where] it’s good to make yourself feel so much smaller. I come back feeling a fresh approach to everything. Whenever we’re inside our own little bubble, you lose touch with the world. I always ask people, “How do you discover music?” It’s interesting, the artists people gravitate to or what their perceptions are of music — specifically country music — wherever you are.

You are very involved with Musicians On Call. How important is it for executives to give back?
My grandmother, who was my touchstone, was very religious. [She would say], “To whom much is given, much is expected.” I always have that in my mind. It’s the perfect charity for me because I come from a family of nurses. Musicians On Call takes music and the health care industry and puts them together.
It’s so special to watch how everybody reacts differently to music. I encourage my whole team to find some sort of charity that makes [them] feel good. The reason that I want everybody to at least know what Musicians On Call is is because if you make your living in any way that touches music, this will show you how important your job is. Music is a healer, and it also allows people to find a sense of peace in those final moments, too. There’s all sorts of opportunities to help the world if we just open our eyes.

“I encourage my whole team to find some sort of charity that makes [them] feel good.”
A P R I L 4 & 5, 2018
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T H E M A D I S O N S Q U A R E G A R D E N C O M P A N Y
Helping Artists Help
PLUS1, the "philanthropic concierge," streamlines donations from ticket sales

BY MARGARET FARR ELL

Arcade Fire’s commitment to helping Haitian families achieve financial autonomy started long before the Montreal-based band became indie-rock royalty in the 2000s. “It’s something that has been in our DNA forever,” says singer Régine Chassagne. “We started playing in these punk-rock venues, and you’d bring $3 or a can of goods to give away.”

After the release of 2007 album Neon Bible, the band brought that spirit on tour, donating $1 from each concert ticket sold to Partners in Health, earmarking the money for the nonprofit’s initiatives in Haiti. And the group’s continuing dedication to causes in that country—from which Chassagne’s family emigrated—as well as the idea of setting aside $1 from each ticket sold, began to inspire other musicians to find ways to support causes important to them.

In 2014, Arcade Fire touring member Marika Anthony-Shaw established PLUS1. She calls it a “philanthropic concierge” that pairs acts—including The National, St. Vincent, Broken Social Scene—and New York hip-hop crew Beast Coast—with causes they want to support but might not know how to get involved with.

The nonprofit uses Arcade Fire’s original model to gather funds, analyzing projections for ticket sales to estimate the amount it can raise. A hundred percent of those funds taken from ticket sales—which according to PLUS1 is approaching $10 million, with $3 million for Partners in Health alone—go to organizations like Native Youth Sexual Health Network, KANPE and Phoenix House.

In 2018, distribution of funds through PLUS1 grew by 500%.

PLUS1—which is based in Montreal and has offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Chicago—finds ways to deploy its funds to have the most impact, and experts survey local organizations in need based on causes and locations personal to the artists. Tyler, the Creator, who has asthma, wanted to donate $1 per ticket from his Camp Flog Gnaw Carnival to asthma relief. “We quickly learned that you’re 10 times more likely to die of asthma in America if you’re a person of color than if you’re white,” says Anthony-Shaw.

Since asthma is also one of the leading causes of school absenteeism, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, PLUS1 located an asthma clinic on wheels called Breathmobile that provides free treatment for kids on school grounds.

PLUS1 now works with over 150 artists, and upcoming campaigns will involve Carly Rae Jepsen (LGBTQ youth advocacy organization The Trevor Project in San Francisco) and Conor Oberst (The Florence Project, which supports litigators working to reunite families at the border).

PLUS1 also bills itself as cause-oriented to allow more flexibility in partnerships. “You have so many different artists participating and everybody can kind of do a little bit, which is how we end up having massive distribution for maximum impact,” says Anthony-Shaw. “Suddenly you’re at Madison Square Garden, sold out, and you [realize] thousands of lives get saved from that one evening.”

New Deals
Logic signed an exclusive global administration deal with Universal Music Publishing Group.

Atlantic Records signed rapper Sueco the Child.

K-pop group Monsta X signed with Epic Records.

NBC’s Songland inked a recording and publishing deal with BMG.

WME signed The Beach Boys.

Primary Wave Music Publishing acquired a stake in Culture Club’s catalog.

Executive Turntable
Troy Carter’s Q&A named Phillip Eubanks COO and Marc Hemoon head of design.

Jamie Krents was promoted to executive vp of labels Verve and Impulse!

Adam Parness resigned from his role as Spotify global head of publishing.

NOTED May 21 - 29

Laurie Zeleny was named senior vp people at Vevo.

IHeartMedia hired Karen Chinas as senior vp/head of investor relations.


Former Instagram head of music partnerships Lauren Witter-Seawood was named president of UnitedMasters.

Media Alert
The 1975 won songwriters of the year at the 2019 Ivor Novello Awards.

Obits
“Bongo Rock” percussionist Preston Epps died at 88.

John Gary Williams of R&B act The Mad Lads died at 73.

Read more about their lives and impact at billboard.biz.
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Billboard’s 2019 Country Power Players

and salutes all of our Music colleagues in Nashville

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Julie Greenberg
Jeff Gregg
Logan Handelsman
Ariel Happe
Brian Hill
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Meredith Jones
Steve Kaul
Lucy Kozak
Jeff Krones
Madison Lee
Brian Manning
Joseph Martin
Blake McDaniel
Bryan Myers
Lindsey Myers
Jordan Pelfrey
Tawny Plate
Coady Rapp
Brett Saliba
Sam Schaumberg
Kylen Sharpe
Aaron Tannenbaum
Dustin Turner
Emily Van Allsburg
Elisa Vazzana
Brian Waymire
Hunter Williams
MacKenzie Wolf
Emily Wright
Anderson . Paaq & The Free Nationals’ light show came alive as the sun set on May 25.
Boston Calling
BOSTON, MAY 24-26

Now a Memorial Day weekend tradition, the formerly biannual fest celebrated its 10th edition this year, with nearly 40,000 fans flooding the Harvard Athletic Complex in Allston, Mass., during each of Boston Calling’s three days. Tame Impala, twenty one pilots and Travis Scott topped the bill while charismatic newcomers to the festival circuit—King Princess, NAO and Greta Van Fleet—made it clear they’ll continue to climb lineups. Chvrches filled in for Janelle Monáe, who dropped out due to a scheduling conflict; Welsh singer Marina, the only artist on the bill who had performed at the first Boston Calling in 2013, drew a dense crowd an hour ahead of her set; and Logic brought out Joyner Lucas to perform their new collaboration “Isis.” The biggest highlight: Lil Nas X, teased as a special guest, performed his eight-week Billboard Hot 100 No. 1 “Old Town Road” during Anderson .Paak’s May 25 set.

—GAB GINSBERG

1. Lil Nas X sang “Old Town Road” with .Paak, who covered Gnumwue’s “Pony” before bringing out the rapper. “I’ve always had a good time in Boston,” said Marina on May 26. She revealed she would be back in the fall. Two days after NAO made her Boston Calling debut on May 24, the British singer jetted to the United Kingdom to play Birmingham Pride. 4. Christine & The Queens on May 24. 5. King Princess shouted out LGBTQ fans during her song “Pussy Is God” on May 25. 6. Twenty one pilots opened their May 24 headlining set with a flaming car and showed off their gymnastics skills with high jumps and backflips. 7. Logic (left) and Lucas on May 26.
BottleRock Festival
NAPA VALLEY, CALIF., MAY 24-26

1 Santana closed out the Fire Fox Stage on May 26 with a rocking 19-song set. 2 Green Day’s Tre Cool (left) took part in a cooking demonstration with chef Richard Blais. 3 Pharrell Williams performed May 25, nearly a month after hosting his inaugural Something in the Water festival in Virginia. 4 Midland’s Jess Carson (left) and Mark Wystrach on May 24. 5 Jenny Lewis channeled Elton John with large sunglasses and a sparkly ensemble. 6 Bishop Briggs (far left) recruited Bay Area choir La Rova & FLOW for her May 26 performance. 7 Neon Trees frontman Tyler Glenn. 8 Neil Young went past curfew on May 25 but kept playing as fans helped finish his 1989 hit “Rockin’ in the Free World.”
Congratulations

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1 Pink celebrated three consecutive No. 1 album debuts on the Billboard 200 prior to her show at Madison Square Garden in New York on May 21.

2 From left: Mel B, Emma Bunton, Geri Halliwell and Melanie C of the Spice Girls kicked off their Spice World reunion tour in Dublin on May 24.

3 From left: Ringo Starr, Jakob Dylan and Stephen Stills at the Los Angeles premiere of the Laurel Canyon documentary Echo in the Canyon on May 23.

4 Rihanna launched her FENTY fashion line in Paris on May 22.

5 Lance Bass (left) and husband Michael Turchin hung out with Ashlee Simpson at the Virgin Hotels San Francisco Grand Opening Party on May 23.

6 Metallica’s Lars Ulrich (front) greeted fans who volunteered at the second Day of Service hosted by the band’s All Within My Hands Foundation at the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank on May 22.

7 Dua Lipa attended the amfAR Cannes Gala in Cap d’Antibes, France, on May 23.

8 BTS at iHeartRadio Theater in New York on May 21.
2019 COUNTRY POWER PLAYERS

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THANK YOU FOR BEING A GUIDING LIGHT ON THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED
Madlib (left) and Gibbs photographed April 24 at Rappcats in Los Angeles. Gibbs and Madlib talk about their second joint album, Bandana, at billboard.com/videos.

Three years ago, Freddie Gibbs was writing lyrics in jail and searching for a new label. Now, with Madlib by his side again, he’s stronger than ever.

BY CARL LAMARRE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY YURI HASEGAWA
**FREDDIE GIBBS IS IN A GOOD MOOD.**

He’s in New York to visit his new label home, RCA/Keep Cool, with which he inked a deal in March to release a new collaborative album, *Bandana*. It will be his second with Madlib, and follows the pair’s acclaimed 2014 set, *Piñata*. For Gibbs, the upcoming major-label release is not a victory lap—it’s the shot he has earned after more than a decade of grinding as an independent artist.

In 2006, Gibbs, then a baby-faced MC in his early 20s with a reputation for harrowing street tales, signed with Interscope. He was dropped a year later, before his debut was released. “When I was at Interscope, I didn’t have a plan,” he says. “They were testing the waters to see if I could make music to their liking. I didn’t have any leverage, because I had nothing to stand on.” Now, the 36-year-old born Freddick Tipson in Gary, Ind., insists that working with RCA/Keep Cool “is a totally different situation. I went into this knowing what I had to do—and knowing what we wanted to do.”

*Bandana*, out June 28, stands in stark contrast to today’s SoundCloud rap scene. The duo pushes songs over three minutes, with Madlib switching beats mid-track. With his unfiltered, in-your-face attitude, Gibbs mirrors the grim and grit of 1990s rap. “We up there with [’90s hip-hop duo] Pete Rock & CL Smooth,” he says. “We the best doing it today. You got Run the Jewels, and I love what they do, but what me and Madlib do? It stands alone.”

After he was dropped, Gibbs independently released a flurry of mixtapes including 2009’s acclaimed *The Misadventures of Freddie Gibbs* and 2010’s *Str8 Killa EP*. In 2011, the gruff-voiced MC signed to Jeezy’s Corporate Thugz Entertainment label and dropped two projects before exiting in 2013, citing creative differences, to begin his independent label ESGN (Evil Seeds Grow Naturally), on which he finally put out his first full-length of the same name—it reached No. 24 on *Billboard*’s Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart.

The 45-year-old Madlib (real name: Otis Jackson Jr.) was born into a musically inclined family in Oxnard, Calif.: His parents were musicians; his uncle is jazz trumpeter Jon Faddis; and his younger brother, Michael Woodrow Jackson, is rapper-producer Oh No, who has landed production credits for Action Bronson, Mos Def and Talib Kweli. Madlib himself boasts an impressive résumé of collaborators, including Kanye West, Erykah Badu and Anderson .Paak. But the notoriously private producer is most enthralled with Gibbs and his razor-sharp street edge and charisma. Says Madlib: “He’s gangsta.”

He and Gibbs first teamed up for their series of joint EPs in 2011, with *Thuggin*, which they recorded under the name MadGibbs and released on the producer’s own independent label, Madlib Invazion (the producer himself is signed to Los Angeles indie Stones Throw Records). MadGibbs dropped two more EPs (*Shame in 2012, Deeper in 2013*) before hunting down on a proper full-length. The soul-stirring *Piñata*, which featured boom-bap masters like Raekwon, Mac Miller, Danny Brown and Earl Sweatshirt, debuted at No. 39 on the *Billboard* 200 and peaked at No. 7 on the Top Rap Albums chart.

Gibbs and Madlib vowed to release an edgier following, but before they even had a chance to enter the studio, Gibbs was arrested in June 2016 prior to a concert in Toulouse, France, for an alleged rape nearly one year prior. He spent two weeks in jail, posted bail and was then extradited to Austria for his trial. In August, he was charged with sexual assault. In September, after spending over a month in jail, he was acquitted of all charges. Speaking to XXL in 2017, Gibbs said that while he was cleared of the charges, he was well aware of the fact that people in the industry were scared to go near him. “Young rappers with shit like that on their name don’t give a fuck, the hip-hop world don’t give a fuck,” he said. “But not me. I had to patch things up.”

Gibbs wrote 80% of *Bandana* while in jail, using the beats that Madlib had given him before he was arrested. “I had no music player or anything like that in my cell, so all I had was memory. I’d think about the subject matter, and all night I just played the beats in my brain.” Says Madlib: “We didn’t know what the outcome was going to be. I didn’t even know if there was going to be a second album. All the while, Keep Cool co-founder Tunji Balogun was connecting Gibbs and his manager, Lambo, with lawyers to help navigate the process. Once the charges were dropped, Gibbs and Madlib had one goal in mind: finish the album as soon as possible.

Three years later, the duo did just that. Unlike its predecessor, the release not only has the backing of a major label, it sees Gibbs reckoning with his past. The somber “Practice” addresses his own infidelity, and over Madlib’s ominous production on “Situation,” he openly addresses how murder, theft and drug-dealing tore his family apart. But it’s “Soul Right” that stands out most, thanks to Gibbs’ newfound optimism: “I can’t hold no grudges, my hands are too busy catching blessings.”

“This is what we’ve been waiting for and what we’ve been grinding for,” says Gibbs. “[It’s] an opportunity to compete with the best. I could run circles around these little independent n—as all day. I want to be up there with the top-echelon rappers, because that’s what the fuck I am. Madlib gives me the ingredients, and I make the gumbo.”
THANK YOU TO EVERY ONE OF THE AMAZING ARTISTS WHO HAVE PLAYED OUR STAGES FOR YOUR PRICELESS PERFORMANCES AND ANOTHER TRULY AMAZING YEAR!

OPRY ENTERTAINMENT.
When she was 17, Charm La'Donna landed a coveted spot as a dancer on Madonna’s record-breaking Sticky & Sweet Tour — thanks in part to her ability to krump. “She was looking for the type of performer who could be versatile,” says La'Donna of the pop icon. “I happened to be that girl.” The gig launched an impressive career for the now-31-year-old Compton, Calif., native, who began taking dance lessons at age 3 and has since worked with Britney Spears, Pharrell Williams and Selena Gomez. In 2018 she made headlines for devising and dancing in Kendrick Lamar’s Grammy performance, after serving as the only female dancer on the rapper’s DAMN. tour. Her latest project: choreographing for flamenco revivalist Rosalía, who DM’d her on Instagram early last year.

1. **El Mal Querer Tour**

Soon after meeting over FaceTime, La'Donna spent two weeks in Rosalía’s native Spain choreographing the El Mal Querer tour — which kicked off April 17 in Los Angeles — with six backup dancers. Having never worked with flamenco before, she kept an expert instructor on hand to offer insight. “Flamenco is so important to who (Rosalía) is, and I wanted to be respectful,” says La'Donna.

2. **Con Aitüra**

While working on the eye-popping music video for “Con Aitüra,” a reggaeton-inspired collaboration among Rosalía, J Balvin and El Guincho released in March, La'Donna made sure everyone’s ideas were heard. “I’m not the type of person who feels like, ‘This is what I think, so this is what we should do,’” she says. “We all value each other’s opinions and have the common goal to create art.” The clip has topped 257 million YouTube views, and in April, La'Donna taught its choreography at a Red Bull Music Festival master class in New York.

3. **Coachella 2019**

La'Donna made an extra trip to Spain in March to perfect the choreography for Rosalía’s Coachella debut in April. (Rosalía also performed with Sade during his mainstage set, shown here.) She’s especially proud of a minutelong rapid-fire air punch performed at the end of the singer’s yet-to-be-released “Como Ali.” Watching the performance, La'Donna says, she saw “people who look different, who speak different languages” in the audience. “That’s what is inspiring and what it has always been about to me.”
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HEATING UP THE CHARTS

As pop’s sunniest season kicks off, Billboard staffers debate the early contenders to crown the annual Summer Songs chart

ANDREW UNTERBERGER We have to start with the horse fronting this race: Do we think the current No. 1 single, Lil Nas X’s Billy Ray Cyrus-assisted “OLD TOWN ROAD,” has enough juice to keep reigning through the summer?

JASON LIPSHUTZ A few weeks ago, I would have said no way, but now with a big-budget video and the song still atop the Hot 100... I don’t know.

TREVOR ANDERSON I suspect it’s too far over the hill to mount an extensive season-long challenge. The Hot 100 is a three-factor chart; “Old Town Road” is at No. 3 on Radio Songs and recently fell from No. 1 to 2 on the Digital Song Sales chart, so there’s not much room to grow on streaming alone. All of the Song of the Summer winners for the past decade reached No. 1 for the first time by May 25 at the earliest. With new singles from Taylor Swift, Shawn Mendes and Ed Sheeran, it’s tough to think “Old Town Road” can win it all.

LIPSHUTZ My money’s on Sheeran and Justin Bieber’s “I DON’T CARE.” The last time they linked up, they hit No. 1 with the breakup anthem “Love Yourself.” “I Don’t Care” is lighter and cuddlier, a buoyant love song that’s perfect for pool parties.

UNTERBERGER Is that really the main competition for “Old Town Road”? Its upbeat, lightly dancehall-flavored production feels out of step with pop radio in the year of Ariana Grande, Post Malone and Billie Eilish.

ANDERSON My eye is on a song from... 2017! “TRUTH HURTS” by Lizzo was recently revived thanks to a TikTok challenge and its inclusion in the Netflix rom-com Someone Great. Lizzo is a very 2019 pop star. She defies stereotypes of what a big, black woman can be in the music industry, bouncing across genre lines with a personality ripe for social media. The fact that it didn’t get much traction two years ago plays in Lizzo’s favor: Atlantic Records, sensing a sleeper hit, quickly slapped the song onto the deluxe version of her new album, April’s Cure I Love You. When Atlantic sets its sights on radio, expect “Truth Hurts,” now at No. 38 on the Hot 100, to dart up the chart.

LIPSHUTZ A song from 2017 getting an unlikely second look is an underdog narrative I could see a lot of people getting behind. On the completely opposite end of that spectrum is Swift, whose “ME!” featuring Panic! at the Disco’s Brendon Urie — is a hit thanks in part to her stature as a superstar.

ANDERSON It sounds like a surefire pop radio hit, but it quickly declined at streaming — it’s out of the top 10 on Streaming Songs. I’m not sure it can reverse course on radio alone.

UNTERBERGER To throw out two more choices: Halsey’s “NIGHTMARE” features something we haven’t heard on a Song of the Summer in at least a decade: lots of electric guitar. It reminds me of Lil Uzi Vert’s 2017 summer hit “XO Tour Llif3” — there’s an energy there that’s undeniable. Meanwhile, DaBaby’s “SUGA” is well on its way to becoming the most viral non-meme-based rap hit since Blueface’s “Thotiana.” It might just be a remix, social challenge or co-sign away from crossing all the way over.

LIPSHUTZ So what you’re saying is that “SUGA” just needs its own Billy Ray Cyrus. Somebody pass Ricky Van Shelton’s number to DaBaby!

Jason Lipshutz is Billboard senior director of music, Trevor Anderson is a chart manager and Andrew Unterberger is a senior editor for Billboard.com.
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On June 3, Billboard and CMT will present the second Billboard Live Featuring CMT Next Women of Country showcase in Nashville, highlighting four of Music City’s most promising artists

BY ANNIE REUETER

INGRID ANDRESS

FROM Denver
AG 27
LABEL Atlantic Records/Warner Music Nashville
AGE 25
In 2013, Andress packed up and moved to Nashville. She has since grown her fan base with songs that feature bold female characters, including the 2019 empowerment anthem “Lady Like” and the heart-wrenching piano ballad “More Hearts Than Mine.” In May, the singer-songwriter dropped the emotional “Both,” about an indecisive lover. On Instagram, she explained that the song is about sticking it out for yourself and what you want in a relationship. “I wrote this song for my friends, but I realize now that it’s for everybody.”

CAYLEE HAMMACK

FROM Elaville, Ga.
AG 125
LABEL Capitol Records/Nashville/Universal Music Group Nashville
AGE 27
Lauren Jenkins

FROM Nashville, Alyssa Bonagura: Los Angeles, Ruby Stewart
AG 30, 31
LABEL Arista Nashville/Sony Music Nashville
AGE 27
Jenkins took a DIY approach to making and promoting her music, asking coffee shops if they would play, going to open mics or playing in airports,” she says. But now that the young songwriter’s debut, No Saints, which hit No. 18 on the Country Album Sales chart in March — has been recognized for her smoky vocals and vivid storytelling, those days are behind her. Still, she co-wrote every track on the album and co-produced the short film Running Out of Road, which coincided with the album’s release.

THE SISTERHOOD BAND

FROM Nashville
AG 25
LABEL Big Machine Records/Big Machine Label Group
AGE 27
Early on, Jenkins

Sisterhood, the duo’s follow-up. “I’m more emotionally invested [when we] interact with fans and hear how a song has changed their life,” says Stewart, who teases a new single coming up early this summer. “Because that’s what music has done for me.”

On one of the first Diosas de la Noche dates, it was very hot, and we were sweating like crazy. When I turned around to look at the dancers after particularly taxing choreography, they all looked like sheep ready for slaughter. We just started to laugh in the middle of the stage.”

WHAT YOU MISS THE MOST ON TOUR

“My children.”

“My dog, Oto.”

FAVORITE SONG BY YOUR TOURMATE

“‘Mi Cama’ and ‘Punto G.’ I also have a song called ‘Punto G.,’ and we both have a G in our names.”

“‘She has tons of amazing songs, but ‘Habla Bish Bish’ is one of my favorites.”

By Annie Reueter
CAN'T STOP A TRUE ICON!

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Brave New Broadway

The most exciting performers nominated for awards at the 2019 Tonys (airing June 9 at 8 p.m. EST on CBS) are making audiences reconsider what musicals and their stars look and sound like — and how daring they should be.

BY REBECCA MILZOFF

Amber Gray, 38  
THE LOWDOWN
One of the most singular Broadway performers in years, Gray (up for featured actress in a musical) storms, slogs and coos onstage as a live-wire (and slightly drunk) Persephone in singer-songwriter Anaïs Mitchell’s take on the Orpheus and Eurydice myth.

WORDS OF WISDOM
“A couple of years ago, as people got more into activism, it changed what audiences want to see. There are four shows from the downtown theater world on Broadway now. There’s more variety, which is how it should be.”

Jeremy Pope, 26  
Ephraim Sykes, 33

THE LOWDOWN
Pope makes a magnetic Broadway musical debut alongside Sykes, a Hamilton alum, as The Temptations’’ yin and yang falsetto-voiced Eddie Kendricks and wailing showman David Ruffin, respectively. Both received a nom for featured actor in a musical.

WORDS OF WISDOM
“You understand why [Ruffin] sang the way he sang. He was covering up a lot of damage,” says Sykes. “Black men, even myself sometimes, we mask our pain — we don’t even know we’re experiencing this trauma.”

Caitlin Kinnunen, 27  
THE LOWDOWN
As high school student Emma, the “little lesbian” at the center of the farcical musical, Kinnunen (nominated for lead actress in a musical) warms grounds the antic show — and made history in 2018 with the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade’s first on-air LGBTQ kiss.

WORDS OF WISDOM
“From the beginning, I knew how important the character of Emma was, that this was a story that had not been told on Broadway and needed to be. It’s so cool that we can finally step up and say, ‘These are the stories we want to tell.’”

Damon Daunno, 34  
OKLAHOMA!

THE LOWDOWN
As romantic lead Curly in the stripped-bare new production of the Rodgers & Hammerstein classic, Daunno (up for lead actor in a musical) smolders and struts like a rock star — and makes audiences rethink one of musical theater’s iconic leading men.

WORDS OF WISDOM
“People have come to appreciate a more real, authentic voice (in musical theater). With pop music, genre is dead — you can do anything you can possibly think of, and it’s encouraged. That’s bleeding over into theater.”

Lilli Cooper, 29  
TOOTSIE

THE LOWDOWN
As a teen, Cooper starred in Spring Awakening’s original Broadway run; in 2018, she was Sandy Cheeks in SpongeBobSquarePants. Now her feminist, millennial spin on Jessica Lange’s character from the iconic 1982 film earns her a nod for best actress in a featured role in a musical.

WORDS OF WISDOM
“We’re slowly shifting into a more diverse world in the theater. I hope it’s not just a phase. I’ve had the lucky experience of playing roles that are not racially specific, and that type of inclusivity is so important.”

ONES TO WATCH

Hsu (left) with Will Roland in Be More Chill.

In a season filled with breakout performances, these young actors made new and classic roles completely their own — and deserve Tony Award recognition for it.

PATRICK VAII Farmhand Jud Fry is usually portrayed as a dim-witted clod of a villain in Oklahoma! But with his haunted, delicate performance, Vaili held the role into a heartrending, modern societal outcast.

SOPHIA ANNE CARUSO At 14, Caruso sang “Life on Mars” in David Bowie’s musical Lazarus. Now she’s up for lead actress in Be More Chill. Vaili is a refreshingly gifted ingenue coming in her own.

STEPHANIE HSU As Christine Canigula, the love interest at the center of the story, this new musical Be More Chill, Hsu is both endearing and hilarious, with the kind of subtle, hilarious comedic touch that can remind the likes of Sutton Foster.

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AND THANK OUR TALENTED COLLEAGUES IN NASHVILLE WHO SUPPORT AND INSPIRE US EVERY DAY
With his earthy charm and keen instinct for runaway hits, Luke Combs has enjoyed one of the most striking organic breakthroughs in recent Music Row memory — recentering a genre in flux and restoring the role of everyman superstar.

BY MARISSA R. MOSS • PHOTOGRAPHED BY SAMI DRASIN
A few days ago, Luke Combs flew a private plane to Stagecoach. In a few more days, he’ll release his next top five Hot Country Songs hit, “Beer Never Broke My Heart.” And tonight he’ll learn that he has won three Billboard Music Awards. Right now, though, he just wants to show me where he shot a turkey.

On this sticky-hot morning an hour west of Nashville, the 29-year-old country star is maneuvering his red Polaris off-roader down a muddy path on his vast, 140-acre plot of land. “We got four birds on that stand in the last month,” boasts Combs in his relaxed North Carolina drawl as he slows down and points to the perch where he was hunting with his buddies not long ago. “Even if you don’t catch anything, it’s still the best time ever. You drink coffee and watch the sun rise. That’s my favorite thing about being out here.”

Behind the wheel in khaki shorts, a light blue UNC shirt and flip-flops, the Asheville native looks more like a guy who just rolled by for beer and wings than a megastar in the midst of a sold-out, 60-plus-date arena tour. And in fact, it wasn’t long ago that Combs was living in a Nashville apartment, scraping together enough cash to master his first single, “Hurricane.” But in the past three years, the pace of Combs’ career has accelerated to warp speed: He has scored five No. 1 singles and a No. 1 country album, This One’s for You, while his twice-platinum ballad “Beautiful Crazy” just spent seven straight weeks ruling Billboard’s Country Airplay chart. In March, he topped all five of the Billboard country charts simultaneously. And in December, he’ll headline Nashville’s Bridgestone Arena, where he could have added a second night had the NHL been willing to move a pesky hockey game.

“What’s tomorrow?” asks Combs. “Sometimes it’s changing the cat litter, and other times, it’s playing for 6,000 people, and that’s totally normal. Meanwhile, five years ago, I couldn’t get somebody to listen to me at a barbecue restaurant.”

In today’s splintered world of country music, Combs has shot to stardom by serving as a true north for some and a happy middle for others. He’s a throwback to ‘90s honky-pop greats who writes radio-friendly, relatable anthems with skillful wordplay. With his ubiquitous redSolo cup, he presents like the dude who started singing at the party before he even had time to finish his drink. (For the record, it’s actually two cups, stacked: one to pour, one to fill the Jack with the Coke.)

“He’s the everyman, and that’s powerful,” says Randy Goodman, chairman/CEO of Sony Music Nashville. (Combs is signed to Columbia) While many of country’s current stars have embraced hip-hop (Sam Hunt), pop (Maren Morris, Florida Georgia Line) and even EDM (Kelsea Ballerini), and others gravitate toward progressive Americana (Brandi Carlile, Margo Price), Combs stands at the crossroads of it all: At the Academy of Country Music Awards, he went from singing alongside Amanda Shires on fiddle to backing Brooks & Dunn.

Whatever kind of country bear you are, Combs’ porridge tastes just right. And in a genre that can feel as though it’s changing faster than you can say “Old Town Road,” Combs and his music are, to many, a real refuge. “People tell Luke, ‘Thank you for saving country music for me,’ ” says Combs’ co-manager Chris Kappy. “They feel like he has been their anchor.”

Combs stops the Polaris to show me some land he plans to farm (corn, wheat, millet), explaining how he eats everything he hunts. “I haven’t bought a pound of ground beef since I moved out here,” he says proudly as we head back to the 4,000-square-foot home he purchased last summer. He opens the garage freezer and pulls out a package of deer sausage labeled “April 20th.” “4/20?” he chuckles. “He-he.”

But while Combs’ everyman appeal is organic, he hasn’t reached this level of stardom by coating on down-to-earth charm. A carefully cultivated social media presence and streaming-friendly strategy have helped him grow an unparalleled fan base (known as his “Bootleggers”) that exploded once he went to radio. Beginning with six-second videos on Vine, constant YouTube clips and frequent Facebook Live sessions, Combs has racked up 2.7 billion on-demand U.S. streams, according to Nielsen Music, by being the kind of artist that fans not only relate to but feel like they truly know, who happens to also write hit after hit: a country Ed Sheeran.

In a world of surprise album drops and Taylor Swift Easter eggs, Combs realized early that kind of familiarity was a key to his success — and while suspense might make for flashier marketing, he has relied on fan feedback to lead the way. He knew, for instance, that releasing a single and calling it “sacred” wouldn’t work for him. He made that mistake once, when he dropped an EP out of nowhere and got a lukewarm reaction. Instead, he’ll integrate a song into his live show and post it on YouTube and Instagram stories — even, in the case of “Beer Never Broke My Heart,” name a tour after it. By the time “Beer” is released, it will have been in his setlist for over a year.

A week after our jaunt around his property, “Beer” debuts at No. 12 on the Hot Country Songs chart. A week after that, it debuts at No. 2 on Country Streaming Songs with 11 million U.S. streams — the best first full week of streaming ever for a country song. The first single off Combs’ June 7 EP, The Prequel, the track will set a record if it reaches No. 1. He’ll be the first country artist to get his first six singles to No. 1 in a row. A thunderous Southern rock anthem that’s equal parts twang and grit, anchored by Combs’ rich, deep voice, it’s hard to imagine it going anywhere but straight to the top, especially since, as usual, his fans already have given it a hearty test drive. (It’s now at No. 3.) “I’ve been doing that forever,” Combs tells me of his approach. “Not to give it away, but that’s it. Everybody always tries to make things a big secret. Not me. There’s no secret.”

Inside Combs’ writing room at the house, a small, furry menagerie is gathering around the singer. “Wix! What up, girl?” Combs asks a black cat who just sauntered in. Sitting on the
leather couch, surrounded by roughly a dozen guitars, he’s already enthusiastically stroking Buc, a zaffi striped tabby that his fiancée, Nicole Hocking, found in a bucket at a college party. Later today, he and Hocking will head to Petco to pick up Jolo, a rescue dog they’re adopting, and Combs is a bit concerned about potential sibling rivalry.

“I’m kind of worried, because they’re just so sweet,” he says as Wix snuggles up next to Bucc on Combs’ belly. He realizes this looks a little ridiculous. “I’m like Dr. Evil,” he jokes with a gentle pat, sending a puff of cat hair rolling away like tumbleweed.

The room contains one major reminder of what’s happening in the outside world: a plaque on the wall congratulating Combs on reaching 1 billion career streams in 2018. “I think we’re up to 2 billion now,” says Combs. “But who knows.” (It’s actually 2.7 billion.) Combs says his compound here reminds him of home. He’s an only child, and his mother and father visit from Asheville frequently. His family — he describes his parents as “very liberal” — moved to the mountain town from Charlotte when Combs was 8, around the same time that Combs, who was raised on country music, started listening to singer-songwriters like Tracy Chapman and Billy Joel. In high school, he got into Dead Kennedys.

“When I did hear country, everything was about beaches,” says Combs of the era heavily dominated by Kenny Chesney and his acolytes. “There was nothing to relate to.”

Then, in college at Appalachian State University, he discovered Eric Church, who appealed to the side of Combs that loved classic rock and Metallica, but also to the part of him that connected with working-class America. Combs’ mother was laid off from her job after 20 years due to corporate restructuring, and Church’s understanding of the small-town common man made Combs see the genre in a new light. Those were the kind of lyrics that he wanted to write — the drinking songs and the tales of normal folks and their struggles and imperfect loves.

“I related to [country] in a way I couldn’t when I imagined myself in a punk band,” he says. (His co-manager, Lynn Oliver-Cline, still refers to him as “very punk rock.”) “Something about it felt like home.” He taught himself guitar and dropped out of college at 20 to pursue music, moving into an apartment above a strip mall.

In those early days, Combs didn’t have much money, but he did have the seeds of a strategy. By lining up constant gigs and posting on Vine — where, even in a six-second video clip, he could show off his captivating voice — he started to build a fan base. By 2015, Kappy had heard from a Georgia promoter that there was a guy on the Nashville scene who resonated unusually well with crowds. When he stopped by a Combs gig at the 40 Watt in Athens, he noticed that fans were not only singing along, but putting their phones down, too. Four months later, Kappy moved to Nashville to manage Combs, eventually bringing his discovery to Oliver-Cline, who was launching her own label, River House.

“In my previous life, I had seen very rabid fan bases — with Kiss or Paramore,” says Kappy. “[Combs] had that at the club level and even in bars. This guy can sing, this guy can write, this guy is ready to tour and will sit and meet fans every single night. It was a risk, but when you see something like that, you know it’s special.”

To Oliver-Cline, who previously had worked with Americana artists like Jason Isbell, Combs seemed like a “more commercial version of Chris Stapleton” — and she immediately signed on as co-manager, disarmed not just by his talent, but by his hard numbers. “He had sold over 100,000 singles on his own,” she says. “The streams were 100% on demand, no playlisting.”
They shopped Combs’ music to labels but no one bit, so they decided to put out an EP on River House/Thirty Tigers, staying on the road constantly and funneling every other minute into building a fan base—which, for Combs, meant developing a high degree of streaming and social media savvy. Kappy broadcast almost every early show to Facebook Live, constantly posted new videos on YouTube and, to this day, still has a two-person staff dedicated to answering fan messages.

Because Combs already had a strong online presence, his team understood that they would have to approach platforms as equivalents to radio—not, as often happens in country music, as detours from a more traditional promotional route. “We work with everybody just like we would with CMT or iHeart,” says Kappy. “Every aspect of the streaming model is something we are very passionate about, and it is a main source of revenue.” When fans want music, Kappy and Oliver-Cline have pushed them to purchase on iTunes or play on Spotify over buying physical copies—which resulted in 1 million streams of “Hurricane” before Combs even went to radio. (He has sold 497,000 albums to date.)

That momentum was enough to get bidding wars in town started. At his first meeting with Sony, “He had dip in and maybe a Merle Haggard shirt,” recalls Mary Catherine Kinney, Combs’ former label publicist. “He had a full scope of who he was, what he wanted his music to sound like and who his fans were. By the time he got to us, he’d already done the work.”

“He was doing great, commercial country music in this incredible voice,” says Goodman. “But he didn’t look like a normal GQ guy in our format.” Sony entered a joint venture with River House in an unusual pairing of a major Nashville label with an independent. When Combs released This One’s for You, it shot to No. 1 on Top Country Albums. (It has since gone double-platinum.) Kinney calls it “one of the greatest rise stories we’ve ever had in the format.”

Combs got this far in large part because his team adheres to a strong idea of what Kappy calls “the lane.” “We’re always trying to ride that line between commercial and credible,” says Oliver-Cline. “That keeps us up at night.” No sharp turns or unexpected detours: When Combs does a collaboration, it has to make sense, playing up an aspect of his artistry that’s already there. Joining Leon Bridges on Combs’ Crossroads and an upcoming due with H.E.R., bring out Combs’ soulful side. “Neither of us were told we were traditionally handsome or talented or cool,” says Bridges. “Just two dudes from the South who really loved music.” Combs would love to work with Post Malone, and Adele and Sheeran are on his bucket list. But an EDM collaboration? “Those cards aren’t even on the table,” says Oliver-Cline.

Combs realizes it’s time to go pick up Jolo, but first, he wants to play me The Prequel on a pair of wireless speakers. He runs through a set of songs that sound like surefire blockbuster hits. They’re radio catnip—melodic, fun, clearly country—but also smart and even a little sentimental. Both commercial and credible, all the way.

“I can’t wait to play this f**king song live,” he says after blasting the ’90s honky-tonk of “Lovin’ You.” “Yeah,” he adds with a smirk—he’s trying to be modest, but he knows when he has a hit on his hands. “That rocks.”

It’s Cinco de Mayo in Frisco, Texas, and Combs is in the middle of a fitting for a new pair of jeans. Aboard his white tour bus parked at the Off the Rails Country Music Fest, Hocking sits at her laptop, while JoJo — clearly already at home in the family — lolls on the couch. (The cats, presumably hanging in there, are at home.) Content with his denim, Combs settles down next to a custom record console. Church’s Carolina is playing, and Willie Nelson’s Stardust (“Probably my favorite album ever”) is on deck.

Tonight, Combs will play the second-to-last set of the festival, after Morgan Evans and before his pal Hunt. But right now, he and Hocking are reminiscing about the Grammy Awards back in February.
**CHRIS KAPPY**  
FOUNDER/OWNER, MAKE WAKE ARTISTS

**LYNN OLIVER-CLINE**  
FOUNDER, RIVER HOUSE ARTISTS

In early 2016, longtime friends Chris Kappy, 46, and Lynn Oliver-Cline, 45, plotted Luke Combs’ career from a $250-a-month windowless room above a dentist’s office on Nashville’s Donelson Pike. “We had both of our desks and a small love seat,” remembers Kappy, who had recently quit his job at Atlanta-based music-cruise producer Sixthman and moved to Music City to manage the singer-songwriter full time. “Luke would come in, lay on it and shoot the shit.”

Now more than 2.7 billion on-demand U.S. streams (according to Nielsen Music), three years and one everyman megastar later, the executive collaborators have parlayed their glorified storage space into the purchase of a 10,000-square-foot building on Nashville’s west side. But this doesn’t mean they’ve gotten fancy. “We still go to Taco Bell,” says Oliver-Cline.

**THE ORIGIN STORY**

**Oliver-Cline** “Kappy and I have known each other for 23 years. When he moved to Nashville in 2015, he said, ‘Can I come play you some music? I’m going to do the management thing with a guy named Luke Combs.’ When he played [his music] for me, I said, ‘Hmm, I think you actually have something here.’

**Kappy** “It was just Luke and the band, four other guys. He booked all his own shows and didn’t know what a real manager did. It was a three-month-long courting process — he met with other managers, too. I told him, ‘I know what a passionate fan base wants. If you can handle everything from the stage, I’ll handle everything from the stage to the doors.’ I don’t know what I said right, but he decided to go with me. So I quit Sixthman, jumped into the van and started driving.”

**STRIKING A BALANCE**

**Oliver-Cline** “I signed Luke to a record deal, but eventually Kappy and I decided to partner on the management side. I’ve been in the industry for 25 years, worn a bunch of different hats and also have a publishing company. Kappy works his magic on the touring piece and fan engagement. I don’t ever confirm a show, and he doesn’t come up with a record-release date. It works.”

**LESSONS FROM PEARL JAM**

**Oliver-Cline** “Kappy and I had the opportunity to tour the Pearl Jam space in Seattle last December. They have everything in-house: a place for their tech people, the road crew, their gear, the merchandise. We wanted to model it after what they do — it creates a culture.”

**CELEBRATING TEAM COMBS-STYLE**

**Kappy** “Going out for a big steak dinner and popping bottles isn’t who we are. Just some La Croix [and] bean burritos, and we’re happy people.”

**Oliver-Cline** “We go fishing a lot to celebrate — pier fishing, fly fishing, boat fishing.”

**Kappy** “We’re a little different than a regular client/manager relationship. We spend holidays together. We vacation together. We’re really into the personal side.”

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Combs was nominated for best new artist (Dua Lipa won), and they walked the red carpet behind Cardi B. “Literally no one cared about us being there,” says Combs with a laugh. Still, he’s at home among pop stars. Or Ed Sheeran, at least. The two recently hung out at Twin Peaks, Nashville’s answer to Hooters. (Attempting a British accent, Combs channelles Sheeran describing its clientele as “a bunch of lonely blokes who want to look at titties”). Sheeran, who once posted an Instagram story of himself singing Combs “When It Rains It Pours,” happens to be a Tennessee Titans fan, and he has been known to frequent the place to watch games, so Combs met him there. Sheeran was confused when the lonely blokes — who usually let him go incognito — started asking for pictures with the duo.

“I said, ‘Buddy, if you were in a wine bar in East Nashville, people would come and take a picture with you, because those are your fans,’” recalls Combs. “But you have brought me into essentially a NASCAR race. This is where my fans go.”

As ever, Combs understands his audience, which is clear two hours later when he walks onstage in full Luke Combs regalia (black shirt, cap, Solo cups). In the pit, a cross-section of fans — a young girl on her father’s shoulders, a pink-haired woman in checkered Vans, a group of drunken bros and a female couple who kiss during “Beautiful Crazy” — seems to know every word. When Combs finally plays “Beer Never Broke My Heart,” they all sing along, three days before the single has even been released.

They listen just as intently when, throughout the show, Combs tells stories onstage — about how, three years ago, he had never been on a plane; how he constantly heard “no”; how he’s just like them. About midway into the set, Combs’ band walks offstage, leaving him up there alone, like back when he played those barbecue joints, trying to catch a break. “I like to play a song by myself every night to remember how this all started, so I hope you don’t mind,” he says, before launching into “This One’s for You.” “Which is just me, a guitar and a song that I wrote.”

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**S E T E L L E R**
NASHVILLE’S NEW GROOVE

As the genre's brightest stars expand their sound and attract a growing global audience, the 100 industry leaders on Billboard's fifth annual Country Power Players list celebrate the past year's $1.34 billion earnings in sales, streaming and touring.
From left: Keith Urban, Chris Stapleton, Carrie Underwood and Cindy Mabe photographed by Robby Klein on April 16 at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville.
at December, UMG Nashville president Cindy Mabe climbed aboard George Strait’s tour bus, which was parked outside Las Vegas’ T-Mobile Arena and serves as his home during his residency in the city. Strait had turned in an album in October and wanted to put it out before year’s end. But Mabe knew it needed more setup time, and she arranged a face-to-face meeting to break the news.

“Listening to these songs reminded me of how important George Strait is to music,” says Mabe in late April, sitting in UMG Nashville’s office on Second Avenue, overlooking the Cumberland River. So she presented Strait with not only a new rollout plan for the album but also a multi-year initiative for his back catalog that tied in partners like Spotify. “We spoke a lot about why we needed him to keep creating his musical perspective, because he is our North Star,” says Mabe.

Strait has accumulated 44 No. 1s on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart — more than any other artist — and he’s UMG Nashville’s third-most-streamed act, behind Chris Stapleton and Luke Bryan. But Mabe’s decision was about more than just the bottom line — it was an opportunity to right an industry wrong. “In the same way we are doing [campaigns] for The Rolling Stones, Queen and Elton John, why are we not doing it for our core country artists?” she says. “This was a chance for us to start that.”

Her plan worked: Following its release in April, Strait’s Honky Tonk Time Machine became his 27th No. 1 on the Top Country Albums chart, and another in a long line of No. 1 albums (including seven in 2018) for UMG Nashville.

Mabe’s approach with Strait exemplifies why she’s one of Music City’s most respected industry voices: She proves that executives can be simultaneously shrewd and empathetic, attentive to analytics and data but focused first and foremost on artists and music. “Cindy is the quiet oracle,” says Keith Urban, whose Graffiti U was one of the albums Mabe helped top the chart last year. “She has her antenna tuned in to things I often can’t see at the time, but she knows when to push a button and when to keep it moving.”

During the last 18 months, Mabe oversaw groundbreaking album launches for unconventional artists like Kacey Musgraves and Stapleton, Billboard’s top country artist of 2018; helped superstar Bryan retain his dominant position in the industry; took rising stars like Lauren Alaina and Jon Pardi to new chart heights; and broke such budding acts as Jordan Davis, Billboard’s top new country artist of 2018. Last year, UMG Nashville sold 4.6 million albums and garnered 12.1 million track downloads and 10.4 billion on-demand audio streams, adding up to a 2018 country market share of 26.73%, the most of any Nashville label.

But Mabe doesn’t measure success only by the numbers. “I am trying to build artists that make it into the Country Music Hall of Fame — people who change culture and belief systems,” she says. “When that is your mission, it changes how you are playing the game.”

It’s a perspective that the 46-year-old Kernersville, N.C., native says helps her keep a level head in a fast-moving industry. “To be honest, my personal life is even crazier than this,” says the married mother of three kids, all 12 and under. “I am an introverted human being, so it is better for me to sit back and listen to what is happening so I can make a decision. It is how I was raised, frankly.”

After graduating from Belmont University in 1995, Mabe worked as promotion coordinator for Nashville’s RCA Label Group and eventually rose to product manager. In 2007, then-Capitol Records Nashville head Mike Dungan offered her the position of vp of marketing. Mabe, four months pregnant at the time, declined. But when he asked again five months later, she said yes — and they soon forged a powerful partnership. Mabe says she and Dungan, now UMG Nashville’s chairman/CEO, are well-suited teammates because of their complementary styles: She’s the serious one; he’s the jokester. Says Mabe: “We bring the best out in each other.”

As Nashville’s highest-ranking woman label executive, Mabe has been a beacon of support for female artists at all career levels. In 2018, Carrie Underwood — who the previous year had left her longtime home at Sony Nashville for UMG Nashville in part to reunite with Mabe — scored the biggest debut week that year for an album by a woman of any genre with Cry Pretty. This year, new signee Caylee Hammack earned raves for first single “Family Tree.” “I want to relate to what I am listening to,” says Mabe. “You have to hear a woman’s perspective however you consume music.”

Still, the highlight of her year was the overwhelming response to Musgraves’ masterwork, Golden Hour, which won album of the year at the Grammy Awards in February, as well as the Academy of Country Music Awards in April and the Country Music Association Awards last November. “We got a wider audience of real tastemakers that built a really loud noise around this album — the press and the Grammy circles and gay outlets,” she says. “A lot of those things weren’t traditionally something we would do, but it was where this record fit.”

Bringing an artist’s creative vision to fruition is, says Mabe, her greatest joy — and also her biggest responsibility. “I have always felt like songs are gifts from God. Music is the most powerful thing in the universe, and it changes people more than words or actions,” she says. “When someone puts that in my hands, I take it freaking seriously. That is the No. 1 thing.”
**COUNTRY POWER PLAYERS 2019**

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**Labels**

Scott Borchetta, 56  
**President/CEO/Founder, Big Machine Label Group**

Bolstered by acts like Brett Young, Florida Georgia Line and Thomas Rhett — all of whom took multiple songs to No. 1 on the Country Airplay chart in 2018 — Borchetta’s BMLG snagged a 10.1% country market share for the year. Though Big Machine ended its decadelong association with Taylor Swift in November, its talent bench remains deep, with Lady Antebellum, Sugarland and Sheryl Crow coming aboard, as well as newer acts like Midland and Carly Pearce continuing to thrive. Borchetta hints there are bigger things to come. “We’re getting ready to do a huge face-lift,” he says cryptically. “It’s something we’ve been working on the last 12-18 months.”

**MOVIE CHARACTER HE MOST RELATES TO** “Martin Sheen in Apocalypse Now — I’m always in a different battle every day.”

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George Couri, 48  
**Bruce Kalmick, 37**  
**CO-owners, Triple 8 Management/Triple 8 Records**

Since launching in the fall of 2016, Triple 8 — a partnership among Thirty Tigers, Triple 8 Management and Sony — has been on an impressive winning streak, with all four singles it has released (Scotty McCreery’s “Five More Minutes” and “This Is It”; Russell Dickerson’s “Yours” and “Blue Tacoma”) topping the Country Airplay chart. “For a label to be profitable in three years with two artists, it’s pretty incredible,” says Nix of the team that finished at No. 8 on Billboard’s 2018 Country Airplay Label of the Year list. “We don’t take it for granted.” Triple Tigers hopes to continue its success with latest signing Gone West, which comprises Grammy winner Colbie Caillat; her fiancé, Justin Young; and husband-and-wife duo Nelly Joy and Jason Reeves.

**BEST NASHVILLE RESTAURANT MEAL COURI** “My wife and I can devour the Crazy Rice at Sunn in under five minutes — not something you want to watch us do.”

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Mike Curb, 74  
**Founder/Chairman, Curb/Word Entertainment**

Curb Records’ complete integration of the assets — over 13,000 song copyrights and 10,000 masters — acquired in its 2016 purchase of Christian label giant Word Entertainment is the recent feat that gives the company’s leader the most satisfaction. But Curb, who founded his namesake label in 1963, is also excited by the continued chart success of Lee Brice, Dylan Scott and Rodney Atkins, whose single “Caught Up in the Country,” featuring the Fisk Jubilee Singers, set the record for the longest-running single in Country Airplay history at 57 weeks.

**WHAT KEEPS HIM UP AT NIGHT** “We had 126,000 children go off the health-care rolls here in Tennessee [recently]. We need to figure out why.”

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Mike Dungan, 65  
**Chairman/CEO, Universal Music Group Nashville**

UMG Nashville took seven albums to the peak of Billboard’s Top Country Albums chart in 2018 and started 2019 strong with the return of Kacey Musgraves’ Grammy-winning Golden Hour to No. 1 and George Strait’s 27th chart-topper. But it’s the roster’s newbies who have Duncan’s blood pumping. “I’m feeling really great about a lot of our recent signings,” says the Ohio native, who is especially high on Texas singer Parker McCollum, 26, and “Family Tree” singer Caylee Hammack, 25. As head of the label with the highest market share, Duncan can afford to be choosy: “We never stop looking and I believe that our quality meter is very high, but we only move when we feel like we’ve got something and it makes you feel good.”

**ADVICE TO ARTISTS TAKING POLITICAL STANCES** “I greatly admire anyone who uses a celebrity platform to speak up to what they see as an injustice. Just try not to fuck up my business plan.”

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John Esposito, 63  
**Chairman/CEO, Warner Music Nashville**

Esposito points to the ACM Awards in April as evidence of WMN’s success with its artists at every stage of their careers. Dan + Shay, whom the Music City executive calls “one of the really great stories of 2018 in this town,” won duo of the year; Blake Shelton performed “God’s Country,” which in May became his first No. 1 on Hot Country Songs since 2013; and Ashley McBryde took home new female artist. Says the Pennsylvania native: “For a born-again hillbilly to say we [just] had our most successful year financially in 20 years, and we’re beating it again — it’s damn fun.”

**TIME-MANAGEMENT TIP** “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up by Marie Kondo. Her advice has allowed me to unclutter my personal and professional life.”

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Randy Goodman, 62  
**Chairman/CEO, Sony Music Nashville**

One of the biggest success stories of 2018 came from Goodman’s roster: Luke Combs’ This One’s for You spent 17 of its ongoing 35 weeks at No. 1 on Top Country Albums and helped Sony achieve a 22.4% country market share. Sony also scored one of country’s biggest crossover wins: After Maren Morris collaborated with Zedd and Grey for 2018’s Introspect smash “The Middle,” Sony’s challenge was to “tie airplay back in to Maren’s debut album — and it never seemed to work,” says Goodman. But then this spring, Morris’ sophomore set, GIRL, spun off a country radio hit with its title track,

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**The Women Behind The Hits**

**“CRY PRETTY,” CARRIE UNDERWOOD**  
**Songwriter: Liz Rose**

Co-writers: Hillary Lindsey, Lori McKenna, Underwood  
**Country Airplay peak: No. 9 (Sept. 1, 2018)**

“Carrie came out to my house, talking about how hard it is to always be strong and have to show the happy side of everything. I think Lori had the idea of ‘cry pretty.’ It connected with Carrie and was really easy to write. A few months later, she called to tell us it was going to be the first single.”

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56 BILLBOARD | JUNE 1, 2019  
**ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAYA NICELY**
CONGRATULATIONS ON RECEIVING BILLBOARD’S COUNTRY POWER TRAILBLAZER AWARD!

LOVE,
LOU, ROBIN & THE TRI STAR TEAM
 When Big Stars Split The Rent

When Luke was a bachelor, Dierks a student and Faith a capuchy receptionist, they joined other struggling Nashvillians to divvy up the bills. Their former roommates (all now accomplished in their own right) remember the good old days.

**By** Isaac Weeks

**FAITH HILL AND VICTORIA SHAW** (singer-songwriter)

Where Beliveau
When 1994

Shaw on Hill: “We started hanging out when she was the receptionist at the publishing company I was writing for. She was just adorable and delightful. We became fast friends. Her first album came out at the time we were rooming together, so she was on the road a lot, doing promotion. One night the two of us were sitting on the couch in our sweatpants, watching the CMA Awards, and she said, ‘One day, we’ll be up there.’ The following year, she won.”

**DIERKS BENTLEY, FIELDING LOGAN** (manager, Q Prime South) and **JAY WILLIAMS** (partner/co-head, WME Nashville offices)

Where Green Hills
When 1998-99

Logan on Bentley and Williams: “My first job in town was at the Station Inn. Dierks was finishing up his degree, and he and his college friends were there every Tuesday night. One thing led to another, and we ended up living together. There was singing and playing a ton of bluegrass, and going down to the Inn to watch Steve Earle or Del McCoury. Jay had a bluegrass band of his own, so there was a lot of picking going on.”

**CHRIS STAPLETON and ERIN ENDERLIN** (singer-songwriter)

Where Green Hills
When 2004-06

Enderlin on Stapleton: “Me and another girl lived upstairs, and Stapleton had a bachelor apartment in the basement. I figured out real quickly that Chris and I are really socially awkward. We would walk into the kitchen at the same time and immediately apologize to each other: ‘Oh, I’m so sorry, I’ll just come back later!’ I remember sitting in bed at night, listening to Chris playing through the air conditioner vents, thinking, ‘One day, people are going to be really jealous of this.’”

**LUKE BRYAN and DALLAS DAVIDSON** (singer)

Where Nippers Corner
When 2004-05

Davidson on Bryan: “One Sunday we were sitting on the couch, and Luke looked over at me and said, ‘Man, I think we’ve about gotten too old to be roommates.’ I looked back at him and said, ‘Buddy, I’m glad you brought it up, because I was thinking about the same thing.’ He’d gotten a girlfriend, I’d gotten a girl friend, so we were both looking at each other pretty much going, ‘Uh, we need to talk…’ He ended up buying that house.”

**BRETT ELDREDGE, SETH ENGLAND** (partner, Big Loud) and **LEE KRABEL** (senior creative director, Smack Songs)

Where Downtown
When 2007-08 ( Eldredge), 2008-11 ( England)

Krabel on Eldredge and England: “We definitely benefited through our friendship. Brett had an internship at UMG Nashville, Seth was interning at Big Loud Shirt Publishing, and I was interning for a management company that repped Little Big Town at the time. We were all taking each other to big events, helping get each other’s names out there.”

**NEIL MASON** (The Cadillac Three) and **AUSTIN JENCKES** (songwriter-manager)

Where Sylvan Park
When 2012-15

Jenckes on Mason: “The first co-write I ever did in my life was with Neil. I came to Nashville on a Sunday night. That Monday morning, we wrote a song. On Wednesday, he texted me to come over to his house to write more. Six months later, I moved in. If I didn’t have any money and was struggling, he’d let me sing a couple of demos for him and just take that off the rent. Every single person that I’ve met in Nashville connects back to Neil. He was my first publisher and is my manager now.”

and album cut “The Bones” became a surprise playlist favorite, logging over 45 million on-demand streams since its March release.

**MOVIE CHARACTER RELATES TO MOST** “Atticus Finch in To Kill a Mockingbird, I wish I was more like him.”

**ALLISON JONES**

**JIMMY HARREN, PRESIDENT, BMG RECORDS, EXECUTIVE VP, BIG MACHINE LABEL GROUP**

Harron’s 2018 highlights include signing seven-time Grammy winners Lady Antebellum — an act he helped break at Capitol in 2007 — and finding new talent like Riley Green, who peaked at No. 3 on Country Airplay with first single “There Was This Girl,” and Brett Young, who notched his fourth Country Airplay No. 1 with “Here Tonight.” Recalls Harron, “I heard Brett’s voice and said, ‘Nobody sings like him.’” Jones — who works across all Big Machine labels — touts the success of Florida Georgia Line, whose debut with Bebe Rexha, “Meant to Be,” spent 50 weeks at No. 1 on Hot Country Songs. She also praises gains made by Thomas Rhett, Midland and Carly Pearce.

**LEARNING FROM THE BEST** Jones Reba McEntire “sets the gold standard on how to be a working woman in this business. She handles everything with unwavering grace, faith and a wicked sense of humor. I constantly ask myself, ‘What would Reba do?’

**CARSON JAMES**

**SHER MAE DEAN, EXECUTIVE VP PROMOTION, EBR MUSIC GROUP**

Veteran promotion manager James led former college backer and singer-songwriter Chase Rice (who co-wrote Florida Georgia Line’s 2012 crossover hit, “Cruise”) out of a career lull with his Country Airplay No. 1 “Eyes on You” and also helped Jimmie Allen’s “Best Shot” spend three weeks atop the chart. “Talent has no racial boundaries,” says James, “and with artists like Jimmie and Kane Brown, our format’s reach expands immensely.” Now the North Carolina native is laying the groundwork for new artist Lainey Wilson, “a Louisiana girl with an attitude,” whose label debut EP, produced by Jay Joyce (Eric Church), is slated for July. “She’s fun, she’s funny, and she can write,” says James.

**TIME-MANAGEMENT TIP** “In Sam Walton’s book [Made in America: My Story], he said never put more than 10 items on your to-do list per day.”

Congratulations to

CINDY MABE

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

and to

Mike Dungan, Royce Risser,
Brian Wright, Louis Messina,
and all the Billboard Country Power Player honorees!

IT’S GREAT TO HAVE YOU ON OUR TEAM!

GEORGE STRAIT

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HONKY TONK TIME MACHINE
Independent Spirit Rewards

Ten years ago, many Nashville indie labels didn’t stand a chance against the majors at country radio. But thanks to the democracy of streaming and a slew of smart signings, they’re scoring big Country Airplay wins. 

By Annie Reuter

Not so long ago, Kelsea Ballerini’s future in Nashville hardly looked bright. She had dropped out of Lipscomb University, hoping to make it as a singer, but had been rejected by every country label in town. Then, in early 2013, she scored what seemed like her last option for a big break: a publishing deal with independent company Black River Entertainment, where she started churning out a song or two a day and honing her craft. “I knew I wanted to be an artist,” she says, “but I also knew that everyone had already said no to me, so I had to be ready.”

When Black River decided to take a chance on her with a record deal later that year, she quickly proved herself: Her first three singles — “Love Me Like You Mean It,” “Dibs” and “Peter Pan” — all went to No.1 on Billboard’s Country Airplay chart, and in April, she became the newest member of the Grand Ole Opry. “I’ve been so lucky that Black River has always let me make music that comes from the heart,” says Ballerini the morning after her Opry induction.

While the three majors — Sony Music Nashville, Universal Music Group Nashville and Warner Music Nashville — have ruled the country radio charts for years, the airplay landscape is changing thanks to the success of independent mainstays such as Broken Bow Records Music Group, Big Machine Label Group and Curb Records, as well as relative upstarts like Black River, Triple Tigers, Big Loud, Reviver and Pearl. In 2018, indie labels were credited with 1.6 of the 33 No.1 songs on the Country Airplay chart — a sharp increase from 2010, when only six of the 24 songs that topped the list were from indies. (For this story, labels that are at least 50% independently owned are categorized as indie.)

Alongside Ballerini, Russell Dickerson (Triple Tigers) and Jimmie Allen (Stoney Creek/Broken Bow) have topped the charts with their debut singles, while Scotty McCreery (Triple Tigers) and Jake Owen (Big Loud), both previously signed to majors, saw career resurgences after switching to indies.

The shift has been a long time coming: Mike Curb launched what became Curb Records in 1963 with a versatile lineup that spanned rock, pop and country, scoring significant success in the latter during the 1990s with Tim McGraw, LeAnn Rimes, Wynonna Judd and, more recently, Lee Brice and Dylan Scott. The impact Curb made at radio spawned a new generation of indie labels that came on the scene in the late ’90s and early 2000s and quickly transformed country’s landscape: Benny Brown launched Broken Bow in 1999 and signed Jason Aldean in 2004, while Scott Borchetta opened Big Machine in 2005 after years of working at majors and soon after signed Taylor Swift.

Black River Entertainment CEO Gordon Kerr credits Broken Bow and Big Machine’s success with Aldean and Swift for allowing more indie labels to be taken seriously at radio. “When you’ve got Big Machine and Broken Bow in the same breath as [major] record labels that have been around for a long time, we do need to pay homage to the success they have had,” he says.

At the same time, the music industry’s struggles amid the digital revolution in the early 2000s also set the stage for the end of the majors’ radio dominance, says Big Loud partner Seth England. And as the industry has bounced back, the playing field for indies and majors has remained level. “When you look at today’s economy, there’s opportunity, and due to on-demand streaming, there are similar abilities to make revenue faster both for the label and the artist,” says England.

Many indie labels have benefited from their executives’ experience at bigger companies: Prior to Big Machine, Borchetta worked at Universal Music Nashville and DreamWorks Records as senior vp radio promotion, while Broken Bow executive vp Jon Loba did stints at Warner Bros. and Atlantic Records. But even as he leveraged his relationships, Borchetta says he knew he had a limited window to leave a mark.

“We were fortunate. Our second single was Jack Ingram’s [“Wherever You Are”], and it went to No.1. Taylor Swift’s third single [“Our Song”] went to No.1, and it was game on,” says Borchetta. “It’s a tough business to be in, but it’s great for the indies. It gives everybody hope that you don’t have to be with one of the big three to have a career in this business, whether you’re an artist or an executive.”

Says Loba of Broken Bow and Big Machine: “When both of our companies had so much critical mass, it gave others the confidence to hang in there. And, more
importantly, radio’s perception at that time changed.” While Loba says that Broken Bow’s promotion team is “a little bit leaner than some of the majors,” that clearly hasn’t stopped it from making inroads at radio. In fact, many indie labels estimate that their promo staffs have only one or two fewer people than an imprint’s team at a major.

Still, the rise of streaming and the increased availability of data have also allowed indie labels with limited A&R resources to compete alongside larger companies with bigger staffs. Dickerson had been on the road for six years and amassed 20 million streams before he signed with Triple Tigers in 2016. Norbert Nix, partner/GM of the label, says the consumer data on Dickerson’s romantic breakout single, “Yours,” signaled that the label had a hit on its hands. “We didn’t care about the tempo vs. ballad thing. We just knew that the song was really special,” he says.

The first four singles that Triple Tigers released — Dickerson’s “Yours” and “Blue Tacoma,” McCreery’s “Five More Minutes” and “This Is It” — all went to No. 1 on the Country Airplay chart, an achievement Nix attributes to the strength of the music, but also to the label’s “less is more” approach to its roster size, common among indies that take pride in the hands-on attention they can provide to their artists.

“Our model is to develop what we have and create credibility with country radio programmers so when we come back with a song, they will hopefully give us consideration because of our track record,” says Nix.

If there’s one strategy indie labels have in common, it’s ultimately their willingness to take chances on artists — like Ballerini, Broken Bow’s Jimmie Allen and Big Machine’s Carly Pearce — that majors might not.

“Small labels are willing to take the biggest risk,” says Allen, a black singer-songwriter who moved to Nashville in 2007 and juggled three jobs before signing with Broken Bow, which BMG bought in 2017. “All those other big companies were telling me no because I looked different and sounded different. The indie companies told me yes and believed in what I had to offer.”
Broadway’s Big-Name Barkeeps

What’s a country superstar to do after scoring hits? Set up camp on downtown Nashville’s main drag and open a namesake bar—six in the last 18 months alone.

BY TAYLOR WEATHERBEE

1. KID ROCK’S BIG ASS HONKY TONK & ROCK N’ ROLL STEAKHOUSE

Owner: Kid Rock

The vibe here is Kid Rock all the way: a neon-splashed bar with black lights overhead, the singer’s “American Badass” emblem hanging over the first floor and a sign shaped like a woman’s behind. There’s decent steak, too, including a 36-ounce Tomahawk ribeye.

2. LUKE’S 32 BRIDGE

Owner: Luke Bryan

Visitors can bounce between the rooftops of Aldean’s and Bryan’s bars (they’re housed in the same building, but the spaces, which both opened in 2018, are distinct: Aldean’s features a big, green tractor on the first floor [an ode to his 2009 Hot Country Songs No. 1] as well as his mom’s peach cobbler on the menu. Bryan’s, named for a bridge in his native Georgia and, now, his clothing line, has a 36-bar, plus the black Chevy truck from his That’s My Kind of Night Tour.

3. JASON ALDEAN’S KITCHEN + ROOFTOP BAR

Owner: Jason Aldean

In its past lives, Broadway’s oldest building was a Civil War hospital, Nashville’s first used-record store and home to Bullet Records from 1946 to 1952. In October 2018, it became a three-floor honky-tonk and a Jackson mini-museum, featuring a bar that’s an exact replica of its owner’s Merritt sports fish boat, Hullbilly.

4. A.J.’S GOOD TIME BAR

Owner: A.J. Jackson

The former Grumman Guitaras space, where Bentley used to test out banjos when he moved to Nashville, features vintage guitars, a motorcycle that hangs above one bar and, above another bar, a Hit-Up sign name-checking his hit “Tip It On Back.”

5. DIERKS BENTLEY’S WHISKEY ROW

Owner: Dierks Bentley

Shelton partnered with Ryman Hospitality Properties to open this spot last June (in a franchise that includes locations in his hometown of Tishomingo, Miss.; Gatlinburg, Tenn.; and, in 2020, Orlando, Fla.). It’s the only bar on Broadway with snacks inspired by Shelton’s irreverent sense of humor, like Redneck Nachos and a Kiss My Country Ass Quesadilla.

6. OLE RED

Owner: Blake Shelton

The Big & Rich star enlisted his brother to build almost everything inside, including the tractor-wheel light fixtures. The two Heroes bar — which honor first responders, veterans and active military personnel, all of whom receive discounted drinks — have an American flag backdrop (albeit one made of beer cans). A neon sign of Rich’s likeness lights up when he’s at the bar.

7. REDNECK RIVERA

Owner: John Rich

The Big & Rich star enlisted his brother to build almost everything inside, including the tractor-wheel light fixtures. The two Heroes bars — which honor first responders, veterans and active military personnel, all of whom receive discounted drinks — have an American flag backdrop (albeit one made of beer cans). A neon sign of Rich’s likeness lights up when he’s at the bar.

Gordon Kerr, 52

President/CEO, Black River Entertainment

Kerr measures success by more than the numbers, citing his biggest 2018 accomplishment as “helping our artists, our writers and our staff realize their dreams.” However, Black River Entertainment—which in addition to its namesake label includes Black River Christian, Black River Americana and Black River Publishing, as well as a management company and recording studios—has racked up some impressive achievements over the last 12 months. Kelsea Ballerini notched her fourth Country Airplay chart-topper with “Legends,” For King & Country landed its fifth No. 1 on Christian Airplay with “God Only Knows,” and Christian artist Hannah Kerr (the CEO’s 22-year-old daughter) scored a top 30 hit on Billboard’s Adult Top 40 chart.

ONE BUSINESS NASHVILLE STILL NEEDS “Tim Hortons. I am a sucker for their Timbits.”

Ben Kline, 50

Executive VP, Warner Music Nashville

Cris Lacy, 46

Executive VP, Warner Music Nashville

Kristen Williams, 39

Senior VP Radio and Streaming, Warner Music Nashville

Lacy says Dan + Shay had “everything to do” with Warner’s 2018 success, as Williams helped the Grammy-winning duo’s piano ballad “Tequila” land atop both Country Airplay and Hot Country Songs, pushing the act over 2 billion career-on-demand streams. Those numbers not only led to Dan + Shay breaking on pop radio, with “Tequila” peaking at No. 18 on the Mainstream Top 40 chart, but also boosted its follow-up Country Airplay No. 1, “Speechless,” to No. 24 on the Hot 100. The pair helped Warner Nashville double its global revenue to seven figures in two years. Says Kline: “If we had a foot in the door, we broke it down in 2018.”

LEARNING FROM BLAKE SHELTON Kline “It doesn’t matter how big a superstar, the business is constantly evolving and you have to change with it. I get texts from him all the time: ‘What does “consumption” mean?’”

Jon Loba*

Executive VP, BBR Music Group

Jason Aldean’s Rearview Town, which was Billboard’s best-selling independent album of 2018, and rising artist Jimmie Allen’s Country Airplay No. 1 “Best Shot,” drove BBR Music Group to the top spot on the year-end 2018 independent labels chart. Successes from Dustin Lynch,
CINDY,

WE’VE COME SO FAR TOGETHER. THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS BELIEVING IN THE POWER OF MUSIC & FORGING THE PATHS THAT BRING ARTISTIC VISIONS TO LIFE.
LOCASH and Runaway June propelled the label in early 2019. "When we started in 2001, there were so many things our competitors said could never happen within the walls of an independent: sales, dreams, radio airplay, major press, TV appearances, award nominations, touring," says Loba about BBR Music Group, which BMG acquired in 2017. "But we’ve knocked them all down."

David Macias, 54
OWNER/PRESIDENT, THIRTY TIGERS
“We’re up 9.6% (in revenue) from 2017 to 2018,” says Macias about his 17-year-old label. The Grammy-winning producer is particularly proud of helping triple John Prine’s first-week album sales with his 2018 LP, The Tree of Forgiveness, over Prine’s previous effort. Also noteworthy is the success American Idol alum Scotty McCreery has achieved at country radio through Triple Tigers Records — a partnership that Thirty Tigers, Triple 8 Management and Sony formed in 2016. He says of McCreery’s hit album Seasons Change: “This is a new chapter, and it couldn’t be off to a better start.”

COUNTRY MUSIC STORY OF THE YEAR “Kacey Musgraves. [Her success] should give everyone courage to take more chances on great music.”

Roxy Risser, 48
EXECUTIVE VP PROMOTION, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP NASHVILLE
Brian Wright, 46
EXECUTIVE VP AIR, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP NASHVILLE
In a year that included major successes for Keith Urban, Chris Stapleton and Carrie Underwood, Kacey Musgraves’ ascension was the primary highlight for the two executives. A young Musgraves sang her debut single, “Merry Go Round,” before country radio programmers in 2012, so to watch her win the album of the year Grammy seven years later feels like an especially hard-fought victory. “It was really cool to see her get that recognition,” says Risser.

LAST CONCERT ATTENDED FOR FUN Wright “Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers in 2017.”

Ken Robold, 54
EXECUTIVE VP COO, SONY MUSIC NASHVILLE
Jim Catino, 47
EXECUTIVE VP AIR, SONY MUSIC NASHVILLE
Steve Hodges, 54
EXECUTIVE VP PROMOTION AND ARTIST DEVELOPMENT, SONY MUSIC NASHVILLE
During the past year, this power trio collected big returns on a hat trick of wins: Maren Morris’ GIRL, noted the largest debut-week streaming sum for a country album by a female artist, with 24 million on-demand audio streams. Kane Brown netted his first No. 1 album on the Billboard 200 with second LP Experiment; Luke Combs’ This One’s for You has spent 35 weeks (and counting) at No. 1 on Top Country Albums, the first LP by a solo male to achieve that feat since Garth Brooks’ No Fences in 1990. Hodges calls Combs’ durable hit “Beautiful Crazy,” which spent 11 weeks atop Hot Country Songs, “a phenomenon of its own.”

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP Robold “At Sony, we take pride that we don’t shy away from signing females because there is an issue getting country (airplay). If an artist is unique and compelling, we will sign them.”

MANAGEMENT

Narvel Blackstock, 62
COO, STARGUIRK ENTERTAINMENT
Blackstock’s 31-year-old firm continued to grow the brands of Blake Shelton and Kelly Clarkson — the CEO’s daughter-in-law — beyond their singing bases. Shelton’s Ole Red clubs (see page 62) expanded into Gatlinburg, Tenn., and new series The Kelly Clarkson Show will hit daytime TV this fall. Both clients are also coaches on NBC’s The Voice, which makes them “advocates for not only their music, but the music industry as a whole,” says Blackstock.

ON DECK Developing talent Maggie Rose, who already has netted over 21.6 million on-demand U.S. streams, made her national TV debut on NBC’s Today in March.

Gary Borman
FOUNDER/CEO, BORMAN ENTERTAINMENT
After landing his sixth No. 1 on Top Country Albums in May 2018 with ninth studio set Graffiti U, client Keith Urban grossed $47.9 million on his Graffiti U world tour from 72 dates. His success co-headlining five C2C: Country to Country dates throughout Europe led Borman to prioritize an international plan for his Australian superstar. Plus, the 2018 Country Music Association Awards and the 2019 Academy of Country Music Awards both named Urban entertainer of the year.

AND THE WALLS CAME DOWN “One can no longer define an artist or their music simply by genre or country of origin. The walls of genre and nationality that keep music contained and segmented are continuing to dissolve from the impact of streaming and social media.”

Virginia Bunetta, 38
MANAGING PARTNER, G-MJOR MANAGEMENT
As if Thomas Rhett — whose new album Center Point Road drops May 31 — taking the male artist trophy at the 2019 Academy of Country Music Awards wasn’t enough, Bunetta (née Davis) hit a personal high note this past year, welcoming a daughter with her husband, songwriter-producer Julian Bunetta, on the October night that Rhett played the Los Angeles Forum. “I started working with Thomas when he was a songwriter at Lipscomb University, when he was 19 or 20,” says

The Women Behind The Hits

“TURNIN’ ME ON,” BLAKE SHELTON
Songwriter: Jessi Lee Alexander
Co-writers: Josh Osborne, Shelton
Country Airplay peak: No. 10 (Nov. 17, 2018)

“Blake had a simple little melody and hook — the money line. I called Josh Osborne, because it reminded me of ‘Sangria,’ which he wrote. A couple of days later, we got together and wrote it. I thought it was cool to give this girl power over the guy: ‘She must get off on turning me on.’ I love that line.”
Cindy, you are...

“The Quiet Oracle”

Congrats!!!

with love –

[Signature]
the West Virginia native. “To deliver my baby on the night of this very big show for us was surreal.”

**TIME-MANAGEMENT TIP** I list my top priorities on a yellow legal pad every night for the next day, so I start there first thing instead of my email.

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**Coran Capshaw, 61**
FOUNDER, RED LIGHT MANAGEMENT

**Mary Hilliard Harrington, 42**
SENIOR MANAGER, RED LIGHT MANAGEMENT

**Janet Weir, 44**
MANAGER, RED LIGHT MANAGEMENT; OWNER, 42 INT

**Van Haze, 41**
MANAGER, RED LIGHT MANAGEMENT

Capshaw works directly with Chris Stapleton, who has steadily grown into one of country’s top touring draws; grossing $38 million from 45 shows in 2018. Weir helped Maren Morris shatter a streaming record with GIRL. Its tracks racked up 24 million on-demand streams in its premiere frame, the largest debut-week tally for a country album by a female artist. Haze guided budding star Brett Young to his first No. 1 on Top Country Albums with Ticket to L.A. and his fourth Country Airplay chart-topper with “Here Tonight.” (For Harrington, see page 68.)

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**Bob Doyle, 71**
OWNER/PRESIDENT, MAJOR BOB MUSIC/BOB DOYLE & ASSOCIATES

Longtime client Garth Brooks, who Doyle co-manages with Randy Bernard, hinted at things to come when, in October, he played the first concert held at Notre Dame Stadium. CBS’ subsequent concert special, *Garth: Live at Notre Dame*, drew 14 million total viewers. Brooks, whom iHeartRadio Awards presented with the inaugural artist of the decade award in March, kicked off a three-year stadium tour in earnest that same month, with nine so-far announced shows selling more than 600,000 tickets. In another first, Brooks will release his music on vinyl with a new box set, Legacy.

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**Martha Earls, 41**
OWNER, EIG MANAGEMENT

Kane Brown’s sophomore album, *Experiment*, bowed at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 in November, one of only three country albums to reach the chart’s top slot in 2018. It was a high note for manager Earls, who says, “Within that album, there’s some heavy music: One song called ‘American Bad Dream’ is very timely, topical and important.” She adds that *Experiment* “contains some music and messaging that may be a little progressive for the format that makes people a little uncomfortable. But we’re talking about it. And conversation leads to change.”

---

**Am Edelblute**
OWNER, THE HQ

Edelblute steered Carrie Underwood, whom she has managed since the singer’s *American Idol* days, through another spectacular year: September’s *Cry Pretty* was the performer’s fourth Billboard 200 No. 1, the biggest all-genre debut by a female in 2018 and the top-selling new country album of last year. In November, Underwood was named female vocalist of the year at the Country Music Association Awards, which she and Brad Paisley co-hosted for the 12th time.

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**Kerrl Pauley Edwards, 47**
PRESIDENT, KP ENTERTAINMENT

Edwards guided Luke Bryan to another stellar year, including a tour that grossed more than $67 million in 2018 and hit 11 stadiums. “I don’t think I ever dreamed we would be in the position to do that many [stadiums],” the Lipscomb University alum says about her client of 15 years. “I almost have to pinch myself.” She also manages Cole Swindell, whose third studio release, *All of It*, stormed onto Top Country Albums at No. 1 in September, the first time he had reached the chart’s peak.

**COUNTRY STRONG** I’ve had people outside of country say, ‘There doesn’t seem to be another community like you guys have.’ That’s a big flag for us to wave. I’m competitive with the best, but don’t talk badly about Blake Shelton or Jason Aldean.”

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**Chris Kappy, 46**
FOUNDER, MAKE WAVES ARTISTS

**Lynn Oliver-Cline, 45**
FOUNDER, RIVER HOUSE ARTISTS

See page 50.

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**Marion Kraft, 54**
CEO, SHOPEE MANAGEMENT

See page 68.

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**The Widening Gender Gap**

While women artists struggle to get spins, their counterparts behind the scenes lag even further behind men — as a look at the contributors to the top 40 Country Airplay songs from the past five years reveals.

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**Methodology:** All data listed on the songwriters and producers on every song to reach the top 40 of the Country Airplay chart for the years 2014-18. For tracks with multiple songwriters and/or producers (including duos/groups), each person was counted individually.

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**PRODUCERS**

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**SONGWRITERS**

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650 MILLION ON DEMAND CAREER STREAMS

DYLANT SCOTT

+ NOTHING TO DO TOWN EP - #1 DEBUT BILLBOARD COUNTRY ALBUM SALES CHART
+ NEW FACES OF COUNTRY MUSIC® CLASS OF 2019
+ iHEARTRADIO MUSIC AWARD NOMINEE – BEST NEW COUNTRY ARTIST
+ RAISED ON COUNTRY TOUR 2019 WITH CHRIS YOUNG

FILOMORE

IMPACTING RADIO COAST TO COAST
30 MILLION ON-DEMAND STREAMS

+ ON TOUR WITH LAUREN ALAINA, FALL 2019
+ NATIONAL TV DEBUT – NBC'S TODAY SHOW, MAY 2019
+ GRAND OLE OPRY DEBUT, JUNE 2019
MARY HILLIARD HARRINGTON
SENIOR MANAGER, RED LIGHT MANAGEMENT

Mary Hilliard Harrington, 42, and Marion Kraft, 54, met in 2005 while Harrington was doing publicity for a not-yet-famous Miranda Lambert and Kraft served as the singer’s manager. Nearly 15 years later, Lambert, whom Kraft still manages, is a full-fledged superstar, and Harrington now manages some big names of her own, including Dierks Bentley, Elle King and LANCO. But what hasn’t changed in the intervening time is their connection and their dedication to making the path for artists smoother. In 2018, the friends helped create the CMA KixStart artist scholarship program, which aims to help rising acts get ahead in the industry.

“I wouldn’t have been able to do it by myself,” says Kraft at her Nashville home, with Harrington seated beside her on the couch. “I needed a great partner.” Together they’re also on a mission to rectify the lack of women on country radio (see page 60) and in writing rooms. Harrington represents Caylee Hammack, whom CMT named a 2019 Next Women of Country class member, and Kraft’s client list is an all-female cadre of powerful women: Lambert, Ashley Monroe, Pistol Annies and Tenille Townes.

GOING BEYOND GENDER

Harrington “For a lot of years, as this diversity conversation was happening, I didn’t feel like I was a ‘good female’ because I wasn’t signing girls. But the reason was that no one had walked in my office that just floored me. When I saw Hammack, I was just like, ‘Let’s go do it!’ I want people to love her because she’s an amazing artist and not because she’s female. She is incredibly special beyond her gender.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO ARTISTS

Kraft “When Miranda came into the format, [we had] the support of record labels and TV executives saying, ‘We’re in on this; we’re going to give it years.’ And it took years. She had her first single in 2004 but her first No. 1 in 2010. If we had people that only believed for six weeks or a year or even two, she would not be an artist today. We need to remember that careers are not built overnight.”

HOW TO GET MORE WOMEN ON THE AIRWAVES

Harrington “It’s going to take a lot of people not just talking about it but actually doing something. We hear a lot about [lack of] familiarity being the problem at country radio or streaming. How can [listeners] have familiarity with female artists if you’re not even adding them?”

KEEPING IT COMPETITIVE

Kraft “For Miranda to have won [the Academy of Country Music award for] female vocalist of the year for nine years in a row — that’s ridiculous. How haven’t we, as an industry, been able to build female [artists] that can compete with that? Thank God somebody else won this year. We celebrated. It’s time.”

MARION KRAFT
CEO, SHOPKEEPER MANAGEMENT
Harrington (left) and Kraft photographed by Yev Assad on May 11 at The Hermitage Hotel in Nashville.
The Women Behind The Hits

“RICH,” MAREN MORRIS
Songwriter: Laura Veltz
Co-writers: Jessie Jo Dillon, Morris
Country Airplay peak: No. 4 (Nov. 17, 2018)

“I laugh every time I play the song at a [writers] round, [singing], ‘Sitting on a big-ass pile of dimes.’ We were just goofing off, having a fun time. It was accidentally put on hold for Little Big Town. That doesn’t typically happen unless the song has legs. Maren had to call and say, ‘Hey, do you mind if I take the song back?’”

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Co-writers: Jessie Jo Dillon, Morris
Country Airplay peak: No. 4 (Nov. 17, 2018)

“I laugh every time I play the song at a [writers] round, [singing], ‘Sitting on a big-ass pile of dimes.’ We were just goofing off, having a fun time. It was accidentally put on hold for Little Big Town. That doesn’t typically happen unless the song has legs. Maren had to call and say, ‘Hey, do you mind if I take the song back?’”
LEE BRICE
FEATURING THE SMASH HIT
RUMOR
+ 9TH SINGLE IN A ROW TO REACH RIAA CERTIFIED GOLD
+ 150 MILLION ON DEMAND STREAMS
+ #1 COUNTRY SONG ON PANDORA TOP SPINS CHART
+ #1 ON SIRIUSXM THE HIGHWAY
+ PERFORMED ON NBC’S TODAY SHOW

RODNEY ATKINS
CAUGHT UP IN THE COUNTRY
THE NEW ALBUM - AVAILABLE NOW

“CAUGHT UP IN THE COUNTRY (FEAT. THE FISK JUBILEE SINGERS)”
+ CERTIFIED GOLD BY THE RIAA
+ LONGEST-RUNNING SINGLE IN BILLBOARD COUNTRY AIRPLAY HISTORY

“WATCHING YOU” - RECENT RECIPIENT OF BMI’S “MILLION- AIR” AWARD FOR RADIO PLAYS OF MORE THAN FOUR MILLION
COUNTRY POWER PLAYERS 2019

COUNTRY

January. “Eric is like me. He’s a dreamer.”

COUNTRY MUSIC.

“Tough act to beat for 2019, but with tours featuring Blake Shelton, Tim McGraw and others. That’s a tough act to beat for 2019, but with tours from Chesney and Shelton planned and record-attendance shows from George Strait in Atlanta and Houston already in the books — along with more stadium and Las Vegas arena dates for the King of Country Splintered throughout the year — the industry veteran may have a chance. He also promotes Eric Church’s ongoing Double Down Tour that includes two-night runs in 25 cities. “No two evenings are the same,” says Messina, who received the CMA Touring Lifetime Achievement Award in January. “Eric is like me. He’s a dreamer.”

MOVIE CHARACTER HE MOST RELATES TO: “Clint Eastwood’s character William Munny from Unforgiven. He’s an old outlaw trying to teach the youngest frontier life.”

Brian O’Connell, 53
PRESIDENT OF COUNTRY MUSIC TOURING, U.S. CONCERTS DIVISION, BIG LOUD

The BOC, as he’s known to friends, is country’s ultimate road warrior, clocking roughly 46 weeks of travel in 2018 and promoting 12 headlining tours and 600 shows, including Luke Bryan’s $68 million What Makes You Country tour. He also promoted tours for artists including Miranda Lambert and Jason Aldean, and festivals like Dierks Bentley’s Seven Peaks in Buena Vista, Colo., which averaged 10,000 fans a day in its first year. O’Connell thinks festivals are his best artist discovery and development tool: “Eight years ago we had Thomas Rhett play Watershed Festival three times in a day, and he just opened his arena tour in Montreal. We always find the right lane for our artists.”

ARISTES ARE PEOPLE, TOO: “When you’re routing a tour, you’re not just filling in blanks on paper. You’re going, ‘OK, the artist’s kids go back to school this week, and we’ve been on the road five weeks, so maybe take a weekend off here for family time.’”

Sally Williams, 47
SENIOR VP PROGRAMMING AND ARTIST RELATIONS, OPRY ENTERTAINMENT, GM, GRAND OLE OPRY

Kelsea Ballerini’s April induction into the Grand Ole Opry marked the first time a contemporary female artist joined the Nashville institution in 11 years, since Carrie Underwood in 2006. “The Opry is firing on all cylinders right now,” says Williams, who has held the GM role for two years, noting the theater’s 222 shows in 2018 and 225 scheduled for this year. Under the Missouri native’s direction, Opry Entertainment also has launched crossover initiatives like Opry Next Year, a yearlong collaboration with rising country artists; Riley Green, Tegan Marie, Tenille Townes and Travis Denning, staged the first USO-Opry show in April in Dayton, Ohio; and booked 200 ticketed concerts in 2019 at the Ryman Auditorium, including a two-hour concert in March held in conjunction with Ken Burns’ upcoming PBS documentary, Country Music.

NASHVILLE TRAFFIC TIP: “Take 6 a.m. YMCA classes. The traffic signals are in flashing mode, there aren’t many cars yet.”

Stacy Vee*
VP FESTIVAL BOOKING, GOLDENVOICE; VP ARTIST RELATIONS, MESSINA TOURING GROUP

See page 74.

Scott Clayton, 53
JOEY LEE, 30
JAY WILLIAMS, 46
CO-HEADS/PARTNERS, WME’S NASHVILLE OFFICES

Brian Oswald, 62
PARTNER, WME

In the past year, WME’s Nashville team booked over 14,000 shows, including headlining arena tours for superstars Jason Aldean, Dierks Bentley, Miranda Lambert and Eric Church. Globally, the Music City office secured more than 400 concerts in 31 countries, helping Ashley McBryde parlay a side-stage slot at the 2018 C2C: Country to Country festival into several headlining shows throughout Europe. “Country artists are thinking about a worldwide plan now, and that wasn’t in the cards five or six years ago,” says Williams. Among the 2019 additions to WME’s Nashville roster is touring powerhouse Zac Brown Band.

LESSONS FROM BOBPHIS OSWALD “Hank Williams Jr. has been my client for nearly 30 years. The first year, I learned the hard way: Don’t think you know the answer when you are talking to your artist. Thirty years later, I’m reminded not to jump to conclusions.”

Marc Dennis, 48
DARIN MURPHY, 52
CO-HEADS, CREATIVE ARTISTS AGENCY MUSIC NASHVILLE

ROD ESSIG, 70
JOHN HUIE, 63
FOUNDEES, CREATIVE ARTISTS AGENCY MUSIC NASHVILLE

In 2018, Dennis’ longtime client Shania Twain embarked on an 87-date, four-continent tour that grossed nearly $70 million, according to CAA. New York transplant and Academy of Country Music chairman Murphy worked with Keith Urban on his GraffitiU world tour, which grossed $47.9 million globally from 72 shows in 2018-19. Essig helped bring the high-profile 2019 NFL Draft to Nashville in April, booking Tim McGraw as the main headliner.

CMA Music Nashville co-founder Hue handled Kelsea Ballerini’s 14-date arena tour, her largest to date.

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIST Dennis “You have to have a [long-term] plan. You can’t just go have a moment at a festival like C2C (Country to Country) and then disappear.”

Jonathan Levine, 57
MUSIC EXECUTIVE, LEADERSHIP GROUP, PARADIGM TALENT AGENCY

Mike Betterton, 47
LENORE KINDER, 39
AGENTS, PARADIGM TALENT AGENCY

See page 82.

Notes:

* Stacy Vee

MOVIE CHARACTER HE MOST RELATES TO: “Clint Eastwood’s character William Munny from Unforgiven. He’s an old outlaw trying to teach the youngest frontier life.”

Craig Wiseman, 55
OWNER, Big Loud Records

Seth England, 33
PARTNER, Big Loud Records

Clay Hunnicutt, 51
PRESIDENT, Big Loud Records

Big Loud’s management arm, in partnership with Maverick, toasted a whopping 50 weeks at No. 1 on Hot Country Songs with the Florida Georgia Line and Bebe Rexha smash “Meant to Be” and scored a No. 1 on the chart with Morgan Wallen’s “Whiskey Glasses,” which also landed the management and label client a second Country Airplay top five in May, following the No. 1 “Up Down.” “If you look at the genre’s current impact, it’s leading presence is undeniable,” says Hunnicutt. In its fourth year of operation, Big Loud’s label division also boasted strong showings for Jake Owen’s “I Was Jack (You Were Dian),” which crowned Country Airplay in August, and 12-year-old viral Walmart yodeler Mason Ramsey; “College kids are rabid about Mason,” says England. “He sold 1,700 tickets at Baylor [University’s Waco Hall] in March with only six songs online.”


Louis Messina, 71
CEO, Messina Touring Group

Messina ended 2018 with the year’s highest-grossing country trek, Kenny Chesney’s Trip Around the Sun Tour, which contributed $114.3 million to the promoter’s $680 million worth of overall ticket sales, alongside outings by Blake Shelton, Tim McGraw and others. That’s a tough act to beat for 2019, but with tours from Chesney and Shelton planned and record-attendance shows from George Strait in Atlanta and Houston already in the books — along with more stadium and Las Vegas arena dates for the King of Country Sprinkled throughout the year — the industry veteran may have a chance. He also promotes Eric Church’s ongoing Double Down Tour that includes two-night runs in 25 cities. “No two evenings are the same,” says Messina, who received the CMA Touring Lifetime Achievement Award in January. “Eric is like me. He’s a dreamer.”

MOVIE CHARACTER HE MOST RELATES TO: “Clint Eastwood’s character William Munny from Unforgiven. He’s an old outlaw trying to teach the youngest frontier life.”
CONGRATULATIONS

BOBBY BONES
CORAN CAPSHAW
JANET WEIR
KERRI EDWARDS
MARY HILLIARD HARRINGTON
VAN HAZE

AND ALL OF BILLBOARD’S
2019 POWER PLAYER HONOREES!

FROM YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY AT

RED LIGHT MANAGEMENT
STACY VEE
VP FESTIVAL BOOKING, GOLDENVoice;
VP ARTIST RELATIONS, MESSINA TOURING GROUP

As curator and producer of Stagecoach, Stacy Vee has been an integral part of Coachella’s sister event since its 2007 launch. After starting as an assistant and later ascending to talent buyer in 2015, the Minnesota native helped the world’s biggest country music festival set an attendance record of 80,000 in April.

A self-identified “type A personality,” who has already confirmed performers for the Indio, Calif., festival in 2020, Vee speaks animatedly about artists she has watched grow up with Stagecoach. Luke Bryan went from “one of our baby acts, years ago” to third-time headliner this year. Florida Georgia Line, the genre-defying trailblazers, leapfrogged from afternoon support in 2013 to top billing in 2014. Sam Hunt, who first played the festival in 2015, closed out this year’s Saturday night.

A lifelong music fan with her first cassette cover (Tina Turner’s Private Dancer) framed in her Los Angeles office, Vee is understandably more subdued when discussing the blowback she faced this year for Stagecoach’s heavily male lineup: Only two of the 10 top-billed acts were women (Cam and Lauren Alaina), with headliners Bryan, Hunt and Jason Aldean. The criticism “was tough to read,” she says, especially since her team leaders are all women and the weekend’s overall lineup “had more females than ever.” But Vee — who in May added vp artist relations for Messina Touring Group to her duties — says she’s aiming for gender parity on the festival’s Mane Stage in the next few years: “I’m going to do everything in my power to make that a reality.”

THE LINEUP LOWDOWN
“I talk to people like [Messina Touring Group’s] Louis Messina and [AEG Presents’] Adam Weiser, but it’s ultimately my decision. I work really far out, know when artists have new music coming out and when they plan to tour. There isn’t an algorithm; it’s a gut feeling.”

HOW DIPLO AND TOM JONES ENDED UP AT STAGECOACH
“I like to throw curve balls at people. Tom Jones came to Stagecoach [in 2017] to watch Jerry Lee Lewis and I thought, ‘That would be fun.’ We booked Diplo this year to play our [Palomino Stage] afterparty: His managers came out in 2018, all three days, dressed head-to-toe in Boot Barn gear and pitched the idea, so I gave him a shot.”

COUNTRY’S GENRE-BLURRING CROSSOVER
“If you listen to what [Stagecoach] artists play before their sets, you’ll hear hip-hop, electronic. A song like ‘Old Town Road’ has allowed Lil Nas X [whose surprise duet with Billy Ray Cyrus closed Diplo’s set] to create his own path. We totally embrace that, and our patrons do too.”

COUNTRY MUSIC STORY OF THE YEAR
“Kacey Musgraves. She’s tearing down barriers, sticking to her guns, having her own sound and standing up for what she believes in. She had a goal and she did it.”

DREAM HEADLINER
“Dolly Parton. We’ll get her one day.” —DAVE BROOKS

The Talent Whisperer
Charged with curating the largest country music festival in the world, Stagecoach booker Stacy Vee breaks stars (and attendance records) as she commits to an even greater diversity among performers.
"My whole Stagecoach (leadership) team is women in charge," says Vee, who was photographed with her team by Sami Deras on April 21 at the Stagecoach Festival in Indio, Calif. From left: Mapi Moran, Amanda Gray, Lyndsay Lyon, Vee, Shea Kopp and Sabrina Sarmiento.
**The Women Behind The Hits**

**“YOURS,” RUSSELL DICKERSON**

*Songwriter: Parker Wellling*  
Co-writers: Caseby Broom, Dickerson  
*Country Airplay peak: No. 1 (Jan. 27, 2018)*

“Even when we were writing the verses, it felt like one of those rare kinds of things songwriters hope happen. We really liked this idea of what [Russell] would’ve been before he had this person in his life. Casey had built a track, and I messed around with lyrics. It took a couple of days, but we knew we had something special.”
CONGRATULATIONS

KERRY O’NEIL
AND
CARLA WALLACE

PICTURED WITH BIG YELLOW DOG WRITER & GRAMMY WINNER DANIEL TASHIAN

LEADING BIG YELLOW DOG MUSIC FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS
Bevilles Dunkerley, 44
HEAD OF COUNTRY MUSIC, PANDORA

Dunkerley, who has overseen live events with artists like Jason Aldean and Carly Pearce, says Pandora has over 20 million engaged country listeners, and the internet radio platform’s No. 2 station overall is Today’s Country. “We’ve always been giant in country music, but there’s still a lot of room to grow creatively,” says the Vanderbilt University alum, who sees SiriusXM’s recent $3.5 billion acquisition of Pandora as a key partnership that will help expand country’s reach. In November, the Academy of Country Music elected Dunkerley to its board of directors.

MORSE TOMATOES IN THIS RADIO SALAD, PLEASE

“I have to look up at my screen about once a day to check the artist’s name on male-voiced country songs — so many guys sound alike. But I’d know Lauren Alaina or Maren Morris from the first word.”

John Marks*
HEAD OF COUNTRY, SPOTIFY

Brittany Schaffer*
HEAD OF ARTIST AND LABEL MARKETING, NASHVILLE, SPOTIFY

Last summer, to promote its Hot Country brand, Spotify commissioned crop-circle artist Stan Herd to create portraits of Jason Aldean, Kelsea Ballerini and Luke Bryan in fields near Lawrence, Tenn. Spotify’s Hot Country, which Marks helms, is the service’s third-most-popular genre playlist in the world, according to the company, reaching over 5.3 million followers. But the crop-circle stunt was a clear signal that the streaming powerhouse — which closed the first quarter of 2019 with 217 million monthly users — was serious about growing the genre. Schaffer describes the mission as “a combination of bringing in country fans who weren’t previously streaming on Spotify and working to expand to listeners who haven’t experienced country music before.”

MOST WELCOME CHANGE TO NASHVILLE

Schaffer “No longer having to explain to nonresidents why I choose to live here.”

Jay Liepis, 45
GLOBAL HEAD OF COUNTRY, APPLE MUSIC

As the streaming titan readies its new Nashville location in an old sock factory in the Wedgewood-Houston neighborhood, Liepis keeps nurturing Apple Music’s local investment in country, a genre that’s up 55% worldwide among the service’s 56 million paid subscribers. Kane Brown’s Experiment was a 2018 highlight, with a Sony and EFG Management collaboration that included producing an Apple Music Presents short film about the Billboard 200 chart-topper. The rollout brought results: Liepis says Experiment logged Apple Music’s most streams for a 2018 country album in its first 24 hours.

MOST UNWELCOME CHANGE TO NASHVILLE

“All the scooters, pedal taverns and other ridiculous transportation/party options downtown has to offer.”

Kelly Rich, 52
SENIOR LABEL RELATIONS MANAGER, AMAZON MUSIC

Emily Cohen, 35
SENIOR MUSIC CURATOR, AMAZON MUSIC

Amazon Music always has been strong in country, renewing its exclusive streaming and downloading deal with Garth Brooks earlier this year. And with its tens of millions of total paid subscribers, the company claims that its share of country music in its overall streaming mix is more than twice the industry average. Amazon erected billboards for Maren Morris’ second major-label album, GIRL, in New York, Los Angeles and Nashville, and featured Morris in its A Voice Is All You Need ad campaign. Rich’s team also used Alexa’s new-music notification feature to alert Morris’ followers about GIRL’s March release. Rich credits all this in contributing to GIRL’s record-breaking first week of 24 million on-demand audio streams. “What we did at Amazon as a whole, on top of her music being incredible, helped her to achieve this goal,” says Rich. Cohen’s playlist, Country Heat, which launched in April 2018, remains the service’s global country music destination.

WHAT OTHER GENRES SHOULD KNOW ABOUT COUNTRY

Rich “It’s a lifestyle. Fans are very loyal and appreciate artists rather than focusing on quick trends.”

Rachel Whitney, 37
LEAD CURATOR, COUNTRY, YOUTUBE

Since coming aboard YouTube Music in October from Pandora, Whitney has worked to beef up the genre’s audience at the world’s second-most-popular site. “We are seeing new country music talent across the globe, and there’s no better place to watch this phenomenon than on YouTube,” says Whitney, who works on YouTube’s country expansion alongside the Nashville-based music team of Margaret Hart and Copeland Isaachsen. It’s easier [than ever] for U.S.-based artists to develop international fan bases.

COUNTRY MUSIC STORY OF THE YEAR

“Three words: ‘Old Town Road.’ The internet will continue to be a gold mine for new subgenres and crossovers in country music that won’t need gatekeepers to generate huge hits.”

How Kacey, Ryan And Carrie Get Jacked

Trainer to the country stars Erin Oprea outlines the body-sculpting moves that keep her clients in shape BY BROOKE MAZUREK

Personal trainer Erin Oprea didn’t know the first thing about country music when, 13 years ago, singer-songwriter Aubrie Sellers and her mother, Lee Ann Womack, enlisted her services. “It’s only in the past year that I learned what a bass is — that it’s not a drum,” says Oprea with a laugh. Since then, she has become one of Music City’s most in-demand fitness gurus, helping to tone the likes of Kacey Musgraves, Maren Morris, Ryan Hurd, Kelsea Ballerini and Carrie Underwood. Here are three of the moves that keep them all in fighting shape.

JUMP AROUND

“A jump rope is the most versatile piece of equipment. It’s cardio outside of the tour bus,” says Oprea, who often integrates it into an interval-based Tabata workout. “I’ll have my musicians sing and jump rope at the same time so they aren’t getting winded onstage.” For the most efficient workout, keep your body and your jumps low to the ground, your arms bent at a little less than 90 degrees and your rope loops tight and narrow.

ACTIVATE ABS

Oprea’s “slow-mo bicycle crunches” are straightforward but effective. Start by lying on your back with your hands behind your head. Bring your chest up, then take your elbow to the opposite knee while the other leg is fully extended. Pause in that position, making sure your back is not arched. If it is, lift your pelvis to flatten. Hold and switch for 45 seconds. Then do another 45 seconds at a slightly faster pace.

BOOST YOUR BOOTY

Get on your hands and knees with a flat back, then lift your left knee “like you’re peeling on a fire hydrant.” Point the toes, then extend the leg back. “You’re going to feel a good squeeze on your boot,” says Oprea, “and your knee should never drop from that angle.” After 20 reps, stay on the same leg and make 30 “fitty-bitty circles” with your knee. And then you get to do the next leg, because one butt cheek shouldn’t get all the fun.”
“Blanco Brown, like the pioneers of Country music that he follows, is set to have a moment in the Country landscape that carves out a unique sound... all his own.” - John Marks - Head of Country Music Shows & Editorial | Content, Spotify

“He is able to seamlessly knit multiple genres together, blending Tracy Lawrence, T-Pain, “Dixieland Delight” and The Beach Boys... Real artists don’t just break rules; sometimes they rewrite them.” - Billboard

“Blanco Brown is by far one of the most exciting artists I’ve seen in a long time. His lyrics are infectious and his personality is so special that it only takes one performance to make you a real fan of his undeniable talent.” - Nadine Santos - Vice President Programming and Talent Relations, Music Choice

“Blanco Brown, the man and the music, is a pure shot of adrenaline.” - Beville Dunkerly - Head of Country Music, Pandora

“I’ve heard and seen the future, his name is Blanco Brown.” - Phil Guerini VP, Music Strategy DCWW & GM, Radio Disney Network

“Blanco Brown and Lil Nas X are breaking down the walls in the music industry with their introduction to "Country Trap”. Today more than ever artists are making music because they are having FUN, instead of restricting themselves to genres that are seen as "the standards" for the music industry. As we have seen the continued growth of this genre from Blanco’s success stories on Triller and Instagram, I do not anticipate that this will be the last we hear of this evolving category.” - Lauren Braun Diamont - Director of Content, Triller
The original idea Brett, Ross and I had was about wondering what [being in love] might be like. In the middle of the session we decided to switch directions and make the song about truly being in love and how that feels. The words, melody and upbeat spirit all fell into place after that.”
Virgo Investment Group congratulates Chris Farren and Combustion Music for their 77th No.1 single.
PARADIGM TALENT AGENCY

Jonathan Levine
Music Executive Leadership Group

Mike Betterton
Lenore Kinder
Agents

For Paradigm Talent Agency’s Nashville office, it has been a game-changing 18 months. In February 2018, company veteran Jonathan Levine, 57, signed Kacey Musgraves a month before the release of her Grammy-winning album of the year, Golden Hour. That April, Lenore Kinder—who'd heard an advance of the record and “told my wife it was going to change my life”—left AEG Presents, where the 39-year-old had promoted concerts for a decade (including Musgraves), to become one of her agents at Paradigm.

Then, in November, Paradigm acquired Dale Morris & Associates, the in-house touring division of Morris Higham Management, a move that brought Mike Betterton, 47, and agent Nate Ritchies into the firm’s Nashville office. Even more impressively, the deal added fast-rising act Old Dominion and live powerhouse Kenny Chesney, whose $114 million-grossing Trip Around the Sun outing was the top country tour of 2018, to the agency’s flourishing roster.

Nabbing a country superstar like Chesney was a major coup, but Levine’s early investment in Americana artists such as Tyler Childers, recent best new artist Grammy nominee Margo Price and Grammy winner Sturgill Simpson had already raised the agency’s Nashville profile. Levine’s team now handles private bookings and fairs for George Strait and Blake Shelton, and, in late 2018, quietly landed the estate of Johnny Cash.

MANAGING THE MAN IN BLACK’S LEGACY

Levine “In the 16 years since Johnny [Cash] has passed, the family and the estate have done nothing to compromise the magnitude of his music’s impact. Our job is to make sure generations to come are provided opportunities to learn, enjoy and discover [Cash’s] incomparable body of work.”

ON KACEY’S SUCCESS

Levine “This lightning in a bottle that Kacey has managed to capture did not catch any of us off guard. The plans, the foundation, the vision came from the top down, starting with Kacey.”

Kinder “I grew up on The Judds and Dixie Chicks. I yearn for female performers like that now. If radio’s not going to support them, we have to rally our wagons from a live perspective and help women [artists] develop their careers so there are female headliners. It’s helpful to see statistics about lack of representation, but you’ve also got to roll up your fucking sleeves and start doing the work.”

KENNY’S KNOW-HOW

Betterton “In an interview Kenny Chesney did with The New York Times [in 2011], he said, ‘There’s [an] idea that somebody’s job could be more important than somebody else’s, and to me, that’s not true.’ If Kenny didn’t consider his job more important than anyone else’s, then why should I? It takes all of us to do this work.”

—TAYLOR MIMS

The Innovators

Paradigm Talent Agency expanded its Nashville presence by adding 2018 top country touring act Kenny Chesney to its roster while building Kacey Musgraves into a bona fide star.
From left: Simpson, Price, Levine, Betterton, Childers, and Kinder, photographed by Reto Sterchi on May 1 at Paradigm in Nashville.
Kelli Turner, 48  
**PRESIDENT, SESAC**
Since relocating to Nashville from New York four years ago, Turner has grown to love country music. “I wasn’t a huge fan and hadn’t listened to it that much,” admits the University of Michigan alum, who was promoted to her position in October and counts the Country Airplay No. 1 success of SESAC songwriter Jimmie Allen among her recent professional highlights. “Now I see [country] has a broad appeal with great storytelling on real-life situations — there is a lot more to relate to than trucks and whiskey.”

**LEGAL**

**Russell A. Jones Jr., 68**  
**PRINCIPAL, LAW OFFICES OF RUSSELL A. JONES JR. AND ASSOCIATES**
Longtime clients Trisha Yearwood, Garth Brooks, Tim McGraw and Toby Keith rely on Jones not only for the utmost discretion, but for his savvy in brokering landmark deals — like the one for the first concert at Notre Dame Stadium, which Brooks headlined in October. December’s subsequent TV special, *Garth: Live at Notre Dame*, was a ratings winner for CBS, which broadcast the performance to 14 million total viewers. “I maintain a low profile,” says “Rusty,” as most people call him. “My job is to do the work and stay quiet.”

**Jody Williams, 63**  
**VP CREATIVE, BMI NASHVILLE**
In March, Williams led BMI’s expansion to Austin, the organization’s first new office in 20 years. “Outside of Tennessee and California, Texas has the most BMI songwriters,” he says, explaining the necessity for a local presence. Williams, who’s also chairman of the Country Music Association’s board of directors, adds that the Texas office will serve artists who fall under the Red Dirt Country subgenre and exhaustively tour the Southwest. “We will take care of those guys too.”

**Joel Katz, 75**  
**FOUNDING CHAIRMAN, GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA PRACTICE, FOUNDING SHAREHOLDER, ATLANTA OFFICE; GREENBERG TRAURIG**

**Jess L. Rosen, 64**  
**CO-CHAIRMAN, ATLANTA ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA PRACTICE; GREENBERG TRAURIG**
Rosen represents many of country’s heaviest hitters: Kenny Chesney, Florida Georgia Line, Miranda Lambert, Reba McEntire, Brad Paisley, Thomas Rhett and more. But the attorney takes particular pride in client Kacey Musgraves’ big year, a culmination of working with her for over a decade. “The industry has now realized what her fans always [knew],” says Rosen, also an accomplished jazz guitarist.

**Noah McPike, 37**  
**OF COUNSEL, DICKINSON WRIGHT**
Performers don’t just want an attorney, “they want a trusted advisor,” says McPike, who credits both his small-town upbringing in Lincoln, Maine, and Jesuit education from the College of the Holy Cross for the “open door” he extends to his clients, a roster that includes Jason Aldean, Luke Combs, Kane Brown, Billie Currington, Lanco, Jordan Davis and Parmalee. “If you need to call someone in the middle of the night — even if it’s for the millionth time, to ask me something simple like, ‘What does a tax levy mean?’ — it’s OK.”

**Mike Milom**  
**PARTNER, MILOM HORSELL CROWN KELLEY BECKETT SHERMAN**
The veteran attorney’s groundbreaking deals for Loretta Lynn, Conway Twitty, Chet Atkins, Alabama and Emmylou Harris paved the way for his present-day work with stars Luke Bryan, Keith Urban and Kelsea Ballerini. The secret to the Vanderbilt School of Law alumni’s enduring success? “I’m not a raconteur. I’m not a storyteller. I listen well. It’s never about me,” says Milom, who jokes that he may be “the only Nashville native left alive.”

**Julie Boos, 49**  
**BUSINESS MANAGER/OWNER, FBMM**
In 2016, Boos was appointed chairman of FBMM, a business management firm with a long-standing presence in Nashville.
ASCAP is home to the songwriters whose hits power the charts and move music city.

We congratulate all of the Billboard Country Power Players.

ASCAP WE CREATE MUSIC
“It doubled my workload, but made it twice as fun,” says the Kansas native, who specializes in helping clients with touring. “Most country artists don’t tour, they just work,” says Bocs. “They go out year-round, Thursday to Sunday, playing shows.”

HER UPS AND DOWNS Though Bocs won’t confirm, insiders say PBMM clients include Keith Urban, Rascal Flatts and Vince Gill.

Jeremy Holley, 41
Laura Hutfless, 37
PARTNERS/CO-FOUNDERS, EIGHTEEN
Holley spearheaded a text-message campaign for Enterprise Rent-A-Car that paired Zac Brown’s side project, Sir Rosevelt, with Cirque du Soleil for a one-night-only show. Ten percent of the Nashville-based agency’s annual earnings goes to charity, and at the end of 2018 the company’s 15 employees were each given $10,000 to donate to the cause of their choice. Hutfless, who helmed a Super Bowl campaign for dating app Bumble, says many of the chosen charities “were music-centric, including Music Health Alliance and Musicians On Call.”

ADVICE TO ARTISTS TAKING POLITICAL STANCES Hutfless: “Educate yourself on all sides of the issue, speak up with solutions, and use your music to offer hope. The world suffers not only from the violence of bad people, but the silence of good people.”

Jennie Smythe, 42
CEO, GIRILLA MARKETING
The client list of Smythe’s 11-year-old digital marketing agency mixes Nashville’s powerhouses (Tim McGraw, Brooks & Dunn) with country’s next generation (Maddie & Tae, Rachel Wammack, Tenille Arts). But for Smythe, it has been especially fulfilling to watch stalwarts like Danus Rucker, Tracy Lawrence and Rodney Atkins apply the same enthusiasm they have for new projects to their online followings. “Social and digital marketing needs to translate on the ground,” says the Denver native. “The reality is, ‘Did people show up to the event?’ ‘Yes?’ ‘Great.’” This conversion rate bodes well for Girilila: which also quarterbacked socials for Avangers: Endgame, now the all-time second-highest-grossing movie at the domestic box office.

Lessons From Maddie & Tae: “I’ve learned from these girls, who are much younger than me, that talent and patience wins, always.”

Lou Taylor, 53
OWNER/CEO, TRI STAR SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT GROUP
Florida Georgia Line’s smash with Bebe Rexha, “Meant To Be,” confirmed the duo’s top-tier status — and business manager Taylor has been an integral part of the act’s rise. While also working with artists like Reba McEntire and Britney Spears, she advises on the growing FGL empire, which includes a Hillsborob Village creative compound — that houses a publishing company, recording studio and community workplace — as well as FGL’s liquor line, Old Camp Whiskey, and restaurant FGL House. Representation is also key: 75 of Tri Star’s 110 employees are women.

“Most Welcome Change to Nashville” “When I came here in 2002, this was a very closed-off marketplace for anybody new and female. It feels like it’s more open to people doing a great job, regardless of sex or color.”

Sarah Trahern, 54
CEO, COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION
International growth is a huge strategic initiative, says Trahern, citing the expansion of the annual CMA Songwriter Series in London, held prior to the C2C: Country to Country festival in March, into a full-fledged fall U.K./European tour featuring rising stars Kassi Ashton, Tenille Townes, Drake White and others. The Georgetown alumna also commends CMA’s international relations and development. Milly Olykan for shepherding this spring’s launch of the CMA’s inaugural Introducing Nashville tour, which took Lindsay Ell, Devin Dawson, Brandy Clark and Townes to Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. “We’re investing in taking new artists overseas early in their careers to help those artists develop their international fan bases,” says Trahern. On the homefront, the 2018 CMA Music Festival brought over $61 million in direct visitor spending to Nashville.

COUNTRY MUSIC STORY OF THE YEAR The PBS-produced, Ken Burns-directed documentary Country Music will roll out in September. Our staff has been working with them for a while, and it’s going to have a big impact on our business.”

Tatum Hauck Allsup*
FOUNDER/CEO, MUSIC HEALTH ALLIANCE
Sheila Shipley Biddy*
COO, MUSIC HEALTH ALLIANCE

Founder Allsup considers Biddy “the yin to my chaotic yang.” The two heads of the Nashville nonprofit have secured over $40 million in health-care cost reductions and helped more than 9,700 music professionals in the organization’s six-year history. In April, MHA’s live benefit for John Berry, who was diagnosed with tonsil cancer in January, raised over $300,000 for the veteran artist and the nonprofit, featuring Garth Brooks and Travis Tritt.


Methodology: A committee of editors, producers, buyers and product managers met in October to determine the 2019 Country Power Players list. Scoring statements were selected from 200 submissions. Results were also informed by Billboard charts, sales and streaming performances, social media discussions, and radio TV audience shares. Each artist, manager, agency and/or executive listed in the 2019 Country Power Players list was vetted for their impact in the country industry, whether and how they managed to be a force for positive change in the context of their role, and what their development means for the industry’s future. Scoring statements were then scored by a panel of judges, and then the list was vetted by editors, marketing teams, other music industry executives, editors, and editorial staff. The list was then refined to ensure insight, clarity and exclusivity. The posture, behavior, and/or actions of each person on the list contributed to the industry in a meaningful and beneficial way, and the impact of their actions was measured against the results of the Billboard charts, sales and streaming performances, social media discussions, and radio TV audience shares.
Greenberg Traurig proudly congratulates Joel Katz and Jess Rosen for being named to the Billboard Country Power Players list for the 5th consecutive year.”
The Trailblazer

Reba McEntire

As her accolades keep piling up, the multihyphenate star is hardly slowing down — instead, she’s more eager than ever to keep creating, keep fighting and keep singing. By Annie Reuter

She has been one of country music’s most revered artists for over four decades, but for Reba McEntire, her best days are still ahead. "I'm having more fun now than I've ever had," she says. At 64, she's busier than ever, too, with projects in the pipeline spanning the worlds of TV, film, Broadway and fashion in addition to music. In 2018, McEntire became the third female country artist to receive a Kennedy Center Honor, following in the footsteps of fellow icons Dolly Parton and Loretta Lynn. (KFC also named her its first and only female Colonel Sanders.) In April, she hosted the Academy of Country Music (ACM) Awards for the 16th time and released Stronger Than the Truth, an album paying tribute to her Oklahoma roots that became her 25th top five entry on Billboard’s Top Country Albums chart. At a time when an increasing number of Nashville stars are embracing pop and hip-hop, McEntire is standing her ground and releasing the music that she wants to make — and that plenty of country fans clearly want to hear.

Because of her boundless creative spirit, overwhelming success and outspoken support for other women in the genre, McEntire is this year’s recipient of Billboard’s Trailblazer Award. Calling from her Nashville office, the superstar talked about the values that have shaped her career.
What does being a trailblazer mean to you?

Hopefuly I have done some things that have strengthened the country music business. I love country music: what it stands for, how it relates to people of every walk of life — male, female, all ages.

Earlier this year, you expressed dismay that no women were nominated for entertainer of the year at the ACM Awards. Why was it important to speak out?

Because I am a woman, I know how important it was for me to get encouragement and an occasional pat on the back and (heart), “You can do it.” That goes a long way. My mama was always saying, “Reba, you can do this.” And I said, “Oh, but it’s going to be so hard. I’m dreading this.” She said, “Reba, it’ll be over in 24 hours. You can do anything for 24 hours.” That’s a good way to look at it. So I quit worrying.

You recently saw The Cher Show on Broadway and recorded a video message for Cher, saying that you learned “a lot of things I can do to improve my life and my career.”

What did you take away from her story?

I learned that people who are so driven in this industry sacrifice a lot. We forget to include the fun times. I think I took things way too seriously, as Cher did. Sometimes we get into that survival mode where we do things that we might not have done if we weren’t having to survive. I will be telling more of the younger generation, “Have fun while you’re doing this. Remember every detail. Stop and smell the roses today. Don’t be so concerned about what (you’re) going to do tomorrow.”

Your songs often feature powerful female characters. Was there ever a time when you passed on a song because it lacked that perspective?

Oh, lots of times. It doesn’t have to be a strong female voice necessarily, but it has to have a message. If a song has touched my heart, hopefully it’ll touch your heart when I sing it. I’m the conduit. I’m the one that delivers the message. When I go looking for songs, I ask God, “Please send me the songs that will help people, that will touch their hearts.” It might solve a problem for them, it might entertain them, it might get them away from what they’re going through. That’s my job on earth. I feel very strongly about that.

You seem to have a strong sense of what rings true for you artistically. When was the last time you made a misstep?

There was a time that I [covered Beyoncé’s] “If I Were a Boy.” We had done that for [Unplugged on CMT in 2010], and the record label really wanted me to record it and put it out as a single. I didn’t feel real good about it. It wasn’t that successful. The people in the music industry, they’re professionals, and sometimes you have to go with the team. It just didn’t work out.

What does the Reba brand stand for?

The Reba brand stands for quality, integrity, honesty, entertainment, comfort. Everything I do, it has to be honest. The fans know when it goes a little left or right or not the way I would want it. We try new things, we experiment, and we keep going back to what is true.

In late April, three of the top four entries on the Top Country Albums chart were by Brooks & Dunn, George Strait and you. Is radio missing the boat by not playing more traditional country music?

Absolutely. I totally understand why they don’t: There are so many young, up-and-coming artists that need that three-and-a-half minutes on the radio. We had our time. But the country music fans of the 1980s and ’90s are really hungry for the type of music that we can give them. I’m just thrilled with the talent that the songwriters here in Nashville are showing. I’m finding songs as good as any I’ve ever found in my 43 years, and it’s not stopping. It’s just so sad that not everybody’s getting paid what they should be getting paid, because technology has changed everything about how we get our music out to our fans. It’s hard to find a CD nowadays that you can buy, and that’s a shame.

What do you still hope to accomplish at this point in your career?

I love [performing], whether it’s for movies, television, concerts, recording — whatever it is. Kix [Brooks], Ronnie [Dunn] and I are having a wonderful time in Las Vegas doing a residency at Caesars Palace, where people from all over the world can come see us. I’d love to get back into television, maybe some more movies. I love to travel, so I’m trying to check off some time to see more of this beautiful world that God has made.
Can’t make it to the Festival this year?
Access a 12-hour daily broadcast over the Cannes Lions week, with a programme of mainstage talks, exclusive interviews and backstage analysis – available live and on-demand.

Buy the Digital Pass for only €195
canneslions.com/attend/live
The reimagined Scotiabank Arena is ready for your event. You provide the talent, we’ll provide the world’s best fans in the most diverse city on earth.
Inside The 2019 Event & Arena Marketing Conference

Ahead of the four-day June gathering, EAMC chief Sheila Francis shares insights into the trends and issues shaping today's live landscape

BY TAYLOR MIMS

Each year, the Event & Arena Marketing Conference reflects the live-entertainment business' chief concerns — from topical panels regarding venue security, naming rights and diversity and inclusion, to educational roundtables and ample networking sessions. The EAMC began in 1980 when 10 arena marketers met in St. Louis. Initially dubbed the Arena Sales & Marketing Conference, the confab, set for June 12-15 at the Toronto Hilton, has since grown to attract over 350 participants from across the country.

Executed entirely by volunteers, the live-entertainment consortium is led by president Sheila Francis, an EAMC mainstay who will exit her post in August when her three-year term wraps. Francis first joined EAMC’s planning committee in 2008 while an employee of host venue MCI Center (now Capital One Arena) in Washington, D.C. She joined the conference’s board of directors in 2010 and the executive committee in 2013 as vp marketing and communications, before rising to president in 2017. “EAMC is an opportunity to see what everyone else is doing and realize you’re not by yourself,” says Francis. “The challenges you’ve come across, someone else has probably gone through it.”

Since its inception, the event has undergone a series of rebrandings! In 1999, it was renamed the Arena Marketing Conference to reflect the full breadth of departments in attendance, which today includes professionals across group sales, publicity, promotions, advertising and marketing. In 2001, the IRS recognized it as a nonprofit; and in 2004, its moniker changed to EAMC to further highlight the ever-shifting live landscape.

A digital scavenger hunt, coordinated with Social Scavenger, will again kick off the festivities. Conferencegoers break off into groups and use a mobile app that takes them through the city, exposing them to local culture and landmarks they might not discover on their own. The team-building exercise breaks the ice each year and fosters an organic IRL connection among the guests. “It’s like meeting with your friends,” says Francis of the peer-produced event, which she describes as “not stuffy,” thanks to the camaraderie of regular attendees.

EAMC’s fifth annual awards luncheon, which is a hallmark of the conference, will take place June 13 at the Toronto Ballroom and honor the year’s best marketing and publicity campaigns that cost under $10,000 and are rooted in philanthropic and community outreach. Among them: Minneapolis-based Vstar Entertainment Group’s 12 Days of Giving for Paw Patrol; Van Andel Arena’s diaper drive for Sugarland’s Still the Same Tour stop there in Grand Rapids, Mich.; and a WWE Easter Egg Hunt at Rupp Arena in Lexington, Ky. The event will also recognize campaigns that cost over $10,000, including the City of McAllen, Texas’ relaunch of its annual PalmFest as Fiesta de Palmas; Scotiabank Arena in Toronto’s newly inked 20-year naming rights deal with Capital One; and the Chicago Blackhawks’ unique campaign to honor retiring players.

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deal; and AEG’s 10th-anniversary bash for L.A. Live celebrated with a special birthday edition of its Downtown Dark Nights series, which included live music, muralists and street performers.

The program also will feature the year’s most creative “artist welcomes” to venues — a new priority — where Chicago’s United Center will be honored twice: for its We Appreciate U/You Too campaign for the Irish rockers and for its Day of Becoming kickoff for former first lady Michelle Obama’s Becoming book tour.

In addition, 2019 EAMC Hall of Fame inductee Glenn Mikkelsen, GM of the CN Centre in Prince George, British Columbia, and Gigi Award for Excellence honoree Linda Deckard, founder of VenuesToday (formerly Venues Today) magazine, will be honored.

Ahead of the summit, Francis discussed her work with the nearly 40-year-old convention and what attendees can expect this year.

Volunteers have put on EAMC since its inception in 1980. Why is that grassroots support so valuable? This is one of the most [beneficial] conferences I have gone to over the years. I feel energized and refreshed every time I come. It is put on by your peers. Who better to ask for the latest trends or insight or knowledge to grow professionally?

**Why was this year’s keynote speaker, Hamilton chief marketing officer Laura Matlon, selected?**

Hamilton is a top-of-mind show. It is in the Broadway realm, which is a little different from concerts or family shows. As the chief marketing officer, she can offer general marketing insights, but she also has created her own marketing agency and has had enough of a varied background in that world that would be of interest to all facets of our industry.

**One of your standout sessions is the reoccurring roundtable “Dramatic Readings of Bad Press Releases.” Is this purely for comic relief?**

Our professionals are on the receiving end of press releases, so we read bad ones and give advice to PR practitioners on how to better reach them as an audience. It’s always helpful to hear from the other side what works and what doesn’t. Talking to different people who receive these releases and pitches will help you do your job better.

**Which returning panel are you most excited about this year?**

We are bringing back our WISE [Women in Sports Entertainment] session, which we launched last year. We talk about the topics of the day and how women address different challenges working in a male-dominated industry. How do you grow professionally? How do you have those difficult conversations about getting that promotion or going for that job if you’re up against a bunch of male counterparts? It is for everybody — women and men — but offers that other perspective.

**Naming-rights deals are not new, but they are more prevalent now. What is expected from that session?**

Toronto’s Scotiabank Arena (formerly Air Canada Centre) and Budweiser Stage [previously Molson Canadian Amphitheatre] both just went through naming-rights deals in Canada. That is always a topic of interest because you have venues changing sponsor names pretty regularly. Then you have venues that have never had a sponsor name before and are dealing with that for the first time. You are dealing with longstanding traditions at some venues.

You need to go about it in a way that is engaging all the stakeholders.

**How is EAMC addressing marketing to Generation Z and millennials, whose markets are worth $44 billion and $200 billion, respectively?**

We will have a mini focus group from our host venue Scotiabank Arena, where attendees can directly ask the younger generation questions. We did a similar panel a few years ago, and we thought it was time to revisit it since it is becoming a challenge. How do you market to the younger generations? How are they getting their news? They aren’t opening a newspaper to see what shows are coming.

**A new awards category this year is related to artist welcomes. Why?**

Many venues and trade publications are talking about artist welcomes. If cities have competing venues, it’s a way to demonstrate to the promoter and manager that this is how we would welcome you to our city. We’ll treat you right. •

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**THE MOST CREATIVE ARTIST GIFTS**

A new EAMC awards category spotlights the eclectic loot that venues are dishing out to attract top-tier artists

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In today’s crowded live-music market, North American venues are leveraging take-home gifts to coax artists (and their teams) into repeat bookings, stretching both their budgets and their creativity — in the process.

This year’s inaugural batch of venue-gifted loot boasts an array of boutique goodies — from custom dog treats that SMG staff in Grand Rapids, Mich., gave to singer Tony Bennett’s pooch, Happy, to a spooky custom rug that Los Angeles’ Microsoft Theater presented to creators of the true-crime podcast My Favorite Murder during its sold-out live-podcast Halloween event.

Cutting-edge tech is also well represented with items like a custom gold “XXVIV” Game Boy that Scotiabank Arena staff gifted to Bruno Mars — a nod to his ‘90s-leaning 24K Magic LP — that included retro game titles from Super Mario Land to Tetris, as well as a Braille poster from Peckanga Arena San Diego/AEG staff to Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli, who became permanently blind at the age of 12.

Fashion makes the cut thanks to more in-vogue items like a custom box set of socks (for Childish Gambino) and bow ties (for Mumford & Sons) from Scotiabank Arena, a series of custom guitar straps and belts from Atlanta’s Fox Theatre to the Tadasci Trucks Band and one-of-a-kind Nike Air Jordans from the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J., for rapper Travis Scott and his daughter, Stormi.

The outlier? SMG Huntington, W.Va., had an actual star named after the band Old Dominion. The celestial nod highlights the power of originality in the category. The band relished the certificate that proclaimed the honor, captioning an Instagram snap: “The venue tonight wanted to make sure we were written in the stars, so they named a star after us!” — Nick Williams
FOR AN EXPERIENCE THAT MAKES YOU SAY
YASSS.
IT HAS TO BE TULSA.

#ROCKTHEBOK
CONGRATULATES OUR 2019 SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME INDuctees & HONoREES

WE JOIN THE INDUSTRY IN SALUTING:
MISSY ELLIOTT
YUSUF/CAT STEVENS
JACK TEMPCHIN
JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE
Nearly 50 years ago, Billboard toasted the Songwriters Hall of Fame’s first dinner and induction ceremony, held March 8, 1971, at the New York Hilton, in a series of four black-and-white photographs that set the event’s tone for years to come: Johnny Mercer proudly held his trophy aloft; Eubie Blake entertained at the piano; Kris Kristofferson took the stage as a presenter; and Frank Sinatra gave an award to Richard Rodgers. The SHOF was in fact founded two years earlier, in 1969, the vision of Mercer and music publishers Abe Olman and Howie Richmond, who created an organization devoted to the craft of songwriting that continues to shape the global music business. “It all begins with a song ‘is not just a cliché,’” says SHOF president/CEO Linda Moran. “Songwriting is the heart and soul of the creative process.”

On June 13, the organization will celebrate its 50th anniversary at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York and fete this year’s class of inductees, who include artists Missy Elliott, Yusuf (the artist formerly known as Cat Stevens), Tom T. Hall and John Prine, as well as songwriters Jack Tempchin (Eagles, George Jones, Emmylou Harris) and Dallas Austin (TLC, Gwen Stefani, P!nk). Former Sony/ATV Music Publishing chairman/CEO Martin Bandier will receive the Visionary Leadership Award (see page 98), while Halsey will take home the Hal David Starlight Award, named in honor of the late SHOF chairman Hal David for his support of young songwriters. Singer-actor Justin Timberlake will also be honored with the Contemporary Icon Award, credited to his “iconic status in pop culture,” while the organization’s highest honor — the Johnny Mercer Award — will be presented to songwriter Carole Bayer Sager, previously inducted in 1987.

Across five decades, the Songwriters Hall of Fame has recognized some 400-plus inductees, including composers across every genre as well as the music publishing executives who helped propel their hits to the mainstream. Under Moran’s tutelage, the SHOF has bolstered its educational platforms to nurture the next generation of talent with scholarships and courses, such as its SHOF Master Sessions held at New York University’s Steinhardt and the University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music. For the SHOF’s upcoming 50th edition,
Billboard invited veteran music executives to recall their favorite memories from past ceremonies (see page 104). And ahead of this year’s gala, the class of 2019 honorees and inductees look back at the making of their biggest hits.

**DALLAS AUSTIN**

**“COOL!”**

**RECORDED BY** Gwen Stefani

**CHART PEAK** No. 10, Mainstream Top 40; Sept. 3, 2005 (the week the chart debuted in Billboard)

“I wrote that song for TLC when me and [TLC member] Chilli broke up, but I didn’t want to record it with them. It was very obvious who it was about and what it was, and it was hard. I finally said, ‘I’m not going to do this with you guys, let’s find another song.’ A year or so later I ran into Gwen, who had done a breakup song like that with No Doubt’s ‘Don’t Speak.’ I remember thinking, ‘How’s she doing that song with Tony [Kanal] in the group?’ I played ‘Cool!’ for her and she said, ‘I love this song—this is just like me and Tony’s situation.’”

**CAROLE BAYER SAGER**

**“THAT’S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR”**

**RECORDED BY** Diane & Friends

**CHART PEAK** No. 1 (four weeks), Billboard Hot 100, Jan. 18, 1986

“We were at the studio, and Dionne [Warwick] and Stevie Wonder put their vocals on. My dear friend Elizabeth Taylor also came down, so it flashed through my mind that we should put a couple more people on it to make it an anthem for AIDS. We put Gladys Knight on—I was incredible—and then we needed one more voice to hammer it home. We picked Luther Vandross, who was amazing, but Clive Davis said he didn’t have quite enough power, so he called Elton John, who said, ‘If this isn’t a No. 1, I’m leaving the business.’ Fortunately, it was, and we gave a large sum of money to amfAR at the time.”

**MISSY ELLIOTT**

**“WORK IT”**

**CHART PEAK** No. 1 (five weeks), Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, Nov. 23, 2002

“Tim [Timbaland, producer] and I would get on each other’s nerves. We’re like brother and sister. I begged him to go to some mom-and-pop stores to get some breakbeats, because we had a block; he finally caught this vibe. When I heard the worm sound, I jumped up, like, ‘That’s it!’ I was in another room because I never record in front of anyone, and he kept saying, ‘Nah, that ain’t it!’ I’m pissed. By the fifth time, he said, ‘Yes! That’s it!’ He thought we were done, but I got him back on the So Addictive album, I said, ‘Nap! That ain’t it!’ about three times. Then he did ‘Get Ur Freak On,’ and I said, ‘Yup! That’s it!’

**TOM T. HALL**

**“HARPER VALLEY PTA”**

**RECORDED BY** Jeannie C. Riley

**CHART PEAK** No. 1, Hot 100; Sept. 21, 1968

“It’s a true story about my hometown of Olive Hill, Ky., population 1,300. I changed the names to protect the guilty and the innocent. Jeannie C. Riley was the third version of it. I put it down as a demo and sent it to a DJ, whose wife cut it, then [Sun Records president] Shelby Singleton’s wife cut it, and then they called Jeannie. When she recorded it, she said at the end of the song, ‘The day my mama,’ instead of ‘that mama,’ which made it a girl’s song. Nobody even noticed.”

**HALSEY**

**“WITHOUT ME”**

**CHART PEAK** No. 1 (two weeks), Hot 100; Jun. 12, 2019

“I didn’t know ‘Without Me’ was going to be my first solo No. 1. I put it out on a whim and hoped my fans would take it as an answer to some of the things I was going through on a personal level. I made that song for me, and then when I saw how much it resonated with my fans and beyond... It’s because of the universal theme. Everyone knows what it feels like to be taken advantage of by someone you love. A lot of songs are like, ‘I’m a bad bitch, you don’t know what you’re missing out on.’ But I think there are few that speak from a point of vulnerability and say, ‘You were taking advantage of me, and I would’ve kept letting you because I loved you so much.’ Admitting that naivety, maybe that’s why it worked so well. It was very honest and very candid.”

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`AVID SONGWRITER CHAMPION`

Publishing stalwart Martin Bandier will receive this year’s Visionary Leadership Award

Martin Bandier, who exited his post as chairman/CEO of Sony/ATV Music Publishing in April after 12 years, will take home the Visionary Leadership Award on June 13. The accolade spotlights a member of the SHOF’s board of directors who has made a significant contribution to its mission. With the tribute, Bandier joins just three prior honorees: SHOF chairman emeritus Hal David, former BMI CEO Del Bryant and former ASCAP chief John A. LoFurmento.

Bandier’s 50 years in the publishing sector, which include leading SBK Entertainment and EMI Music Publishing, dove tail with the event’s own 50th anniversary this year. At Sony/ATV, the dealmaking titan grew the company into the publishing giant it is today. (Clients include The Beatles, Lady Gaga, Carole King and Taylor Swift.) “I helped make music publishing sexy,” Bandier, 77, told Billboard in March. The honor caps a victory lap of a year, which included receiving the Icon Award — previously given to Paul Simon and Dolly Parton — at BMI’s Pop Awards in May and his annual pilgrimage to the Bandier Program at Syracuse University, where he teased his next operation, Bandier Ventures, in a year-end Q&A with the program’s graduating class.

“We have long benefited from Marty’s advice, guidance and wisdom,” says SHOF president/CEO Linda Moran of the “avid songwriters’ champion” who always encourages the organization to “raise the bar.”

— NICK WILLIAMS
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR
SONGWriters HALL OF FAME
2019 INDUCTEES AND HONOREES

MISSY ELLIOTT
JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE
YUSUF (CAT STEVENS)

WE ALSO CONGRATULATE

Dallas Austin | Tom T. Hall | John Prine
Carole Bayer Sager - Johnny Mercer Award
Halsey - Hal David Starlight Award
Martin Bandier - Visionary Leadership Award

THANK YOU FOR MOVING GENERATIONS OF LISTENERS WITH YOUR SONGS

ascap WE CREATE MUSIC
JOHN PRINE
"PARADISE"
CHART PEAK Debut LP John Prine, No. 154
[Billboard 200], March 4, 1972

“My father is from Paradise, Ky., and I used to go there as a kid in the ’50s and ’60s. I got drafted in the Army in the summer of ’66. I remember him telling me that the coal company tore down his hometown and stripped out the whole area. I was just starting to write songs again when I got into the Army. My dad told me he didn’t think what I’d done were ‘real’ songs. I started writing again when I was over in Germany, so I wrote a song about his hometown. I knew if I wrote a country song about him, he’d know I was a songwriter.”

JACK TEMPCHIN
“PEACEFUL EASY FEELING”
RECORDED BY Eagles
CHART PEAK No. 22 Hot 100, March 10, 1973

“I had a gig in El Centro, Calif., and there was a folk music place called the Aquarius. I was single, I’d made it big with the waitress — she was going to take me to her place — so I told the guys I didn’t need a ride to the place we were staying. But then she left and never came back. So I’m in a strange town and I ended up sleeping on the floor of this coffeehouse, and that’s when I started writing ‘Peaceful Easy Feeling.’ My friend who was really into Zen was always talking about the magic of when you let go. A lot of times that’s when you find it.”

W E P R O U D L Y C E L E B R A T E T H E
SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME
FOR 50 YEARS OF HONORING AND CELEBRATING
THE GREATEST SONGWRITERS OF OUR TIME
AND INSPIRING GENERATIONS TO COME
WITH HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR LEADER AND MY DEAR FRIEND...
LINDA MORAN “THE GODMOTHER”
MARY JO MENNELLA
SESAC SALUTES THE SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME ON 50 Years of Celebrating Songwriters
JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE
“SEXYBACK”
CHART PEAK No. 1 [seven weeks]. Hot 100. Nov. 11, 2006.
“Timbaland and I went back and forth trading lines, freestyling, but it came about after I had been listening to David Bowie for weeks. I wanted something with that same unapologetic feeling as ‘Rebel Rebel’ — that feeling of being completely comfortable with yourself. After the song came out I was walking around New York City when I crossed paths with a UPS delivery guy who shouted, ‘Hey, JT! I’m bringing sexy back!’ He was wearing the uniform and everything. In that moment he felt that way, and that was awesome. I wanted anyone to be able to say those words.”

YUSUF [CAT STEVENS]
“WILD WORLD”
“‘Wild World’ was really my parting song with my girlfriend, actress Patti D’Arbanville. Because I’d had such an experience of almost falling off the planet [from tuberculosis], I knew there were a lot of dangers out there. So it was kind of me talking to myself about the career I was about to embark on, and also talking to her about her career and what she was going on to then do. We’d basically split at that point, and that was the ode to our parting. It’s very much too, I’d think, a song for a mother watching [her] kids walk out the door.”
The National Music Publishers’ Association congratulates our 2019 annual meeting honorees including Songwriter Icon Ryan Tedder, Lifetime Service Award honoree Dean Kay and Industry Legacy Award honoree Barbara Cane.

NMPA is the leading voice for promoting and advancing the interests of music publishers and their songwriting partners.
50 Years Of Pinch-Me Music Moments
Ahead of its semicentennial this June, industry executives share the G.O.A.T. performances from the Songwriters Hall of Fame gala — from Lady Gaga and k.d. lang to Foreigner and Neil Diamond

“Two things stand out in my mind. First, Irving Burgie was so happy to be inducted. He grew up in America but wrote a lot of songs about the Caribbean, and the audience still, most of us, didn’t have any idea who he was. And he said, ‘Here’s one of the songs I wrote,’ and he starts to sing ‘Day-O.’ The whole place erupted. He was so demure and understated, people had tears in their eyes... The second one was Foreigner. Lou Gramm really hadn’t been well, and I don’t think the band had performed for a long time, but Lou got up and sang ‘I Want To Know What Love Is,’ and it was the most incredible moment. He looked old when he got on the stage, but by the time he finished he looked like the youngest rocker ever.”
—Martin Bandier, former chairman/CEO, Sony/ATV Music Publishing

“One of my absolute favorite nights of the year is the Songwriters Hall of Fame. Each of the awardees’ catalogs is dazzling and I’m left grinning with warmth, admiration and respect all night long! I’m a total admirer of the songwriter. Personally, one of my favorite moments in life has been hearing the songs of Sammy Cahn or Burt Bacharach [both inducted in 1972] one after another. I listen time and again with disbelief that one person could have written so many classics that have enriched my life.”
—Clive Davis, chief creative officer, Sony Music

“K.d. lang’s performance of ‘Hallelujah,’ to honor inductee Leonard Cohen. One of my favorite songs, and a performance that was inspired.”
—David Israelite, president/CEO, National Music Publishers’ Association

“We gave Neil Diamond the Johnny Mercer Award last year, just before he had announced his retirement from touring because of Parkinson’s. People weren’t quite sure how he was functioning. Then he gets up, takes the mic, bypasses his speech and — rock star that he is — tears the entire room apart with ‘Sweet Caroline,’ says thank you and walks offstage.”
—Evan Lamberg, president, Universal Music Publishing North America; co-chair, SHOF Show Committee

“Thanks to our small but powerful show committee, there have been too many special moments to list: from Pink’s ‘Me and Bobby McGee’ accompanied by just an acoustic guitar, to Lady Gaga’s performance of ‘What’s Up?,’ [to] Meat Loaf and Constantine Maroulis’ ‘Bat Out of Hell.’”
—Linda Moran, president/CEO, SHOF

“I accepted Jay-Z’s award in 2017 since he [had] just had twins. It was significant to so many because he was the first-ever hip-hop songwriter to be inducted. It was a landmark moment for the SHOF. Another was Drake’s Hal David Starlight Award honor in 2011. It was so early in his songwriting career, which we’ve all watched blossom into one of the biggest in the world.”
—Jon Platt, chairman/CEO, Sony/ATV Music Publishing

1 Johnny Mercer Award honoree Diamond at the SHOF dinner in 2018. 2 From left: Judy Collins, Cohen and lang at the ceremony in 2010. 3 Burgie at his induction in 2007. 4 Lady Gaga onstage in 2018, when she was honored with the inaugural Contemporary Icon Award.” Something of a childhood dream or fantasy,” she told the crowd. “If they only knew how many bad songs I wrote before that good one!”
Congratulations to the Songwriters Hall of Fame on your 50th anniversary.
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<th>WEEK</th>
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<td>Maelyn Jarmon</td>
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**Notes:**
- Tyler, the Creator reenters the Artist 100 at No. 1, reining for the first time as he scores his first chart-topper on the Billboard 200 with his 165,000 equivalent album units, according to Nielsen Music (see page 110).
ROUND HILL MUSIC

Congratulations to this year's inductees and special award winners:

DALLAS AUSTIN
MISSY ELLIOTT
TOM T. HALL
JOHN PRINE
JACK TEMPCHIN
YUSUF / CAT STEVENS
CAROLE BAYER SAGER
JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE
HALSEY
AND
MARTIN BANDIER
Voice, Idol Winners Wow

Maelyn Jarmon (above) hits No. 1 on emerging Artists after using the 16th season of NBC’s The Voice (May 29). Four of her tracks landed on the Digital Song Sales chart, led by her cover of Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah” at No. 6, 180,000 sold, according to Nielsen Music.

Meanwhile, Laine Hardy, the 2019 winner of America’s American Idol (May 19), launches at No. 2 on Emerging Artists with his debut single, “Flame,” ignites at No. 8 on Digital Song Sales, 18,000 sold. Plus, Voice runner-up Gyth Rigdon nears 30-6 on Emerging Artists and fourth-place finalist Andrew Sevener debuts with No. 11 as his debut, “Proof I’ve Always Loved You” and “Rural Route Raisin” each at Nos. 29 and 44 on the sales chart with 8,000 and 7,000 sold, respectively.

—Kendal Zelinger

WARWICK ‘BACK’ IN A BIG WAY

She’s back by Dianne Warwick (above) debuts at No. 3 on the Billboard 200 with album sales marking the legendary artist’s highest rank on the 200 album sales chart in 50 years, since Swift reached No. 2 on Best Selling Albums, “Rhythm & Blues LP’s” in 1967. The record includes an update of “What the World Needs Now.” No. 7, 75 million hits 100 hit for Jackie DeShannon in 1965 that Warwick recorded a year later. “I don’t like what’s going on with my country or the world,” Warwick recently told Billboard. “I hope people start paying attention to those words again, because we need your love.”

—Gary Trust

Go to BILLBOARD.COM/BIZ for complete chart data

Emerging Artists

June 1 2019

108 Go to BILLBOARD.COM/BIZ for complete chart data

Data for week of 06.01.2019
THANK YOU
HARLAN

There are songwriters. There are great songwriters. And then there’s Harlan Howard. For over six decades, his “three chords and the truth” anointed Nashville with a plain-spoken genius the likes of which we may never see again. Willie Nelson called Harlan “the guru, the guy everybody looks up to.” That includes everybody at Vaden Group | Elliott Davis who worked with “The Dean.”

For more than forty years, our team of professionals has been providing worry-free business management, tax advisory, and consulting services for writers, performers, and producers. Whether you’re destined for the hall of fame or your first honky-tonk, you can depend on us to help you make every word and every note add up to success that won’t fall to pieces.

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For more information visit vadengroup.com

Image courtesy of the Grand Ole Opry Archives
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<td>Republic Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Post Malone</td>
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<td>93</td>
<td>Post Malone</td>
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<td>94</td>
<td>Post Malone</td>
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<td>96</td>
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<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Post Malone</td>
<td>Heal Your Heart</td>
<td>Republic Records</td>
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</table>

**Note:** The Billboard 200 chart ranks the top 200 albums in the United States, based on data compiled by Nielsen Music. The chart is published weekly by Billboard magazine, a publication owned by the Billboard Media Group. The chart is based on each album's sales, digital downloads, and streaming. The chart is updated weekly on Billboard's website. The chart is also broadcast on the weekly television special "American Top 40."
Everything starts with a songwriter.

Martin Bandier congratulates The Songwriters Hall of Fame for 50 years of continued support for songwriters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist/Certification</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Peak</th>
<th>Weeks In Top 100</th>
<th>Peak 100 Ranges</th>
<th>First Peak</th>
<th>Last Peak</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad Bunny</td>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Notorious B.I.G.</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>YoungBoyNeverBrokeAgain</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
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**Elton John Diamonds**

Elton John’s greatest-hits collection nabbed its third straight week of unit gains (15,000 equivalent album units earned during the week ending May 23, according to Nielsen Music; up 3%) as promotion ramps up in the approach to the release of the John biopic Rocketman, which opens May 31. In the wake of the film, Diamonds could surpass its No. 23 peak — if the movie has the same chart impact that Bohemian Rhapsody had on Queen’s music catalog. —K.C.
CONGRATULATIONS

SETH ENGLAND  CLARENCE SPALDING  CRAIG WISEMAN

2019 COUNTRY MUSIC
POWER PLAYERS

FROM YOUR MAVERICK FAMILY

MAVERICK
Imagine Dragons’ “Believer” (642.5 million), Juice and Alter’s “Debut” (28 million), and New Top Album Sales

**Top Album Sales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Week No.</th>
<th>Chart No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tyler, The Creator</td>
<td>IGOR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>The National</td>
<td>I Am Easy to Find</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>DJ Khaled</td>
<td>Father of Asahd</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAMMSTEIN</td>
<td>RAMMSTEIN</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Head and the Heart</td>
<td>Living Mirage</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carly Rae Jepsen</td>
<td>It’s Not You, It’s Me</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billie Eilish</td>
<td>when the party’s over</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>BTS</td>
<td>Map of The Soul: PERSONA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sariay Maggie x The Circle</td>
<td>Space Between</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>Hurts 2 B Human</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vampire Weekend</td>
<td>Father of the Bride</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lauren Daigle</td>
<td>Look Up Child</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anderson .Paak</td>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Shawn Mendes</td>
<td>NOW</td>
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<td>Shawn Mendes</td>
<td>Glasshouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queen</td>
<td>Bohemian Rhapsody (Soundtrack)</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>Queen</td>
<td>Greatest Hits</td>
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<td>The Greatest Showman</td>
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<td>Soundtrack</td>
<td>Christmas in the Lobby: U2 Live at the Troubador</td>
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<td>George Strait</td>
<td>Honky Tonk Time Machine</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weezer</td>
<td>Weezer (Teal Album)</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Megan Thee Stallion</td>
<td>Suga</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>CARRIE UNDERWOOD</td>
<td>Cry Pretty</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>Elton John</td>
<td>Diamonds</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Lewis Capaldi</td>
<td>Disney Unplugged: A Re-Imagined Carter</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queen</td>
<td>Greatest Hits II (2018) (The Platinum Collection)</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>Khalid</td>
<td>Free Spirit</td>
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<td>Paul McCartney</td>
<td>Egypt Station</td>
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<td>Lizzo</td>
<td>Cuz I Love You</td>
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<td>Hillsong UNITED</td>
<td>People</td>
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<td>Anthony Evans</td>
<td>Altered</td>
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<td>Chris Stapleton</td>
<td>Traveller</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mac DeMarco</td>
<td>Here Comes the Cowboy</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>FULL OF HELL</td>
<td>Weeping Choir</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metallica</td>
<td>Metallica (40th Anniversary Edition)</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kacey Musgraves</td>
<td>Golden Hour</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Com Truise</td>
<td>Persuasion System</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rob Thomas</td>
<td>Chip Tooth Smile</td>
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<tr>
<td>MARC ANTHONY</td>
<td>OPUS</td>
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**Heatseekers Albums**

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<thead>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Week No.</th>
<th>Chart No.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Kingfish Migrant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full of Hell</td>
<td>Weeping Choir</td>
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<tr>
<td>Com Truise</td>
<td>Persuasion System</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>MADDIE POPPE</td>
<td>Whirlwind</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Jennie Vaughan</td>
<td>Please Come Home</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Steel Pulse</td>
<td>Mass Manipulation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAMSEAN PATTISON</td>
<td>Heroes &amp; Gods</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE HEAVY</td>
<td>Sons</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>GGTY</td>
<td>Saving Stars</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>TODDRAH HALL</td>
<td>USB Party, Part One (EP)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Big Thief</td>
<td>U.F.O.F.</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saint Vitus</td>
<td>Saint Vitus</td>
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<td>WALKOFF</td>
<td>The Complete Collection (2003-2021)</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possessed</td>
<td>Revelations Of Ovillation</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Gilbert</td>
<td>Behold Electric Guitar</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORVILLE PECK</td>
<td>Pony</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>WEYES BLOOD</td>
<td>Titanic Rising</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>JAMILA WATSON</td>
<td>Legacy</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influencers Worship</td>
<td>Just The Cross</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>King Gizzard &amp; the Lizard Wizard</td>
<td>Fingertip Pain</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>The King Live in Paris</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>GRACE LIZZARD &amp; JASON GOTT</td>
<td>Jaded.</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRIAN MEAD</td>
<td>Finding Gabriel</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>CHARLY BLUES</td>
<td>Young Enough</td>
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**Soundtracks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Week No.</th>
<th>Chart No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Game of Thrones: A Telltale Game Series</td>
<td>Episode 1: The Lost Lords</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game of Thrones: A Telltale Game Series</td>
<td>Episode 2: The Sword in the Dark</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game of Thrones: A Telltale Game Series</td>
<td>Episode 3: The Silver Hand</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game of Thrones: A Telltale Game Series</td>
<td>Episode 4: The Black Arrow</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game of Thrones: A Telltale Game Series</td>
<td>Episode 5: The Ladder</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game of Thrones: A Telltale Game Series</td>
<td>Episode 6: The First of His Name</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game of Thrones: A Telltale Game Series</td>
<td>Episode 7: The Ice of Winter</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game of Thrones: A Telltale Game Series</td>
<td>Episode 8: The Red Woman</td>
<td>8</td>
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**Sales Spike For Dagge**

Lauren Daigle celebrates her second album to reach a half million in sales as her debut release, Look Up Child, surpasses the sales mark. The title sold 500,000 in the week ending May 23, bringing its total to 500,000. She previously closed the half-million threshold with 2019’s How Can It Be (781,000). Fun fact that most may not be aware of: Daigle auditioned for American Idol in 2010, 2011, and 2012 but didn’t make the Top 24 contestant lineup in any of those seasons.

Speaking of TV talent shows, Moesha Bristow, the winner of season 16 of NBC’s The Voice, debuts at No. 175 on the Billboard 200 with The Voice: The Complete Season 16 Collection (EP). It starts with 6,000 equivalent album units earned in the week ending May 22, according to Nielsen Music. Of that sum, a little under 1,000 were in album sales. Most of the title’s units were generated by track-equivalent album units (55,000), with only a little streaming activity registered for the set (554,000 on-demand audio streams for its six songs). Bristow was crowned champion on season 16.

But will she ever visit the Billboard 200 again? The last top-four-placing Cookies & Cream: The Voice to chart an album — after the routine Top 40 season best-of compilation — was season nine winner Jordan Smith, who won Dec. 15, 2015. Her studio album Something Beautiful debuted and peaked at No. 7 on the list dated April 9, 2016. It was followed by a holiday release, ‘This Is The Season, reaching No. 9 on Dec. 17, 2016. Smith’s last, the 2019’s Only One, missed the Billboard 200 but hit No. 91 on Top Album Sales. — K.G.
For efficient and accurate royalty processing.
For sound recordings and musical works.
For all music creators in the sound system.

Recording Artists  Producers
Labels  Background Vocalists
Songwriters  Session Musicians
Publishers  Digital Service Providers
HIPGNOSIS SONGS FUND

SALUTES THE

SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME

2019 INDUCTEES

AND

CHAIRMAN

NILE RODGERS
### Pop/Rhythmic/Adult

#### June 1, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Hot 100 Peak</th>
<th>Mainstream Top 40 Peak</th>
<th>Digital Song Sales Peak</th>
<th>Adult Contemporary Peak</th>
<th>Adult Top 40 Peak</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radio Songs</strong></td>
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<td>Sucker</td>
<td>Jonas Brothers</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing With a Stranger</td>
<td>Sam Smith &amp; Niall</td>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>Old Town Road</td>
<td>Luke Bryan</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
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<td>Sweet But Psycho</td>
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<td>RCA</td>
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<td>Republic</td>
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<td>Republic</td>
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<td>ME!</td>
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<td>Republic</td>
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<td>Without Me</td>
<td>Halsey</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>High Hopes</td>
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<td>Republic</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>I Don't Care</td>
<td>Ed Sheeran &amp; Justin Bieber</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>Break Up (Your Girlfriend) World</td>
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<td>Republic</td>
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<td>IF I CAN'T HAVE YOU</td>
<td>Shawn Mendes</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td>Eastside</td>
<td>Benny Blanco, Halsey &amp; Khalid</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td>Sunflower</td>
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<td>Good As You</td>
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<td>Whiskey Glasses</td>
<td>Morgan Wallen</td>
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<td>Happier</td>
<td>Marshmello &amp; Bastille</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>Look Back At It</td>
<td>A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td>Delilah</td>
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<td>Comin' Out</td>
<td>Weeknd feat. Drake</td>
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<td>Republic</td>
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<td>Jonas Brothers</td>
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**Data for week of 06.01.2019**
CONGRATULATIONS TO JOHN PRINE

ON HIS SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME INDUCTION!

Congratulations to the 2019 Songwriters Hall of Fame Inductees

Proud Music Publishers of The Greatest Of All Time
CONGRATS SCOTT SIMAN

on being named 2019 Billboard Country Power Player

billboard
ALL THINGS MUSIC — STRAIGHT TO YOUR INBOX

SIGN UP AT BILLBOARD.COM/NEWSLETTERS
CONGRATULATIONS
NOAH McPIKE
ON BEING NAMED TO
BILLBOARD’S 2019
COUNTRY POWER PLAYERS LIST!

DICKINSON WRIGHT

ACCESS THE BEST IN MUSIC.
FREE FOR CURRENT BILLBOARD SUBSCRIBERS
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CONGRATULATIONS
TIM McGRAW & JON MEACHAM
ON YOUR NEW BOOK

SONGS OF AMERICA
PATRIOTISM, PROTEST, AND THE MUSIC THAT MADE A NATION

SONGS OF AMERICA
AVAILABLE JUNE 11

One day we started trying to answer the question, "What role did music play in history" and the book took shape. If you want to tell the story of our country, you have to understand the music. If you've given up hope about what's happening in the country, listen to the music of our past and you'll be reminded that we've been through difficult times before and we'll be through them again. But we've always overcome.
| TITLE | Artist | Certification | Total Weeks | Ranking
|-------|--------|---------------|-------------|--------
| High Hopes | Panic! At The Disco | B | 53
| Hey Look Ma, I Made It | Panic! At The Disco | A | 34
| Natural | Imagine Dragons | B | 19
| DSG Unsainted | Slipknot | B | 4
| Chlorine | twenty one pilots | A | 32
| Bad Liar | Imagine Dragons | B | 29
| Lo/Hi | The Black Keys | C | 12
| Glory | The Luminaries | B | 7
| Ready to Go | Cage The Elephant | B | 7
| 100 Bad Days | Aesop Rock feat. Katz & Learning | AJR | 16
| Hurt | Oliver Tree | B | 20
| Missed Connection | The Head And The Heart | B | 18
| 11 Minutes | Yungblud & Hayley Featuring Travis Barker | B | 14
| Monsters | Shinedown | B | 11
| Longshot | Catfish and the Bottlemen | B | 15
| Alligator | Of Monsters And Men | B | 6
| Go | The Black Keys | B | 1
| Cringe | Matt Macon | B | 15
| Almost (Sweet Music) | Hole | C | 9
| This Life | Vampire Weekend | B | 5
| Blame It On My Youth | Blink-182 | B | 3
| Forgive My Friends | Smith & Thell Feat. Swedish Jam Factor (Chell & Thell) | B | 23
| Harmony Hall | Vampire Weekend | C | 18
| Beloved | Mumford & Sons | B | 13
| Joy | Bazille | B | 3
| Still Feel | Half Moon Run | B | 12
| Remember When | Bad Wolves | B | 7
| Borderline | Lime Cordiale | B | 10
| Under Your Scar | Godsmack | B | 4
| Life In The City | The Lumineers | B | 1
| Breaking Down | I Prevail | B | 12
| Heroine | Dashboard Confessional feat. Twin Sister | B | 3
| Power Over Me | Porcelain | B | 16
| Are You Bored Yet | Wallows Feat. Clairo | B | 12
| Maybe, I'm Afraid | Lovetittybeard | B | 28
| Peer Pressure | James Bay Featuring Jullia Michaels | B | 13
| Patience | Tame Impala | B | 9
| Saw Lightning | Beck | B | 6
| Bismark | Ak-centz | B | 1
| Deutschland | Ramstein | B | 4
| Change | The Revivalists | B | 5
| Elevate | Papa Roach | B | 3
| Different Kind Of Love | Aftershock | B | 4
| Reason To Fight | Disturburb | B | 6
| Boom | X Ambassadors | B | 26
| You Had Your Soul With You | The National | B | 7
| Radio | Ramstein | B | 1
| Leviathan | Volbeat | B | 1

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<td>You Had Your Soul With You</td>
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**No ‘Missed’ Opportunity**

The Head & The Heart top the Triple A Airplay chart with “Missed Connection,” which rises 24. The song is the band’s third leader and first since “All We Ever Knew,” which ruled for eight weeks beginning in August 2016. The new track is the first single from Living Mirage, which bowed at No. 3 on Top Rock Albums with 24,000 equivalent units earned, according to Nielsen Music.

The summit of Top Rock Albums belongs to The National’s I Am Easy To Find, which debuts with 40,000 units earned. The act’s eighth studio album is its fourth total and consecutively topping leader, a streak that dates to the May 2010 arrival of High Violet.

Rammstein’s self-titled set opener at No. 2 on Top Rock Albums and No. 1 on Hard Rock Albums, 06/09. The LP is the German rockers’ first in nearly a decade, since Liebe Ist Für Alle Da, which bowed at No. 1 in November 2009, becoming the group’s first No. 1 on the ranking. Rammstein remains as the band’s first top 10 on the all-genre Billboard 200, at No. 9, exceeding the act’s prior-best No. 13 start and peak of Leibe.

Plus, Slipknot’s “Unsainted” climbs to the top of Rock Digital Song Sales and Hard-Rock Digital Song Sales after its first full tracking week, selling 11,000 downloads. The sum sparks the track’s 298 vault to real Rock Songs, where it’s the metal band’s first top five hit.

—Kevin Sutherland
CITY NATIONAL

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11:11 Clocks
In At No. 1
Maluma (above) charts his third straight No. 1 on Top Latin Albums and Latin Rhythm Albums as 11:11, his fourth studio set, opens atop both lists. The LP follows his previous leader, F.A.M.E., which arrived at the summit in May 2019 but fell from No. 1.

The first week for 11:11 was mostly driven by streaming activity, registering 13,000 in streaming equivalent album units. That figure translates to 174 million on-demand audio streams for the set's songs in its debut frame, making it the most-streamed Latin album of the week. Meanwhile, Maluma's *F.A.M.E.*, the new album's first single, rose 1-2-9 to No. 1 on Latin Airplay, with a 38% gain in audience in the week ending May 4 (ending at 9.8 million), it’s his 14th top 10 on the list. Or hot Latin Singer, the track bumps 10-8.

"Hushaw," Kany García’s Contra el Viento debuts at No. 3 on Latin Pop Albums (2,000 sold units, highest new bow for a DSL artist since Thalia’s Valentín started at No. 1 on Nov. 24, 2019. Plus, Avatar’s reunion single, "cemient," tops Latin Airplay (4-1) with 16.6 million in audience, up 45%. In the act’s first No. 1 since "Diez de Noviembre" notched nine consecutive weeks between Jan. 23 and April 10, 2020. —Pamela Busch
Celebrating Cumulus’ own

Country Power Player!

Charlie Cook
VP/Country Formats, Cumulus Media
Operations Manager, Nashville Market
Program Director, WSM-FM & NASH Icon
### HOT CHRISTIAN SONGS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
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<th>Artist</th>
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<td>Resurrecting</td>
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<td>Scars</td>
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<td>Look Up Child</td>
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*Data for week of 06.01.2019*
**HOT DANCE/ELECTRONIC SONGS™**

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<td>Kygo &amp; Rita Ora</td>
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<td>ON MY WAY</td>
<td>Alan Walker, Sabrina Carpenter &amp; Farrve</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>TOUGH LOVE</td>
<td>Avicii Featuring Angel &amp; Vargas &amp; Laguna</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>ALL DAY AND NIGHT</td>
<td>Jax Jones, Martin Solveig &amp; Madison Beer</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>LILY</td>
<td>Alan Walker, K-391 &amp; Emilie Hollow</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU</td>
<td>Jonas Blue Feat. Theresa Rex</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>GIANT</td>
<td>Calvin Harris &amp; Rag'n'骨Man</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>Zedd &amp; Katy Perry</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>HUGEL Featuriing Amber Van Day</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>STAY (DON'T GO AWAY)</td>
<td>David Guetta Featuring RAYE</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>FIRE IN MY SOUL</td>
<td>Oliver Heldens Featuring Rongne &amp; Elae</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>NO SLEEP</td>
<td>Martin Garrix Featuring Efren</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>CAN'T TAKE IT FROM ME</td>
<td>Major Lazer Feat. Skip Marley</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>THOUGHTS OF YOU</td>
<td>Kygo Featuriing Vanye Brossard</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>YOU LITTLE BEAUTY</td>
<td>DEE ROY</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>NO SLEEP</td>
<td>Martin Garrix Featuring Efren</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>CAN'T TAKE IT FROM ME</td>
<td>Major Lazer Feat. Skip Marley</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>THOUGHTS OF YOU</td>
<td>Kygo Featuriing Vanye Brossard</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>YOU LITTLE BEAUTY</td>
<td>DEE ROY</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>STAY (DON'T GO AWAY)</td>
<td>David Guetta Featuring RAYE</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
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<td>Oliver Heldens Featuring Rongne &amp; Elae</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>NO SLEEP</td>
<td>Martin Garrix Featuring Efren</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>CAN'T TAKE IT FROM ME</td>
<td>Major Lazer Feat. Skip Marley</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>THOUGHTS OF YOU</td>
<td>Kygo Featuriing Vanye Brossard</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOP DANCE/ELECTRONIC ALBUMS™**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>ALBUM TITLE</th>
<th>CERTIFICATION</th>
<th>WEEKS ON CHART</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Avicii</td>
<td>My Name Isega</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lady Gaga</td>
<td>The Fame Monster</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Chainsmokers</td>
<td>Collage EP</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>THE CHAINSMOKERS</td>
<td>W DELUXE</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>THE CHAINSMOKERS</td>
<td>Sick Boy</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Alan Walker</td>
<td>Different World</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Jonas Blue</td>
<td>Good Vibrations</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Avicii</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>DEMON DAYS</td>
<td>Demon Days</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>David Guetta</td>
<td>Nothing But The Beat</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Odesza</td>
<td>In Return</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Illenium</td>
<td>Phases</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Kygo</td>
<td>Kids In Love</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>DJ Snake</td>
<td>Encore</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Aluna Garcia &amp; Galimatias</td>
<td>Urban Flora</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Major Lazer &amp; MajoLazer Essentials</td>
<td>MAJOR LAZER ESSENTIALS</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>RL Grime</td>
<td>Nova Pura</td>
<td>🎵</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Gryffin</td>
<td>Gravity Pt. 1 (EP)</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Daft Punk</td>
<td>Random Access Memories</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>195</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Kygo</td>
<td>Cloud Nine</td>
<td>🎵</td>
<td>35</td>
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**DANCE/MIX SHOW AIRPLAY™**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Airplay Date</th>
<th>Chart Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Daft Punk | Dance Floor Revolution | September 14, 2019 | 1
| Calvin Harris | Feels | September 14, 2019 | 2
| Galantis | The Party Feat. Charlie Sloth & Louisa Johnson | September 14, 2019 | 3
| Avicii | Wake Me Up | September 14, 2019 | 4
| Martin Garrix | Scared To Be Kind | September 14, 2019 | 5
| Skrillex | Get Yr Head Out Feat. Camo & Krooked | September 14, 2019 | 6
| Alesso & Tiësto | If We Only Had The Words | September 14, 2019 | 7
| Chris Lake | This Is How We Do | September 14, 2019 | 8
| Kungs | This One's For You | September 14, 2019 | 9
| Tchami | Good Saved Is Better Than Bad Lost | September 14, 2019 | 10

**Avicii Advances To No. 1**

Avicii (born Tim Bergling) was a Swedish DJ, remixer, and record producer. He died on April 20, 2018. His posthumous hit, "SOS," featuring Aloe Blacc, was released in 2018 and reached the top of the charts. This song was written in 2017 and was a collaboration between Avicii and Aloe Blacc. The song was written to represent the singer's battle with depression and addiction.

Avicii's legacy continues to grow, and his music is still celebrated and played on dance floors around the world.
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CONCERT GROSSES

June 1, 2019

Nashville Goes To Church
In a nail-biting photo finish, Eric Church (above) claims the No. 1 spot on the Billboard chart with his May 25 performance at Nashville’s Nissan Stadium. According to figures reported to Billboard-Boxscore, he grossed $9.8 million and sold 65,523 tickets, bringing the first leg of his Double Down Tour to a triumphant close.

Church trails Church at No. 2 by under $1,000. His most recent set of Classic Chevrolet dates in Las Vegas also grossed $9.8 million from nine shows in March. After playing two dates spaced across arenas nationwide throughout his 2019 trek, Church’s Nashville concert marks his first time headlining a stadium, in the same city. Church grossed $2.5 million and sold 38,926 tickets at Bridgestone Arena on May 26-27-28. That attendance count remained his personal best until his 2019 return, where he outgrossed his previous high by 49%. The May 25 event’s $9.8 million take is the highest-grossing engagement of his career. The Double Down Tour will exceed Church’s biggest earnings. And while the outing’s grosses have been consistent, fluctuating between $20.71 and $33.6 million, the Nissan Stadium show also exceeds his previous best by 63%. The $56,031 ticket sold is the best Christmas for a concert in the stadium’s history, narrowly besting Taylor Swift’s $56,031 tickets sold on Aug. 25, 2019.

Church also appears at Nos. 5-6 with recent double-headers in Denver and Los Angeles.

ERIC CHURCH

1. $1,822,426
   Artist: Eric Church
   Venue: Nissan Stadium, Nashville
   Date: May 25
   Capacity: 67,591
   Sold: 65,523
   Tickets: $89.50

2. $811,480
   Artist: Life Is Beautiful
   Venue: Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas
   Date: March 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 29, 30
   Capacity: 40,000
   Sold: 39,262
   Tickets: $129.50

3. $784,760
   Artist: Rascal Flatts
   Venue: Rose Bowl, Pasadena, CA
   Date: May 18
   Capacity: 86,000
   Sold: 32,265
   Tickets: $99.50

4. $656,202
   Artist: N Sync
   Venue: Madison Square Garden, New York
   Date: May 16
   Capacity: 18,200
   Sold: 16,073
   Tickets: $129.50

5. $438,578
   Artist: Eric Church
   Venue: First Tennessee Park, Nashville
   Date: May 17
   Capacity: 34,000
   Sold: 28,922
   Tickets: $129.50

6. $415,473
   Artist: Eric Church
   Venue: First Tennessee Park, Nashville
   Date: May 18
   Capacity: 34,000
   Sold: 28,922
   Tickets: $129.50

7. $400,000
   Artist: Celine Dion
   Venue: Caesars Palace, Las Vegas
   Date: May 17
   Capacity: 15,000
   Sold: 11,843
   Tickets: $159.50

8. $377,131
   Artist: Sam Hunt
   Venue: Shoreline Amphitheatre, Mountain View, CA
   Date: May 22
   Capacity: 19,500
   Sold: 9,220
   Tickets: $79.50

9. $352,360
   Artist: Lady Antebellum
   Venue: First Tennessee Park, Nashville
   Date: May 19
   Capacity: 34,000
   Sold: 28,922
   Tickets: $129.50

10. $340,850
    Artist: Eric Church
    Venue: First Tennessee Park, Nashville
    Date: May 17
    Capacity: 34,000
    Sold: 28,922
    Tickets: $129.50

11. $339,920
    Artist: Eric Church
    Venue: First Tennessee Park, Nashville
    Date: May 18
    Capacity: 34,000
    Sold: 28,922
    Tickets: $129.50

12. $339,800
    Artist: Eric Church
    Venue: First Tennessee Park, Nashville
    Date: May 19
    Capacity: 34,000
    Sold: 28,922
    Tickets: $129.50

13. $315,276
    Artist: Eric Church
    Venue: First Tennessee Park, Nashville
    Date: May 20
    Capacity: 34,000
    Sold: 28,922
    Tickets: $129.50

LEGEND
- Side Charts indicate sales with known sales only.
- Album Charts:
  - Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) certification awarded for physical shipments. Sales are calculated with digital downloads of 500,000,000 albums, followed by albums sold at $6.59 each.
  - RIAA certification for physical shipments & digital downloads of 1,500,000 albums (Platinum). Numerical noted with Platinum symbol indicates album’s multi-platinum level.
  - RIAA certification for physical shipments & digital downloads of 5,000,000 albums (Warner). Numerical noted with Diamond symbol indicates album’s diamond-platinum level.
  - Latin album certification for physical shipments & digital downloads of 5,000,000 albums (Platinum). Numerical noted with Plata symbol indicates album’s multi-platinum level.

- Digital Songs Charts:
  - RIAA certification for $50,000 paid downloads and on-demand streams where 100 streams equals 1 download.
  - RIAA certification for 1 million paid downloads and on-demand streams where 900 streams equals 1 download (Platinum).

- Awards:
  - P/E (Percentage) of total sales
  - 45% (45% of total sales)
  - 50% (50% of total sales)
  - 66% (66% of total sales)
  - 75% (75% of total sales)
  - 0% (0% of total sales)
  - 10% (10% of total sales)
  - 20% (20% of total sales)
  - 30% (30% of total sales)
  - 40% (40% of total sales)
  - 50% (50% of total sales)
  - 60% (60% of total sales)
  - 70% (70% of total sales)
  - 80% (80% of total sales)
  - 90% (90% of total sales)
  - 100% (100% of total sales)

- The Billboard chart data is based on regularly updated grosses from the Reporters Association (On-Air) and the Billboard chart sales.

Boxscore data should be submitted to Eric Franklinberg at boxscore@billboard.com.
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All About That Instinct

Carla Wallace
Co-Owner/CEO, Big Yellow Dog Music

Wallace’s boutique publishing/artist-development firm counts songwriter-turned pop star Meghan Trainor and country powerhouse Marren Morris as early success stories. The former’s doo-wop-tinged smash “All About That Bass” ruled the Billboard Hot 100 for a whopping eight-week run in 2014, and thanks to songs like breakout hit “My Church,” Morris’ first two albums — 2015’s Here and this year’s Girl — both debuted at No. 1 on Billboard’s Top Country Albums chart. A pro-farm Morris first showcased her vocal prowess at a 2014 company karaoke Christmas party, where she performed Beyoncé’s “Halo.” “We were all like, ‘What?!’” recalls Wallace. Now she looks to Trainor’s and Morris’ genre-bending approaches for her next class of rising stars, from Tenille Townes to Brynn Elliott. “These artists get to be great singers in any format.”

On a wall in my office, I have the board of clippings ripped out from Billboard magazine, which includes two articles [that are] my aha moments: a 2014 article titled “Meghan Trainor’s ‘Bass’ Rumbles Up The Charts” and then a 2010 feature that said Marren could become “Nashville’s next breakout pop star.” I don’t stare at them too much (Laughs.) I saw such raw talent immediately in Meghan. It was just incredible to see this 17-year-old girl at a songwriter event, and next thing you know she’s blowing up the charts.

“All About That Bass” touched everybody. To celebrate the No. 1, we went to [Nashville drag bar] Play and had a big private party where the girls performed versions of the song. Marren was there, too. I saw a cute clip of them together at the Grammys in February, and I thought it was the coolest thing ever that they were hanging out. The first album Meghan gave me was a self-released project, Only 17 — all her singing, all her production, with all the elements that she has today: the s o c a , the jazz-influenced pop, the doo-wop. Everything was there at that age. It’s the same thing with Marren. Both girls had never had publishing deals or record deals before. It was all about clearing a path for them to discover themselves as artists. A friend of mine said it best: “Isn’t it great that everyone agrees with you?” — AS TOLD TO NICK WILLIAMS
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