

NSAI Honors Songwriters At Ryman Marathon



Decade honorees Taylor Swift (Songwriter-Artist of the Decade) and Ashley Gorley (Songwriter of the Decade) pictured on the red carpet. Photo: Savannah Grimm for NSAI

The annual Nashville Songwriters Association International (NSAI) songwriter awards honored nearly 40 writers Tuesday evening (Sept. 20) during a four-hour extravaganza staged at the Ryman Auditorium.

Major awards were given to **Matthew West** (Songwriter/Artist of the Year), **Garth Brooks** (Kris Kristofferson Lifetime Achievement Award), **Ashley Gorley** (Songwriter of the Year) and the double-brother team consisting of **Jacob & Jordan Davis** with **Josh & Matt Jenkins** (Song of the Year). Gorley was also crowned the organization's Songwriter of the Decade.

At the end of the night, it became clear that the sold-out crowd was there to see **Taylor Swift** win Songwriter/Artist of the Decade. The superstar was greeted by a shrieking standing ovation and repeated shouts during her speech. Then, the Swifties sang along with every word of her Grammy-nominated, 10-minute opus "All Too Well."

The show was hosted by the NSAI's **Bart Herbison**, **Jennifer Turnbow**, **Lindsay Glover** and board president **Steve Bogard**. The event began with West and CCM artist **Anne Wilson** performing "Me on Your Mind" (West/Wilson/**Jeff Pardo**). West's win was only the second time in the NSAI's 33-year awarding history that the honor has gone to a Christian-music artist.

"It is an understatement to say how humbled I am before this audience of songwriters," he said. "Who am I that God has blessed me so much?"

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THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES

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Matt Roy Joins Big Machine Music's Writer Roster

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"Audiences get a piece of the singer's souls"

— **THE BALTIMORE SUN**

"the duo continue to offer a sharply-written female perspective"

— **TASTE OF COUNTRY**

The celebration of Gorley's songwriting began with **Parmalee** doing "Take My Name" (Gorley/Matt Thomas/David Fanning/Ben Johnson) and **Hardy** singing "Give Heaven Some Hell" (Gorley/Hardy/Johnson/Hunter Phelps). Then Bogard presented the President's Keystone Award to Sony Music Publishing's **Jon Platt**. The executive gave \$500,000 to aid the songwriting community during the pandemic. In his honor, **Little Big Town** performed the touching "Rich Man," penned by the group's **Jimi Westbrook**.

One of the NSAI's annual traditions is to salute the "10 Songs I Wish I'd Written," as voted on by its songwriter members. Songwriters **Matt McGinn**, **Jenn Schott** and **Nathan Spicer** sang their co-written "7500 OBO" (recorded by **Tim McGraw**) as the first of these 10 tunes. Nashville pop artist **Gayle** rocked out on her hit "ABCDEFU," co-written by her with **Sara Davis** and **Dave Pittenger**. **Sam Hunt** sang "23" along with his co-writers **Chris LaCorte** and **Josh Osborne** (collaborator **Shane McAnally** was absent).

Alana Springsteen sang the **Chris Stapleton** hit "You Should Probably Leave" (Stapleton/Gorley/Chris DuBois). The delightfully goofy phenom "Fancy Like" was sung by its writers **Walker Hayes**, **Shane Stevens**, **Josh Jenkins** and **Cameron "Cambo" Bartolini** (who broke out a kazoo). The **Kenny Chesney** hit "Knowing You" was performed by its creators, **Brett James**, **Kat Higgins** and **Adam James**.

Trisha Yearwood took the stage to present hubby Garth with his Lifetime Achievement award. "This is really fitting, because it honors what he cherishes most, the songwriter," she said. "No one will ever deserve this honor more....a poet, a good man, a song's best friend and my best friend, Garth Brooks."

Pat Alger sang their co-written "The Thunder Rolls." **Kent Blazy** did "Ain't Goin' Down," which he and Brooks co-wrote with **Kim Williams**. **Tony Arata** sang his own "The Dance." **Luke Combs** performed "The Beaches of Cheyenne" (Brooks/Bryan Kennedy/Dan Roberts).

"Songwriters—there are no bigger dreamers on the planet," said Brooks in accepting his honor. "There is nobody more important to music than the songwriter." Turning to Yearwood, he added, "You are the greatest award I ever got to hold."

The 10-songs countdown continued with the **Morgan Wallen** hit "Sand In My Boots" (Gorley/Hardy/Osborne), performed by **Larry Fleet**. Each of these performances was accompanied by a video interview with its writers explaining how the song came to be. "Half of My Hometown" was sung by **Kelsea Ballerini**, **Nicolle Galyon** and **Jimmy Robbins**, who wrote the song with McAnally and **Ross Copperman**. The sister duo **Tigirlily** did "Never Wanted to Be That Girl" (McAnally/Ashley McBryde/Carly Pearce). Co-writers **Matt Rogers** and **Ben Stennis** sang their Cody Johnson hit "Til You Can't."

There was a tie in the voting, so the 11th song of the "10 Songs I Wish I'd Written" was "Things a Man Oughta Know." It was performed by **Jonathan Singleton**, who co-wrote it with **Lainey Wilson** and **Jason Nix**. The NSAI's Song of the Year was "Buy Dirt," sung by Jordan Davis, Jacob Davis, Josh Jenkins and Matt Jenkins. "This song has been a life changer for me," said Jordan Davis, who recorded it with **Luke Bryan**.

The NSAI's previous Songwriter of the Decade was **Craig Wiseman** (2000-2009). "I am here tonight to pass the torch," he said, citing the fact that Ashley Gorley has written 63 No. 1 hits. **Thomas Rhett** sang "What's Your Country Song" (Rhett/Gorley/Jesse Frasure/Rhett Akins/Parker Welling). Then Johnson, Phelps and **Wyatt McCubbin** sang a five-song medley of Gorley's hits. **Babyface** crooned Rhett's hit "Unforgettable" (Gorley/Rhett/Frasure/McAnally) and gave a well-deserved shout-out to the house band featuring lead guitarist **Colin Linden**.



Garth Brooks accepting the Kris Kristofferson Lifetime Achievement Award. Photo: Jason Davis for NSAI

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"What a strange dream," marveled Gorley. "I don't know what's going on. I'm blown away. You all make me feel special. A wild ride it's been.

"Ten years is a long time," added the Songwriter of the Decade honoree. "But it's not as long as 11 years, which is how long I was in Nashville before I had a hit on the radio. And I'm grateful for those years, because it teaches you how hard it is.

"Being a part of a community with people like me, you feel like you're part of a family.... It's a huge deal to have somebody believe in you. I am very, very honored. You really, really made me feel loved tonight."

Pandemonium broke out when Swift was introduced as the Songwriter/Artist of the Decade. "For me, tonight is brimming with camaraderie," she began. "This is an award that celebrates my family, my co-writers, my team and my fiercest friends. When it comes to songwriting and my life, they are one and the same."

Swift recalled her teen years on Music Row, learning to write, and thanked the Nashville songwriting community for its generosity toward her 15 years ago. She described her categorization of her songs as "quill lyrics," "fountain-pen lyrics" and "glitter-gel pen lyrics," and cited mega-hit examples of each writing style.

"I love doing this," Swift added. "Writing songs is a calling. I'd still be doing it if I'd never been recognized for it."

With just her acoustic guitar for accompaniment, she moved to the center-stage mic and delivered "All Too Well" (Swift/**Liz Rose**). The audience stood and enthusiastically sang/shouted the song with/to her to climax the marathon night of music. **MR**

***MusicRow* Taps Cris Lacy As Featured Speaker For 'Rising Women' Event**



Warner Music Nashville Co-President **Cris Lacy** will be the featured speaker at *MusicRow's* Rising Women on the Row breakfast on Thursday, Oct. 20 at 8:30 a.m. at the Omni Nashville Hotel.

Attendees will be treated to insights from Lacy during an on-stage interview with *MusicRow* Publisher/Owner **Sherod Robertson**.

The ninth annual celebration will honor the next class of Rising Women on the Row honorees: **Jen Conger** (FBMM, Business Manager), **JoJamie Hahr** (BBR Music Group/BMG, Sr. VP), **Mandy Morrison** (City National Bank, Vice President/Senior Relationship Manager), **Missy Roberts** (Universal Music Publishing

Group, VP, A&R), **Jennie Smythe** (Girlilla Marketing, CEO) and **Stephanie Wright** (UMG Nashville, Senior VP, A&R).

Presenting sponsors for this year's Rising Women on the Row are **City National Bank**, **Loeb & Loeb**, and **Tri Star Sports & Entertainment Group**.

For more information or to purchase tickets, [click here](#). **MR**

COUNTRYBREAKOUT RADIO CHART

CHART ACTION

New On The Chart — Debuting This Week

song/artist/label — Chart Position

Up There Down Here/Jake Owen/Big Loud Records — 71

Greatest Spin Increase

song/artist/label — Spin Increase

Thank God/Kane Brown with Katelyn Brown/RCA

Nashville — 168

What My World Spins Around/Jordan Davis/MCA

Nashville — 159

Whiskey On You/Nate Smith/Sony Music Nashville — 156

Fall In Love/Bailey Zimmerman/Hurricane Bailey — 152

Gold/Dierks Bentley/Capitol — 129

Most Added

song/artist/label — No. of Adds

Thank God/Kane Brown with Katelyn Brown/RCA

Nashville — 15

wait in the truck/HARDY feat. Lainey Wilson/Big Loud

Records — 9

How It Oughta Be/Shane Profitt/BMLG — 9

I Can't Love You Anymore/Maren Morris/Columbia

Nashville — 7

Whiskey On You/Nate Smith/Sony Music Nashville — 5

On Deck—Soon To Be Charting

song/artist/label — No. of Spins

Girl In Mine/Parmalee/Stoney Creek Records — 123

USA/Filmore feat. Pitbull/Curb — 116

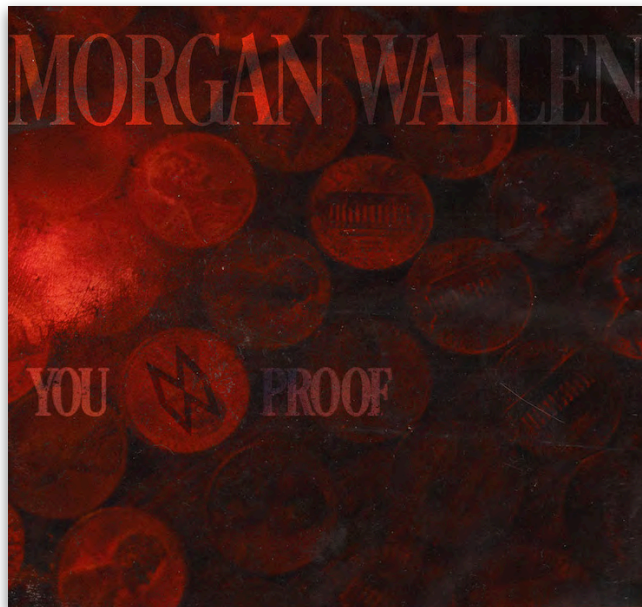
Me On You/Muscadine Bloodline/Stancaster Music, LLC — 105

If Today Was Your Last Day/Shelley Lynch/Lynch

Records — 103

\$ (Money)/Chris Kroeze — 102

NO. 1 SONG



For the third consecutive week atop the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Radio Chart, **Morgan Wallen's** "You Proof" regains +68 spins edging out Thomas Rhett's "Half Of Me" by only 3 spins. Wallen co-wrote "You Proof" with **Ashley Gorley**, **Ernest Keith Smith**, and **Ryan Vojtesak**.

The single remains No. 1 on the country streaming songs chart for an eighth consecutive week. Wallen also keeps his spot at the peak of the country albums chart. *Dangerous: The Double Album* adds 50K in total consumption this week

Wallen is set to headline [iHeartRadio Music Festival](#) this weekend and [Pepsi Gulf Coast Jam](#) in 2023.



Each songwriter and artist earning No. 1 credit on the *MusicRow* Chart receives a *MusicRow* Challenge Coin. Click [here](#) to view a full list of recipients.

MusicRow CountryBreakout Chart Reporting Stations

WHMA Anniston, AL
WXFL Florence, AL
KQUS Hot Springs, AR
KDXY Jonesboro, AR
KBOD Mountain Home, AR
KWCK Searcy, AR
KRAZ Santa Barbara, CA
WPAP Panama City, FL
WUBB Savannah, GA
KXIA Marshalltown, IA
KIAI Mason City, IA
KBOE Oskaloosa, IA
KTHK Idaho Falls, ID

KKMV Rupert, ID
WOOZ Carterville, IL
WAAG Galesburg, IL
WMCI Mattoon, IL
WYOT Rochelle, IL
WRTB Rockford, IL
WCCI Savanna, IL
WIFE Connorsville, IN
KAIR Atchison, KS
KQZQ Pratt, KS
WKDZ Cadiz, KY
WBKR Owensboro, KY
WDHR Pikeville, KY

KRRV Alexandria, LA
WKPE Hyannis, MA
WTCM Traverse City, MI
KYSM Mankato, MN
KZPK St. Cloud, MN
KFAV Warrenton, MO
WFAY Fayetteville, NC
KZZY Devils Lake, ND
KYCK Thompson, ND
KRVN Lexington, NE
Jersey Shore Country
KQBA Santa Fe, NM
WDNB Monticello, NY

WCJW Warsaw, NY
WFRY Watertown, NY
KITX Hugo, OK
KWEY Weatherford, OK
KWOX Woodward, OK
KRKT Albany, OR
WVNW Lewistown, PA
WNBT Mansfield, PA
WCFT Selinsgrove, PA
WFGE State College, PA
KMOM Aberdeen, SD
KZZI Spearfish, SD
WUCZ Carthage, TN

WDKN Dickson, TN
WLLX Lawrenceburg, TN
KFTX Corpus Christi, TX
KYKX Longview, TX
KXOX Sweetwater, TX
WAKG Danville, VA
WAXX Altoona, WI
WJVL Janesville, WI
WGLR Platteville, WI
WQPC Prairie du Chien, WI
WCOW Sparta, WI
WDGG Huntington, WV

COUNTRYBREAKOUT RADIO CHART

| Weeks On Chart | Last Week | This Week | Song / Artist / Label | Spins / Reports | % Spin Power | Spins +/- |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--|--------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 12 | 1 | 1 | You Proof / Morgan Wallen / Big Loud Records | 1799/53 | 4 | 68 |
| 16 | 2 | 2 | Half Of Me / Thomas Rhett / Valory | 1796/60 | 4 | 75 |
| 12 | 3 | 3 | Country On / Luke Bryan / Capitol | 1753/59 | 7 | 111 |
| 14 | 4 | 4 | The Kind Of Love We Make / Luke Combs / River House Artists/Columbia Nashville | 1515/42 | -4 | -55 |
| 18 | 5 | 5 | She Had Me At Heads Carolina / Cole Swindell / Warner Music Nashville | 1476/42 | 0 | -3 |
| 31 | 7 | 6 | Wishful Drinking / Ingrid Andress with Sam Hunt / Atlantic/Warner Music Nashville | 1424/46 | 3 | 48 |
| 16 | 10 | 7 | Fall In Love / Bailey Zimmerman / Hurricane Bailey | 1374/53 | 12 | 152 |
| 23 | 8 | 8 | Son Of A Sinner / Jelly Roll / Broken Bow | 1282/47 | 0 | 0 |
| 24 | 9 | 9 | Heartfirst / Kelsea Ballerini / Black River Entertainment | 1243/55 | -1 | -14 |
| 11 | 11 | 10 | That's What Tequila Does / Jason Aldean / Macon Music/Broken Bow | 1235/56 | 6 | 66 |
| 30 | 12 | 11 | Pick Me Up / Gabby Barrett / Warner Music Nashville | 1216/51 | 6 | 74 |
| 27 | 15 | 12 | Down Home / Jimmie Allen / Stoney Creek Records | 1108/47 | 10 | 105 |
| 8 | 20 | 13 | Gold / Dierks Bentley / Capitol | 1053/53 | 14 | 129 |
| 26 | 14 | 14 | Joy Of My Life / Chris Stapleton / Mercury Nashville | 1047/50 | 1 | 14 |
| 26 | 16 | 15 | Heart Of A Small Town / Tim Dugger / Curb Records | 1043/49 | 5 | 53 |
| 11 | 17 | 16 | Brown Eyes Baby / Keith Urban / Capitol | 1018/52 | 5 | 46 |
| 37 | 18 | 17 | Out In The Middle / Zac Brown Band / Warner Music Nashville | 1006/44 | 4 | 38 |
| 33 | 19 | 18 | My Bar / Priscilla Block / Mercury Nashville | 996/47 | 4 | 39 |
| 16 | 26 | 19 | What My World Spins Around / Jordan Davis / MCA Nashville | 962/50 | 20 | 159 |
| 5 | 24 | 20 | No Body / Blake Shelton / Warner Music Nashville | 945/51 | 13 | 107 |
| 42 | 13 | 21 | Soul / Lee Brice / Curb | 924/40 | -12 | -121 |
| 19 | 23 | 22 | Telling On My Heart / Casey Donahew / Almost Country Entertainment | 891/46 | 6 | 48 |
| 28 | 21 | 23 | Note To Self / Randy Houser / Magnolia Music Group | 858/44 | 1 | 7 |
| 42 | 25 | 24 | You Didn't / Brett Young / BMLG | 848/41 | 4 | 32 |
| 24 | 22 | 25 | All I Can Think About Lately / CJ Solar / Raining Bacon | 838/45 | -1 | -10 |
| 13 | 28 | 26 | Water Under The Bridge / Sam Hunt / MCA Nashville | 790/48 | 6 | 47 |
| 18 | 29 | 27 | Heart Like A Truck / Lainey Wilson / Broken Bow | 789/48 | 13 | 89 |
| 15 | 27 | 28 | Doing Life With Me / Eric Church / EMI Records Nashville | 757/41 | 1 | 7 |
| 16 | 31 | 29 | What He Didn't Do / Carly Pearce / Big Machine | 721/44 | 5 | 37 |
| 21 | 30 | 30 | She Likes It / Russell Dickerson feat. Jake Scott / Triple Tigers Records | 690/36 | -1 | -8 |
| 19 | 33 | 31 | Caught Up On My Drinkin' / Smith & Wesley / Dream Walkin' Records/BFD/Audium | 682/38 | 17 | 101 |
| 10 | 38 | 32 | Whiskey On You / Nate Smith / Sony Music Nashville | 673/38 | 30 | 156 |
| 4 | 41 | 33 | wait in the truck / HARDY feat. Lainey Wilson / Big Loud Records | 602/41 | 25 | 119 |
| 6 | 34 | 34 | Handle On You / Parker McCollum / MCA Nashville | 586/33 | 7 | 38 |
| 4 | 43 | 35 | Beer With My Friends / Kenny Chesney feat. Old Dominion / Blue Chair Records/Warner Music Nashville | 584/38 | 23 | 109 |
| 12 | 35 | 36 | Strange / Miranda Lambert / Vanner Records/RCA Records | 577/35 | 9 | 50 |
| 16 | 36 | 37 | Boy Like Me / Aaron Goodvin / Reviver Records | 556/37 | 6 | 33 |
| 12 | 39 | 38 | Longneck Way To Go / Midland feat. Jon Pardi / Big Machine Records | 530/36 | 5 | 24 |
| 13 | 42 | 39 | Everything She Ain't / Hailey Whitters / Pigasus/S&D/Big Loud | 508/36 | 5 | 25 |
| 8 | 44 | 40 | Loud & Heavy / Cody Jinks / Late August Records | 478/34 | 12 | 52 |

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AWARDS

| Weeks On Chart | Last Week | This Week | Song / Artist / Label | Spins / Reports | % Spin Power | Spins +/- |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--|--------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 20 | 46 | 41 | The Wind / Ashley Barron / SSM Nashville | 470/28 | 14 | 57 |
| 19 | 45 | 42 | Human / Cody Johnson / CoJo Music/Warner Music Nashville | 454/33 | 9 | 36 |
| 11 | 47 | 43 | Famous Enough / Paige King Johnson / PCG Records | 419/31 | 7 | 27 |
| 17 | 48 | 44 | You Go Good / Shane Owens / AmeriMonte Records | 404/29 | 5 | 18 |
| 23 | 40 | 45 | Hell Yeah / Little Big Town / Capitol | 388/22 | -23 | -115 |
| 9 | 51 | 46 | Til You Get There / Ty Herndon / Pivotal Records | 384/29 | 8 | 27 |
| 34 | 49 | 47 | Good Day For Living / Joe Nichols / Quartz Hill Records | 374/23 | -2 | -8 |
| 7 | 52 | 48 | Y'all Life / Walker Hayes / Monument Records | 342/27 | 2 | 6 |
| 25 | 53 | 49 | Holy Water / Michael Ray / Warner Music Nashville | 324/22 | 4 | 12 |
| 2 | 70 | 50 | Thank God / Kane Brown with Katelyn Brown / RCA Nashville | 323/27 | 108 | 168 |
| 15 | 54 | 51 | Never Til Now / Ashley Cooke & Brett Young / Big Loud/BMLG Records | 315/22 | 4 | 11 |
| 39 | 50 | 52 | Country'd Look Good On You / Frank Ray / Stoney Creek Records | 301/16 | -18 | -68 |
| 22 | 55 | 53 | Songs About You / Brett Eldredge / Warner Music Nashville | 288/20 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | 56 | 54 | You / Dan + Shay / Warner Music Nashville | 283/21 | 0 | 1 |
| 10 | 57 | 55 | Open Road / Ned LeDoux / Powder River/Thirty Tigers | 279/22 | 12 | 30 |
| 22 | 32 | 56 | Lovesick Drifting Cowboy / James Robert Webb / Bison Creek Records | 268/19 | -59 | -387 |
| 19 | 58 | 57 | Shades / Dave Herrera / Brokerade, Inc | 259/15 | 6 | 14 |
| 18 | 37 | 58 | Amen / Jacob Bryant / American Roots Records | 239/15 | -54 | -282 |
| 14 | 60 | 59 | Come On Down / Josiah Siska / Black River Records | 231/21 | -1 | -2 |
| 10 | 59 | 60 | Something In The Orange / Zach Bryan / Belting Bronco/Warner Records | 231/10 | -2 | -4 |
| 7 | 62 | 61 | One Drink In / Donice Morace / Bad Jeu Jeu Records/CDX Records | 228/16 | 9 | 18 |
| 7 | 63 | 62 | Everything Has Your Memory / Wade Bowen / Bowen Sounds | 223/16 | 9 | 19 |
| 3 | 66 | 63 | Can't Have Mine / Dylan Scott / Curb | 221/17 | 21 | 39 |
| 13 | 61 | 64 | Long Live Cowgirls / Ian Munsick with Cody Johnson / Warner Music Nashville | 217/18 | -1 | -2 |
| 2 | 68 | 65 | It Matters To Her / Scotty McCreery / Triple Tigers Records | 211/16 | 21 | 37 |
| 5 | 64 | 66 | I Don't Want You Back / Tiffany Woys / Tiffany Woys | 210/15 | 4 | 8 |
| 5 | 65 | 67 | Wild As Her / Corey Kent / Combustion Masters | 196/14 | -2 | -3 |
| 6 | 72 | 68 | Project / Chase McDaniel / | 168/13 | 12 | 18 |
| 4 | 73 | 69 | Lake Days / Cam Allen / Goat Music Group | 149/13 | 6 | 9 |
| 4 | 69 | 70 | How You Make A Man / Craig Morgan / Broken Bow | 149/9 | -6 | -10 |
| 1 | 87 | 71 | Up There Down Here / Jake Owen / Big Loud Records | 145/12 | 53 | 50 |
| 7 | 74 | 72 | Man Made / Matt Stell / RECORDS | 140/10 | 1 | 1 |
| 42 | 67 | 73 | Son Of A / Dillon Carmichael / Riser House | 140/8 | -20 | -36 |
| 3 | 79 | 74 | Country Can / Hannah Ellis / Curb | 138/11 | 16 | 19 |
| 2 | 77 | 75 | Ain't A Woman Like A River / Flat River Band / Early Bird Records | 137/12 | 13 | 16 |
| 4 | 71 | 76 | If He Wanted To He Would / Kylie Morgan / EMI Records Nashville | 137/11 | -11 | -17 |
| 9 | 75 | 77 | Worth A Shot / Elle King feat. Dierks Bentley / RCA Records/Columbia Nashville | 136/12 | -1 | -2 |
| 14 | 78 | 78 | Sounds Good To Me / Jason Byrd / MayCourt Records | 132/9 | 10 | 12 |
| 5 | 80 | 79 | Who I Am Who I Ain't / Rusty Steel / Tower Music Group | 130/8 | 13 | 15 |
| 3 | 76 | 80 | Another Round of You / Donny Lee / Donny Lee Music | 125/9 | -6 | -8 |

No. 1 Song

Greatest Spin Increase

Highest Debut



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My Music Row Story: FBMM's Jen Conger



The “My Music Row Story” weekly column features notable members of the Nashville music industry selected by the MusicRow editorial team. These individuals serve in key roles that help advance and promote the success of our industry. This column spotlights the invaluable people that keep the wheels rolling and the music playing.

Jen Conger quickly moved up the ranks to become a business manager at FBMM after becoming the first female associate business manager in the firm's history and doing so at a record pace of under 10 years. In Conger's almost two decades of experience within the music industry, she has mentored a broad list of accomplished artists who have collectively received 17 Grammy Award wins, along with many ACM, CMA, *Billboard* and Golden Globe awards. She is a member of the ACM, the CMA, SOURCE, The Recording Academy and The Country Music Hall of Fame Troubadour Society,

as well as an alumna of the Society of Leaders in Development (SOLID) and a member of the Leadership Music's Class of 2020.

Conger played an integral role in the development and execution of seven sold-out concerts held at Bridgestone Arena, in which the proceeds—over \$4 million to date—benefited the Country Music Hall of Fame. For the last nine years, she has organized a clothing and instrument donation on behalf of her clients, with donated items totaling over \$110,000 given to the W.O. Smith Music School, and in 2018, was involved in the preparation of a sold-out benefit concert in October of that year, which raised over \$700,000 net for various music industry-oriented charities, including MusiCares.

Conger will be honored as part of the current class of *MusicRow's* Rising Women on the Row on Oct. 20. For more details about the class and the event, [click here](#).

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MusicRow: Where did you grow up?

I grew up in a small town called Greensboro, Georgia. I went to high school in Athens, Georgia. My parents would drive an hour each way to take me to school there. I ended up going to college in Nashville at Vanderbilt.

What did you study?

I studied U.S. history and English and minored in film studies. I wanted to be in film director. I got accepted to NYU, but my parents didn't want me to go too far away. I came here and didn't know anything about the music industry.

What did you do after graduation?

I had gotten an internship at a music video production company. They made music videos for country artists. I had been the executive assistant to one of the owners and the bookkeeper left soon after I started. I raised my hand because I was a struggling kid right out of college trying to make ends meet. I thought, "I don't necessarily know accounting, but I'm good with math and money, so how about I try out this whole bookkeeping thing." I just fell into it, but had a knack for it. I thought if this was something I was interested in, I needed to focus on a place that actually does this.

Is that how you ended up at FBMM?

Yes. A friend of mine let me know about a job opening at FBMM. That was 18 years ago, I've been here ever since. I fell into it, went back to school and got my masters in accounting, and just have been learning as I go along the way.

What did you learn right away when you fell into business management?

People need financial advisors. Unfortunately, you're not being taught this in school. So often we have musicians who suddenly have all this fame, but the reality is that the money comes long after the fame. Having a team in place that's being a good steward to your money is so important. So is having people on your team who know the music industry versus someone who is not well versed on royalties and touring, et cetera. It can get artists in a lot of trouble.

Since you didn't originally set out to be in the music industry, when did you feel like you were in the right place?

Probably two years into working at FBMM. I went out on tour with a client and loved it. I loved seeing how the bills that I was paying were reflected on tour. The video bill, the trucking bill, the bus bill... Seeing it coming together live. That's when I realized this was going to be a career for me.

Business managers are unsung heroes of the music industry. What are some of your proudest moments that you've worked on behind the scenes?

We're not in the limelight and that's okay. We get the work done. I think sometimes we make it look too easy. We're getting the work done so that the artist isn't having to worry about it, but the artist isn't seeing the mountains that we're moving every day to get those things done.

I have one client in particular that has put on multiple shows benefiting the Country Music Hall of Fame. I've been at the forefront of that, organizing it and haggling with vendors to try to get as much money to the Country Music Hall of Fame as possible. At the end of the night, being able to let the Hall of Fame know that we've got three quarters of a million dollars heading their way is pretty cool.

What advice would you give a new business manager?

Photo: Courtesy of Jen Conger



Photo: Courtesy of Jen Conger

The devil is in the details. It's important to check your decimal points. (Laughs) Be accountable. When you screw up, chances are you're going to think that it's way worse than it actually is. There's probably a long line of people who've made the same mistake, so be accountable and own it. Most importantly, learn from that mistake so you don't repeat it. I tell new hires some of the really big faux pas that I made moving up. [Through my errors], they're able to understand that even though I may have made a huge error, I'm still here because I learned from it and I grew from it versus trying to be defensive.

Who have been some of your mentors?

From a personal standpoint, my mother is amazing. Her sacrificing for us and being our chauffeur. (Laughs) She had cancer in her early thirties with two young kids; and she sacrificed and did what she needed to do for her family. From a personal level, I'm always trying to emulate that. I've got two kids and try to be a fraction of the kick ass mom that she was.

Professionally, **Chuck Hull** has been a great mentor. He is a tour manager for one of my artists. He's been in the business for 40 something years. He has worked with some no names you've probably never heard of like **Elvis Presley, Paul McCartney, and John Hiatt**. He has taken me under his wing for the last 20 years and has educated me about the touring world—both the historical side of things and how things have changed over time. He's like a surrogate father to me.

What do you think are some of the best qualities about our industry?

That it's constantly evolving. The technology is constantly evolving. The revenue streams are constantly evolving. There's not a cookie cutter idea of what an artist should look like anymore. It used to be cookie cutter but we're definitely moving away from that and I think that's a wonderful thing.

What's a moment you've had that your little kid self would think is so cool?

I got a shout out at an award show when my client won Entertainer of the Year. Business managers are never in the limelight, and we're definitely never mentioned in acceptance speeches, so that was a big deal. [Laughs] And then meeting **Dolly Parton**.

What is something people might not know about you?

I know a lot of film trivia. My favorite movies are *Goodfellas* and *The Godfather: Part II*. My favorite Christmas movie is *Die Hard*.

You will be honored at MusicRow's Rising Women on the Row breakfast on Oct. 20. What has your experience been like as a woman in the industry?

Being a woman in the music industry is not easy. It's still very much a good ol' boys club. Again, I think we're moving away from that, which is wonderful.

As women, we have to look out for each other. I've seen too many times this hazing mentality of, "It wasn't easy for me, so I'm not going to bend over backwards to help this next generation." We need to erase that mentality from our brains because it's not helping. It's only making the issue worse. We have to all work with each other and cheer for each other along the way. **MR**

Rachel Fontenot Exits UMG Nashville



UMG Nashville Vice President of Marketing & Artist Development, **Rachel Fontenot**, will exit her post at the end of this month to pursue new opportunities. Her last official day set for Sept. 30, 2022 .

She was promoted to her current position at Universal Music Group Nashville in 2020. In this role, she lead the artist projects and development team while continuing to oversee her roster.

Fontenot initially joined UMG Nashville in 2019 to oversee day-to-day artist development and marketing efforts for **Lauren Alaina**, **Gary Allan**, **Eric Church**, **Vince Gill**, **Sam Hunt**, **Brandon Lay**, **Parker McCollum**, **Kylie Morgan**, **Jon Pardi**, **Shania Twain**, **Brothers Osborne** and others.

Fontenot began her career with BMG Nashville and held several positions within the company including production, sales, artist development and marketing. She served as Director of Marketing at Sony BMG where she oversaw the marketing campaigns and international marketing efforts for the entire Sony Music Nashville roster. Fontenot also launched her own artist consulting firm in 2017 where she focused on marketing strategy and artist development while maximizing her well-established relationships with record labels, artists and managers. **MR**

Hitmaker Jordan Schmidt Inks Publishing Deal With Endurance Music Group



Pictured (L-R): Attorney T.D. Ruth, daschent's Dane Schmidt, EMG's Mark Ahlberg, Schmidt, EMG's Lauren Funk, and EMG's Michael Martin. Photo: Ed Rode

Endurance Music Group (EMG) has signed hit songwriter and producer **Jordan Schmidt** to an exclusive global publishing agreement. The company has also acquired a significant stake in his existing catalog.

Schmidt's chart-toppers include **Kane Brown**'s "Like I Love Country Music" and the 5x Platinum "What Ifs" (feat. **Lauren Alaina**), the ACM and CMA Single of the Year and Grammy Award-nominated "God's Country" (**Blake Shelton**), **Mitchell Tenpenny**'s "Drunk Me," and **Jason Aldean**'s "You Make It Easy" and "Lights Come On." The deal includes hundreds of songs written by Schmidt, including recent and upcoming releases by Brown, fellow EMG songwriter **Jimmie Allen**, **Cole Swindell**, **Nelly**, **Ernest**, and others, as well as cuts that he produced on albums from Tenpenny, **Tyler Hubbard**, **The Band Camino**, and more.

"I'm excited to call Endurance home," Schmidt shares. "From our first meeting, I could tell they are people who understand songwriters and want to have a positive impact on their careers. I can't wait to get the ball rolling with their incredible team, freak some of them out with my drunken antics at the next company holiday party, and I hope to add to all the great things already happening at Endurance!" **MR**

DISClaimer Single Reviews: Zac Brown Band & Ingrid Andress Produce Vocal Dynamite On New Track



Zac Brown Band. Photo: Danny Clinch

For-real country music returns with a vengeance in this week's DISClaimer column.

It doesn't come any better than Gene Watson & Willie Nelson. Youngsters Brandon Ratcliff, Jon Pardi, Sunny Sweeney and Kelsea Ballerini are flying the country banner high as well.

So is Larry Fleet, who takes home the DISCOVERY Award.

The audio-nirvana collaboration between the Zac Brown Band and Ingrid Andress is this week's Disc of the Day.

[Click here to read Robert K. Oermann's weekly single reviews.](#)

MORE TOP STORIES

[CMT To Honor Luke Combs, Carly Pearce, More At 2022 Artists Of The Year Celebration](#)

[Cooper Alan Signs With Make Wake Artists & WME](#)

[Josh Jenkins, Niko Moon, Dave Pittenger Represent Nashville At 2022 SESAC Music Awards](#)

[Creative Nation Signs Mia Mantia, Promotes Four Staffers](#)

[SOLID Celebrates Its 25-Year Legacy Of Community-Building & Giving Back On Music Row \[Interview\]](#)

[CAA Announces The Return Of College Student Development Summit, The Hubb](#)

[RIAA Reports Growth Across The Board For First Half Of 2022](#)

[Little Big Town Shines A Ray Of Hope, Wisdom & Joy On New Project, 'Mr. Sun' \[Interview\]](#)

[Chris & Morgane Stapleton, Lauren Daigle, Keith Urban, More Commit To MHA's Heal The Music Day](#)

[Matthew West Wins Big At 2022 ASCAP Christian Music Awards](#)

[Adam Chaffins Signs With Spirit Music Nashville/ Fluid Music Revolution](#)

[Nashville A-Team Guitarist Ray Edenton Passes](#)

[ACM LEVel Up Program Launches Undergraduate Music Business Series](#)

[Jeannie Seely Marks Opry Milestones](#)

Bobby Bones Signs With UTA



Radio and TV personality **Bobby Bones** has signed with UTA for representation. The company will help Bones continue to build on his career across several verticals, including radio, television, touring, and books.

Bones serves as host of the award-winning, nationally syndicated iHeartRadio Bobby Bones Show, which broadcasts to 185 stations and is the No. 1 morning show in the country category with millions of monthly listeners. His work on the show resulted in Bones becoming the youngest-ever inductee into the National Radio Hall of Fame.

On the TV side, Bones currently serves as host of the USA Network competition series, *Snake in the Grass*. He has previously been host and executive producer for the National Geographic series, *Breaking Bobby Bones*, as well as Opry, which features exclusive highlights from the Grand Ole Opry stage each week. Additionally, he's served as an in-house mentor on ABC's *American Idol* for four seasons, and was crowned champion of *Dancing with The Stars*' 27th season.

As an author, Bones is a two-time *New York Times* No. 1 best-seller following the success of his books *Bare Bones* and *Fail Until You Don't: Fight. Grind. Repeat*. Bones also recently wrote his first-ever children's book, *Stanley the Dog: The First Day of School*.

Bones will continue to be represented by Red Light Management and The GreenRoom PR. **MR**

Matt Roy Joins Big Machine Music's Writer Roster



Pictured (L-R): BMM's General Manager Mike Molinar, Matt Roy, BMM's Director, Publishing Michelle Attardi. Photo: Noah Needleman

Big Machine Music (BMM), a subsidiary of HYBE America, has added singer-songwriter **Matt Roy** to its writer roster with an exclusive co-publishing agreement.

The New Jersey native began playing music at the age of 12. Drawn to the storytelling in country music, Roy landed his first publishing deal prior to graduating from Belmont University in 2018. Since then, he has landed cuts from **Kane Brown** and **Chris Young**, as well as newcomers **Ashley Cooke** and **Adam Doleac**. In 2020, Roy notched his first chart-topper with the multi-week No. 1, Gold-certified hit "Done," which was co-written and recorded by **Chris Janson**.

"Matt has a natural instinct of both craft and commerciality beyond what can be taught or learned. I believe he will be one of the great songwriters of his generation," notes Big Machine Music's General Manager **Mike Molinar**. "We are incredibly honored that he has chosen Big Machine Music as his publishing partner."

"I could not be more excited to be a part of the Big Machine Music family," Roy adds. "Their commitment to song craftsmanship and work ethic is something that inspires me greatly as a songwriter and artist. I really do feel at home and I'm excited to get to work together." **MR**

Dalton Dover Signs With Sony Music Publishing Nashville & Droptone Publishing



Pictured (L-R, back row): Dale Bobo, Anna Weisband, Tom Luteran, Charly Salvatore, Bruce Phillips, and Josh Van Valkenburg; (L-R, front row): Brian O'Neil, Rusty Gaston, Dalton Dover, Jim Catino, and Kenley Flynn. Photo: Sarah Elizabeth

Dalton Dover has signed a global publishing deal with Sony Music Publishing Nashville and **Jim Catino's** newly-formed Droptone Music Publishing.

A native of Aragon, Georgia, Dover appeared on Season 16 of *The Voice*, where he earned a chair turn from **Blake Shelton**. Since then, he has continued to build a fan base on TikTok, garnering millions of views with his popular #CatchMeOffGuard series of cover song mashups. The series has earned praise from fellow artists, including **Jimmie Allen**, **Luke Combs**, **Kidd G** and **Kameron Marlowe**.

Dover's "You Got A Small Town" and "Baby I Am" helped the 23-year-old earn a spot on Spotify's Hot Country 2022 Artists to Watch, along with a spotlight as *Billboard's* February's Country Rookie of the Month and a nod for *MusicRow's* 2022 Discovery Artist of the Year. He is set to release his new song, "Damn Good Life," on Sept. 23.

"From the moment you hear Dalton's voice, there's no doubt he was born to do this. We couldn't be more excited about the music he is creating and the future ahead of him," notes Sony Music Publishing Nashville CEO **Rusty Gaston**. *MR*

Homestead Music Signs Madeline Merlo, Elevates Chelsey Block To Managing Partner

Nashville-based management firm Homestead Music has signed NBC's *Songland* winner **Madeline Merlo**. The award-winning songwriter will release her *Slide* EP on Sept. 23 via BBR Music Group/Wheelhouse Records.

"I am so thrilled to join Homestead Music's incredible roster and work with this world-class team," Merlo shares. "As an artist, it is so important to place your career in capable hands. I am beyond excited to see what the future holds with Homestead Music behind me."

In tandem with the signing announcement, Homestead Music has also advanced **Chelsey Block** to Managing Partner. Established in 2013 with Founder/Managing Partner **Brad Belanger** at the helm, Block has proven herself as a key power player at the company for more than three years.

"Chelsey has been the center of our wheel since she came on board more than three years ago," says Belanger, Homestead Music Founder/Managing Partner. "We're grateful and excited for her to step into this leadership position at Homestead Music." *MR*



Pictured (L-R): Brad Hersh (Homestead Music Creative Director), Chelsey Block (Homestead Music Managing Partner), Madeline Merlo, Brad Belanger (Homestead Music Founder/Managing Partner). Photo: Michael James

TOP SONGWRITER CHART

| This Week | Last Week | Songwriter's Name | Song(s) | Artist |
|-----------|-----------|--------------------|--|--|
| 1 | 1 | Ashley Gorley | Gold Take My Name You Didn't Holy Water You Proof She Had Me At Heads Carolina What He Didn't Do | Dierks Bentley Parmalee Brett Young Michael Ray Morgan Wallen Cole Swindell Carly Pearce |
| 2 | 2 | Zachary Lane Bryan | Something In The Orange Oklahoma Smokeshow | Zach Bryan Zach Bryan |
| 3 | 3 | Ernest Keith Smith | You Proof Wasted On You Son Of A Sinner | Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Jelly Roll |
| 4 | 4 | Morgan Wallen | Brown Eyes Baby You Proof Wasted On You Thought You Should Know Wild As Her | Keith Urban Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Corey Kent |
| 5 | 5 | Chase McGill | 5 Foot 9 With A Woman You Love Next Thing You Know | Tyler Hubbard Justin Moore Jordan Davis |
| 6 | 6 | Bailey Zimmerman | Rock and A Hard Place Fall In Love Where It Ends | Bailey Zimmerman Bailey Zimmerman Bailey Zimmerman |
| 7 | 9 | Luke Dick | Gold Don't Come Lookin' | Dierks Bentley Jackson Dean |
| 8 | 7 | Luke Combs | The Kind of Love We Make Out In The Middle Tomorrow Me | Luke Combs Zac Brown Band Luke Combs |
| 9 | 8 | John Fogerty | Joy Of My Life | Chris Stapleton |
| 10 | 10 | Ryan Vojtesak | You Proof Wasted On You | Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen |
| 11 | 12 | Jackson Dean | Don't Come Lookin' | Jackson Dean |
| 12 | 11 | Thomas Rhett | She Had Me At Heads Carolina Half Of Me | Cole Swindell Thomas Rhett feat. Riley Green |
| 13 | 14 | Tyler Hubbard | 5 Foot 9 Hell Yeah | Tyler Hubbard Little Big Town |
| 14 | 13 | Josh Thompson | Brown Eyes Baby Wasted On You Half Of Me | Keith Urban Morgan Wallen Thomas Rhett feat. Riley Green |
| 15 | 15 | Josh Kear | No Body Ghost Story | Blake Shelton Carrie Underwood |
| 16 | 20 | Jaren Johnston | 5 Foot 9 | Tyler Hubbard |
| 17 | 23 | Matt Alderman | Truth About You Can't Have Mine | Mitchell Tenpenny Dylan Scott |
| 18 | 22 | Mitchell Tenpenny | Truth About You | Mitchell Tenpenny |
| 19 | 24 | Thomas Archer | Truth About You | Mitchell Tenpenny |
| 20 | 16 | Dylan Marlowe | Last Night Lonely | Jon Pardi |
| 21 | 17 | Joe Fox | Last Night Lonely | Jon Pardi |
| 22 | 18 | Jimi Bell | Last Night Lonely | Jon Pardi |
| 23 | 19 | Ross Copperman | Note To Self Gold Pick Me Up | Randy Houser Dierks Bentley Gabby Barrett |
| 24 | 21 | Jon Nite | You Didn't Pick Me Up | Brett Young Gabby Barrett |

| This Week | Last Week | Songwriter's Name | Song(s) | Artist |
|-----------|-----------|-------------------|---|---|
| 25 | 29 | Tony Ferrari | Soul | Lee Brice |
| 26 | 30 | Kevin Kadish | Soul | Lee Brice |
| 27 | 25 | Gavin Lucas | Fall In Love | Bailey Zimmerman |
| 28 | 26 | Austin Shawn | Fall In Love | Bailey Zimmerman |
| 29 | 27 | Jason DeFord | Son Of A Sinner | Jelly Roll |
| 30 | 28 | David Ray Stevens | Son Of A Sinner | Jelly Roll |
| 31 | 31 | David Garcia | Ghost Story | Carrie Underwood |
| 32 | 32 | Hillary Lindsey | Ghost Story | Carrie Underwood |
| 33 | 33 | Dan Isbell | The Kind of Love We Make | Luke Combs |
| 34 | 34 | Reid Isbell | The Kind of Love We Make | Luke Combs |
| 35 | 35 | Jamie Davis | The Kind of Love We Make | Luke Combs |
| 36 | 36 | Gabby Barrett | Pick Me Up | Gabby Barrett |
| 37 | 40 | Russell Dickerson | She Likes It | Russell Dickerson Feat. Jake Scott |
| 38 | 41 | Jake Scott | She Likes It | Russell Dickerson Feat. Jake Scott |
| 39 | 42 | Josh Kerr | She Likes It | Russell Dickerson Feat. Jake Scott |
| 40 | 37 | Paul DiGiovanni | With A Woman You Love | Justin Moore |
| 41 | 38 | Jeremy Stover | With A Woman You Love | Justin Moore |
| 42 | 39 | Justin Moore | With A Woman You Love | Justin Moore |
| 43 | 50 | Jordan Davis | What My World Spins Around Next Thing You Know | Jordan Davis Jordan Davis |
| 44 | 44 | Will Bundy | Brown Eyes Baby Half Of Me | Keith Urban Thomas Rhett feat. Riley Green |
| 45 | 45 | Lindsay Rimes | Whiskey On You | Nate Smith |
| 46 | 46 | Nate Smith | Whiskey On You | Nate Smith |
| 47 | 47 | Russell Sutton | Whiskey On You | Nate Smith |
| 48 | 49 | Ryan Hurd | What My World Spins Around | Jordan Davis |
| 49 | 51 | Matt Dragstrem | What My World Spins Around | Jordan Davis |
| 50 | 43 | Jordan M. Schmidt | Like I Love Country Music Wait In The Truck | Kane Brown Hardy feat. Lainey Wilson |
| 51 | 48 | Taylor Phillips | Like I Love Country Music Country'd Look Good On You | Kane Brown Frank Ray |
| 52 | 53 | Monty Criswell | Handle On You Country'd Look Good On You | Parker McCollum Frank Ray |
| 53 | 52 | Matt McGinn | Like I Love Country Music Party Mode | Kane Brown Dustin Lynch |
| 54 | 54 | Rhett Akins | Half Of Me | Thomas Rhett feat. Riley Green |
| 55 | 61 | Jesse Frasure | She Had Me At Heads Carolina | Cole Swindell |
| 56 | 62 | Cole Swindell | She Had Me At Heads Carolina | Cole Swindell |
| 57 | 63 | Mark D. Sanders | She Had Me At Heads Carolina | Cole Swindell |
| 58 | 64 | Tim Nichols | She Had Me At Heads Carolina | Cole Swindell |
| 59 | 56 | Rykeyz | Wishful Drinking | Ingrid Address with Sam Hunt |
| 60 | 57 | Lucky Daye | Wishful Drinking | Ingrid Address with Sam Hunt |

CALENDAR

Single/Track Releases

September 23

Cort Carpenter/*Somebody Tonight*

Brady Lee & Jake Banfield/*I Can Do This All Day*/Sincerely Music Group

September 26

Maren Morris/*I Can't Love You Anymore*/Columbia Nashville

Jake Owen/*Up There Down Here*/Big Loud

Toby Keith/*Oklahoma Breakdown*/Show Dog Nashville

Hannah Ellis/*Country Can*/Curb Records

Sweet Tea Trio/*All Hat, No Cattle*/Top Dog Records

Jake Gill/*Let's Get Dirty*/VRL 1.2

Album/EP Releases

September 23

Kelsea Ballerini/*Subject To Change*/Black River

Maddie & Tae/*Through the Madness Vol. 2*/Mercury Nashville

Kendell Marvel/*Come On Sunshine*/CmdShft

Georgia Webster/*Chapter 1: Things We're Not Saying*/Sony Music Nashville/River House Artists

Sunny Sweeney/*Married Alone*/Thirty Tigers

Blanca/*The Heartbreak and The Healing*/Curb I Word

Lucie Tiger/*The Memphis Tapes*/2120 Music

Blaine Holcomb/*Lessons*

Industry Events

September 24 – 25

Pilgrimage Music & Culture Festival

September 27 – October 1

IBMA World of Bluegrass

October 9 – 11

IEBA

October 14

CMT Artists of the Year