

2021 CMA Awards: Big Night For Stapleton, Combs, & Pearce, Among Others



Pictured: Chris Stapleton and Mike Henderson accept the Song of the Year award for "Starting Over." Photo: John Russell/CMA

The Country Music Association returned to Nashville's Bridgestone Arena on Wednesday night (Nov. 10) for its *55th Annual CMA Awards*, after it was held for a limited audience at the Music City Center last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hosted by **Luke Bryan** for the first time, the evening was filled with several great performances, social statements, and lots of **Chris Stapleton**.

Bryan, a two-time Entertainer of the Year, kicked his first time hosting off with a monologue that included some shade for his lack of nominations this year, jokes over COVID protocols, praise to the Atlanta Braves for winning the World Series, and playful introductions for his friends in the audience. Throughout the night other stars—including fellow *American Idol* judges **Lionel Richie** and **Katy Perry**, as well as **Lady A**, **Darius Rucker**, **Elle King**, and more—appeared to "help" Bryan out with his new hosting gig.

Stapleton, who with **Eric Church** was the most nominated artist of the night with five each, made his way to the winner's podium four times last night. His first win went to him and songwriter **Mike Henderson** for their hit "Starting Over" winning Song of the Year. Stapleton spoke a few words, then turned it to his co-writer Henderson, who "showed [Stapleton] how to write songs." The country songwriter shared the honor with his songwriting mentors, **Gary Nicholson**, **Wally Wilson**, **Kevin Welch**, and **John Hadley**.

Stapleton then won Single of the Year for "Starting Over," Album of the Year for his project of the same name, and Male Vocalist of the Year. By the time

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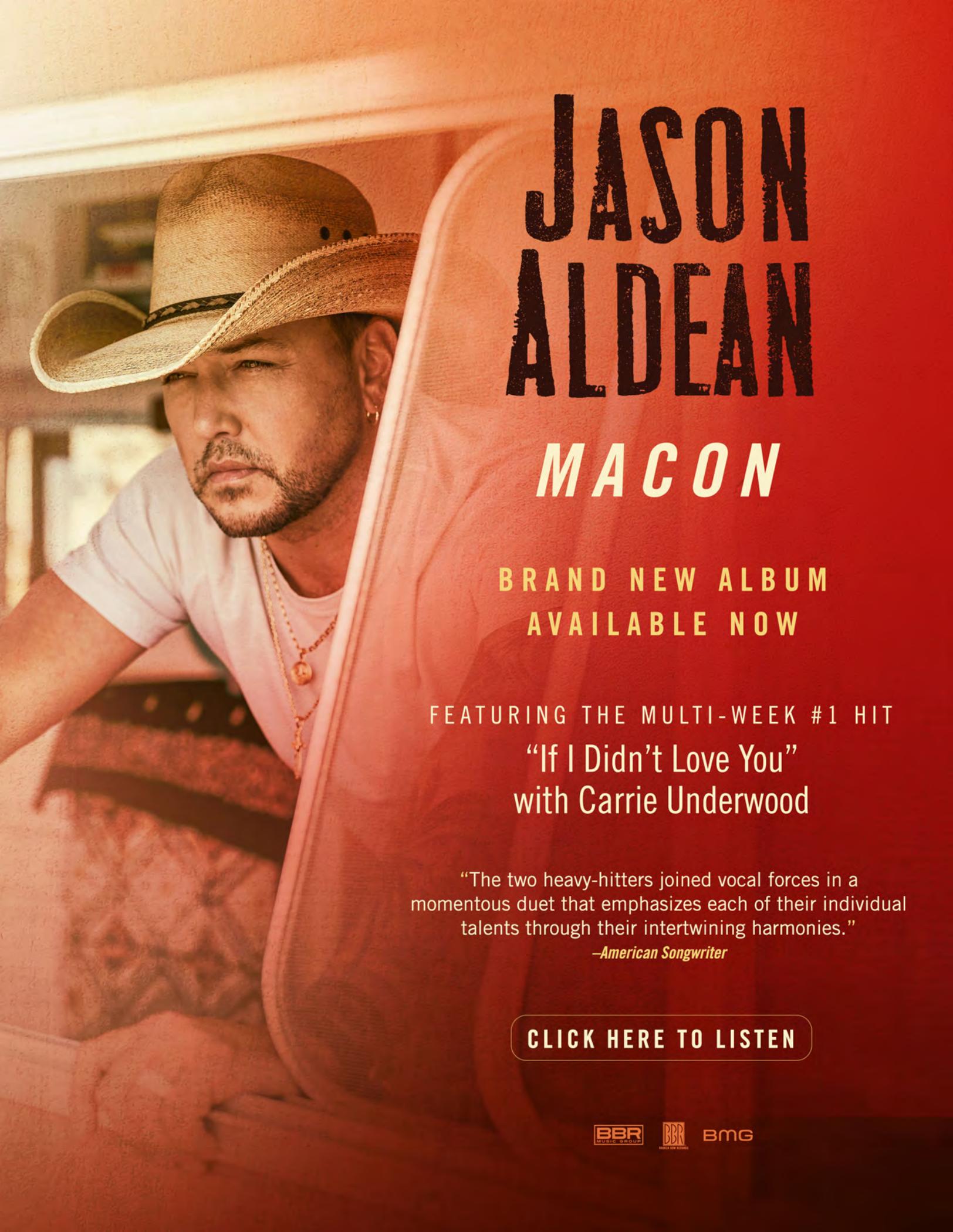
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King Pen, Warner Chappell Music Nashville Sign Jay DeMarcus

Erik Dylan Signs With 50 Egg Music, Duckman & Warner Chappell Music

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A photograph of Jason Aldean wearing a light-colored cowboy hat and a white t-shirt, looking off to the side. The background is a warm, orange-toned interior.

JASON ALDEAN

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“If I Didn’t Love You”
with Carrie Underwood

“The two heavy-hitters joined vocal forces in a momentous duet that emphasizes each of their individual talents through their intertwining harmonies.”

—*American Songwriter*

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the powerful singer accepted his fourth award of the night, he had run out of things to say.

At one point in the night, Stapleton showed off why he's a CMA favorite with a sultry performance of his "Cold." The talented musician, backed by his band and a string section, gave a flawless performance. As usual, the audience ate it up. He also backed **Jennifer Hudson** for a stellar tribute to **Aretha Franklin**. The two world-class singers did a rendition of "Night Life," a song originally written and recorded by **Willie Nelson** and later recorded by Franklin, followed by a duet of "You Are My Sunshine," the **Jimmie Davis**-penned classic that both Franklin and Nelson also recorded.



Pictured: Luke Combs accepts the Entertainer of the Year Award. Photo: Josh Brasted/CMA

In a moment where audience members and fans at home were holding their breath, actors **Susan Sarandon** and **Trace Adkins**, who are both playing in **Jason Owen's** budding TV show *Monarch*, presented most controversial award of the night, Album of the Year. After a long pause filled with screaming fans anticipating the winner, the two announced that Stapleton beat out Church's *Heart*, **Carly Pearce's** *29*, **Brothers Osborne's** *Skeletons*, and most notably, **Morgan Wallen's** blockbuster album *Dangerous: The Double Album*. Wallen was not invited to attend the CMA Awards because of an incident that occurred earlier this year when a video surfaced of the singer using a racial slur outside his Nashville home. Despite being barred from attending the show, he was eligible to be nominated for categories that honor artistic works (Single, Song, Album, Musical Event, and Music Video of the Year categories).

"I want to say thank you to everyone who listened to the record," Stapleton said of his album, *Starting Over*. "There was a lot of great records in this category."

The only award that Stapleton was nominated for and didn't win, Entertainer of the Year, went to a first-time winner. **Alan Jackson** presented the night's top honor. The Country Music Hall of Fame member said, "I can tell you from experience, when you stand up here and they call your name, it really brings you down to earth to realize all the great people who have come before you like **Haggard** and **Jones**, **Charley Pride**, **Loretta**, **Dolly Parton**, **Willie Nelson**, and so many more." He wasted no time pausing for dramatic effect when reading the winner's name. Cheers abounded when he revealed that **Luke Combs** was the CMA Entertainer of the Year for the first time ever.

The artist was stunned. "I'm at a loss for words, Alan Jackson said my name...twice!"

"I have never written a speech for something like this, which is not serving me very well right now. I just want to thank everybody in this room: the fans, every artist in this room," Combs said. "I don't deserve to win this, but I'm sure as hell glad I did. Thank y'all so much!" The young country star also debuted a brand new song last night, "Doin' This," which talked about what he would be doing if he wasn't dominating the country charts.

Another first-time winner in their category, **Carly Pearce** took home Female Vocalist of the Year. Christian artists **Amy Grant** and **Lauren Daigle** presented the award to Pearce, and fellow nominee **Ashley McBryde** brought the emotional singer-songwriter up the stage. "There's a lot of love, respect and admiration in this category," McBryde said as Pearce gathered herself to speak.

"This is all I've ever wanted in the entire world," Pearce said, thanking her team members before doubling over with emotion.

Other top winners included **Old Dominion**, who won Vocal Group of the Year for the fourth time and performed their latest hit, "I Was On A Boat That Day."

Brothers Osborne clinched Vocal Duo of the Year for the fourth time, as well. Brothers **TJ** and **John Osborne** walked up to a thunderous applause when accepting their award. "It's been a crazy rollercoaster of a year in so many



Pictured: Carly Pearce accepts the Female Vocalist of the Year Award.
Photo: John Russell/CMA

ways, especially for me emotionally,” said TJ, who came out as gay earlier this year. “To have you all support me, it really does feel like love wins tonight.” The crowd went wild for both TJ and John, who later performed their song inspired by TJ’s experience, “Younger Me.”

An emotional **Jimmie Allen** was awarded the New Artist of the Year award. “Five years ago I spent my last \$100 and came to the CMA 50th to watch Charley Pride perform on stage. And I got to perform with him last year,” Allen remembered before listing off his thank you’s. He gave a special shout out to **Ash Bowers**, who signed him after 10 years of hard work. Later on Allen showed off his vocal talent and skillful dance moves with a performance of “Freedom Was A Highway.”

Some standout performances of the night included a medley of hits from **Miranda Lambert**, the birthday girl, who kicked the set off with “Kerosene.” The high-energy performance included flames shooting up behind her that harkened back to her 2005 CMA Awards performance of the same song. She also played snippets of “Mama’s Broken Heart,” “Bluebird,” “Little Red Wagon,” and “Gunpowder & Lead” as the audience rocked along to her ambush of hits.

Gal pals Pearce and McBryde sounded great on their new duet, “Never Wanted To Be That Girl,” and **Thomas Rhett**, clad in a flannel shirt and jeans, gave a sweet performance on his “Country Again.”

A young girl, **Faith Fennidy**, introduced **Mickey Guyton**’s performance by letting the crowd know that Guyton’s ode to self-acceptance, “Love My Hair,” was inspired by Fennidy getting sent home from school because of her braids. “This next artist created this song to make sure girls like me feel seen and loved,” Fennidy said. “That’s how you turn something very painful into something very positive.”

Guyton was joined by **Brittney Spencer** and **Madeline Edwards** for the stunning performance. Guyton anchored the performance, while Spencer added gorgeous, honeyed melodies and Edwards lended her smokey, sultry voice for a stunning moment.

Musician of the Year, fiddle player **Jenee Fleenor**, backed country superstar **Blake Shelton** as he sang his rocking ditty about reincarnation, “Come Back As A Country Boy.” Nominees **Kane Brown** and **Chris Young** preformed their infectious hit “Famous Friends” as yearbook photos of country hitmakers appeared on the screen behind the stars.

Overall, the night celebrated country music, its growing commitment to acceptance, and its emergence from the hardships brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. **MR**



Pictured (L-R): Madeline Edwards, Mickey Guyton, and Brittney Spencer perform “Love My Hair.” Photo: Donn Jones/CMA



Pictured (L-R): Lionel Richie, Luke Bryan, and Katy Perry. Photo: John Russell/CMA

COUNTRYBREAKOUT RADIO CHART

CHART ACTION

New On The Chart —Debuting This Week

song/artist/label—Chart Position

Slow Down Summer/Thomas Rhett/Valory — 51

Ain't Doing Something Right/After Midtown/The Core/
10th St. — 70

Baby Don't/Paige King Johnson/PCG Records — 78

If I Were Rock & Roll/Chase Rice/Dack Janiels/
Broken Bow — 79

Hypocrite/Ruthie Collins/MCC/Curb — 80

Greatest Spin Increase

song/artist/label—Spin Increase

Slow Down Summer/Thomas Rhett/Valory — 353

Come Back As A Country Boy/Blake Shelton/Warner Music
Nashville — 152

Up/Luke Bryan/Capitol — 139

If I Was A Cowboy/Miranda Lambert/Vanner Records/RCA
Records — 114

Never Wanted To Be That Girl/Carly Pearce and Ashley
McBryde/Big Machine/WMN — 110

Most Added

song/artist/label—No. of Adds

Slow Down Summer/Thomas Rhett/Valory — 29

Raining Hallelujah/Shannon LaBrie/Moraine Music Group — 9

'Til You Can't/Cody Johnson/CoJo Music/Warner Music
Nashville — 7

Son Of A/Dillon Carmichael/Riser House — 6

Stealing Home/James Robert Webb/Bison Creek Records — 6

On Deck—Soon To Be Charting

song/artist/label—No. of Spins

Barely Breathing/Jeremy Studdard/Owen Entertainment
Group — 146

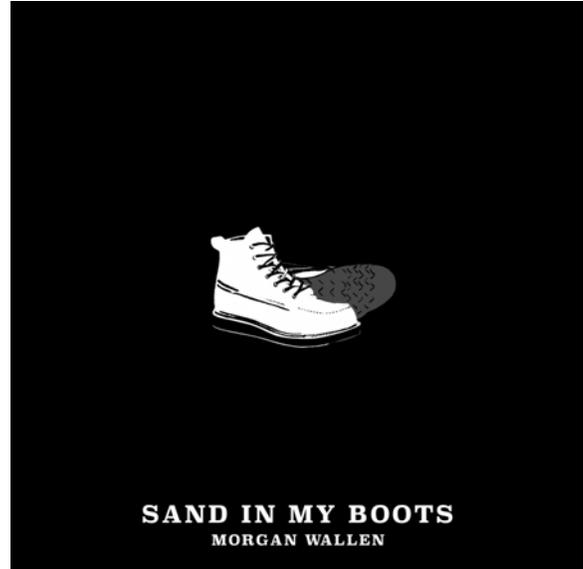
Quicksand/American Blonde — 144

Somebody Else's/Chloe Collins/Collins House Music — 139

Son Of A/Dillon Carmichael/Riser House — 133

Gave Him A Girl/Brei Carter/Brei Carter — 130

NO. 1 SONG



Morgan Wallen returns to country radio topping the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart this week with “Sand In My Boots.” The single appears on Wallen’s [record breaking](#) album, *Dangerous: The Double Album*.

“Sand In My Boots” was written by **Ashley Gorley**, **Michael Hardy**, **Josh Osborne**. The writers currently sit at No. 1, No. 3, and No. 7 on the Top Songwriter Chart.

Wallen’s “Morgan Wallen And Friends” acoustic benefit concert that was held in September raised over \$725,000 for The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee and the Tennessee Emergency Response Fund to immediately assist victims of the severe September storms and flooding in Humphreys County and other parts of Middle Tennessee.



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	WAAG Galesburg, IL	WTCM Traverse City, MI	WFRY Watertown, NY	KFTX Corpus Christi, TX
WXFL Florence, AL	WMCI Mattoon, IL	KYSM Mankato, MN	KITX Hugo, OK	KYKX Longview, TX
KHBZ Harrison, AR	WYOT Rochelle, IL	KZPK St. Cloud, MN	KWEY Weatherford, OK	KYYK Palestine, TX
KQUS Hot Springs, AR	WRTB Rockford, IL	KWWR Mexico, MO	KWOX Woodward, OK	KXOX Sweetwater, TX
KDXY Jonesboro, AR	WCCI Savanna, IL	KFAV Warrenton, MO	KRKT Albany, OR	WAKG Danville, VA
KWCK Searcy, AR	WIFE Connersville, IN	WFAY Fayetteville, NC	WVNW Lewistown, PA	WAXX Altoona, WI
KRAZ Santa Barbara, CA	KAIR Atchison, KS	KZZY Devils Lake, ND	WNBT Mansfield, PA	WJVL Janesville, WI
WPAP Panama City, FL	WKDZ Cadiz, KY	KRVN Lexington, NE	WCFT Selinsgrove, PA	WGLR Platteville, WI
WUBB Savannah, GA	WBKR Owensboro, KY	KBRX O'Neill, NE	WFGE State College, PA	WQPC Prairie du Chien, WI
KXIA Marshalltown, IA	WDHR Pikeville, KY	Jersey Shore Country	KMOM Aberdeen, SD	WCOW Sparta, WI
KIAI Mason City, IA	KRRV Alexandria, LA	KQBA Santa Fe, NM	KZZI Spearfish, SD	WTNJ Beckley, WV
KBOE Oskaloosa, IA	WUUU Covington, LA	WDNB Monticello, NY	WUCZ Carthage, TN	WDGG Huntington, WV
KTHK Idaho Falls, ID	WKPE Hyannis, MA	WOLF Syracuse, NY	WDKN Dickson, TN	
WOOZ Cartersville, IL	WVMD Cumberland, MD	WCJW Warsaw, NY	WLLX Lawrenceburg, TN	

COUNTRYBREAKOUT RADIO CHART

Weeks On Chart	Last Week	This Week	Song / Artist / Label	Spins / Reports	% Spin Power	Spins +/-
12	3	1	Sand In My Boots / Morgan Wallen / Big Loud Records	1799/64	5	92
19	2	2	Cold As You / Luke Combs / Columbia/River House Artists	1752/48	-1	-9
27	4	3	Thinking 'Bout You / Dustin Lynch feat. MacKenzie Porter / Broken Bow	1675/54	1	24
12	6	4	One Mississippi / Kane Brown / RCA Nashville	1623/58	5	76
19	1	5	Heart On Fire / Eric Church / EMI Records Nashville	1491/56	-19	-341
42	8	6	To Be Loved By You / Parker McCollum / MCA Nashville	1466/59	2	29
30	9	7	Half Of My Hometown / Kelsea Ballerini / Black River Entertainment	1465/55	1	18
29	10	8	It's Cause I Am / Callista Clark / Big Machine	1403/55	3	43
14	14	9	Best Thing Since Backroads / Jake Owen / Big Loud Records	1316/64	4	56
37	11	10	Knowing You / Kenny Chesney / Blue Chair Records/Warner Music Nashville	1297/40	-4	-56
12	16	11	Wild Hearts / Keith Urban / Capitol	1296/61	4	55
16	7	12	If I Didn't Love You / Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood / Broken Bow/Macon Music/Capitol	1296/36	-16	-245
47	15	13	Whiskey And Rain / Michael Ray / Warner Music Nashville	1275/44	1	12
44	12	14	Give Heaven Some Hell / HARDY / Big Loud Records	1274/55	-3	-45
9	17	15	23 / Sam Hunt / MCA Nashville	1240/57	5	59
6	18	16	Come Back As A Country Boy / Blake Shelton / Warner Music Nashville	1234/60	14	152
8	19	17	Never Wanted To Be That Girl / Carly Pearce and Ashley McBryde / Big Machine/WMN	1185/65	10	110
15	20	18	Beers On Me / Dierks Bentley feat. BRELAND & HARDY / Capitol	1086/59	11	105
20	23	19	Old School / Toby Keith / Show Dog Nashville	960/50	4	33
6	28	20	Up / Luke Bryan / Capitol	931/52	18	139
38	22	21	Getting Over Him / Lauren Alaina feat. Jon Pardi / Mercury Nashville	920/44	-3	-32
16	25	22	7500 OBO / Tim McGraw / Big Machine	861/46	5	40
4	33	23	If I Was A Cowboy / Miranda Lambert / Vanner Records/RCA Records	822/50	16	114
25	24	24	Back Then, Right Now / Tenille Arts / 19th & Grand Records	815/49	0	4
37	29	25	I Can't / Caitlyn Smith feat. Old Dominion / Monument Records	787/44	2	14
29	26	26	I'm Not For Everyone / Brothers Osborne / EMI Records Nashville	785/41	-3	-21
34	30	27	My Masterpiece / Darius Rucker / Capitol	781/39	4	31
28	27	28	Fill Them Boots / Chris Lane / Big Loud Records	767/41	-2	-16
37	31	29	Home Sweet / Russell Dickerson / Triple Tigers Records	743/36	2	17
16	32	30	Get To Work Whiskey / Ward Davis / Ward Davis/Thirty Tigers Records	720/46	2	16
23	35	31	Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home) / Elle King & Miranda Lambert / RCA Nashville	672/37	8	48
11	36	32	New Truck / Dylan Scott / Curb	645/41	6	37
24	34	33	Local Honey / Mo Pitney / Curb	605/29	-2	-10
7	41	34	'Til You Can't / Cody Johnson / CoJo Music/Warner Music Nashville	578/34	17	86
12	38	35	Steal My Love / Dan + Shay / Warner Music Nashville	572/35	3	17
19	37	36	How Far Can It Go? / Hailey Whitters feat. Trisha Yearwood / Big Loud/S&D/Pegasus	570/31	3	14
11	40	37	Sunrise Tells The Story / Midland / Big Machine	537/36	6	28
8	42	38	All It Cost Me Was Everything / Cody Jinks / Late August Records	530/41	12	56
17	39	39	Grow Up / Ian Flanigan feat. Blake Shelton / Reviver Records	529/33	-1	-4
9	43	40	Stealing Home / James Robert Webb / Bison Creek Records	518/39	13	59

NATALIE NICOLE GILBERT
RECOVERY

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WARM WINTER



Weeks On Chart	Last Week	This Week	Song / Artist / Label	Spins / Reports	% Spin Power	Spins +/-
11	45	41	Broke It Down / Brian Callihan / Reviver Records	494/33	18	74
16	44	42	Am I The Only One / Aaron Lewis / Valory	426/23	-4	-16
13	46	43	Record High / Randall King / Warner Music Nashville	416/29	2	8
11	47	44	They Don't Make 'Em Like That No More / Travis Tritt / Big Noise	411/25	2	10
18	49	45	Hillbilly Shake / AC Thomas / Birmingham Entertainment	386/26	3	13
5	53	46	Bye Mom / Chris Janson / Warner Music Nashville	382/26	13	45
10	51	47	I Know A Girl / MaRynn Taylor / Black River Entertainment	377/27	7	24
3	58	48	Damn Strait / Scotty McCreery / Triple Tigers Records	366/30	22	67
19	48	49	Rub A Little Dirt On It / Chase Likens / On The Green	363/18	-2	-7
14	52	50	Hometown In My Headlights / JD Shelburne / JD Shelburne Music LLC	355/20	3	12
1	0	51	Slow Down Summer / Thomas Rhett / Valory	353/29	0	353
9	54	52	Music Man / Shane Owens / AmeriMonte Records	348/26	7	22
11	56	53	Wilder Days / Morgan Wade / Ladylike Records	348/24	5	18
4	60	54	With A Woman You Love / Justin Moore / Valory	341/23	18	51
13	55	55	These Boots Were Made To Dance / Timothy Baker & Clayton Smalley / YN Records	326/23	0	0
8	59	56	Honky - Tonk / Josiah Siska / Black River Entertainment	295/23	1	3
8	57	57	At the End Of A Bar / Chris Young feat. Mitchell Tenpenny / RCA Nashville	295/20	-6	-18
7	62	58	Shuffle / Laci Kaye Booth / BMLG	291/26	7	18
10	61	59	Hit Me Up / Josh Kinney / Birmingham Entertainment	272/21	-1	-2
15	64	60	Please Don't Let Me / Dylan Gerard / SSM Nashville	259/21	1	2
9	67	61	Blue Collar / Kevin McCoy Band / Honky Tonk Hippie	258/14	8	18
3	69	62	Let Me Know / Smith & Wesley / Dream Walkin/Audium Nashville	254/22	12	27
10	66	63	Who Cares / Filmore / Curb	252/14	-1	-2
12	65	64	The American Face / The Isaacs / House of Isaacs	243/17	-5	-12
7	72	65	The Way Whitley Done It / Adam Whitehead / 32South	234/13	11	24
11	68	66	Version Of Me / Emily Rose / Growing Rose Recording Co.	226/14	-1	-2
6	70	67	It's Gettin' There / Dave Wilbert / Wilbilly Records	225/19	0	0
5	71	68	Heart First / Jennifer Belle / JGSII Records	219/16	-1	-2
3	75	69	Think About Me / Maggie Baugh /	197/14	7	13
1	81	70	Ain't Doing Something Right / After Midtown / The Core/10th St.	195/16	31	46
4	77	71	Hard Time / Cash Creek and Larry Stewart / CCB Nashville	189/14	8	14
3	74	72	The Best Night / Tom Sexton / Lots To Do Music	185/17	-1	-1
2	79	73	New Wings / Alyssa Bonagura / ABON MUSIC	178/14	7	11
2	78	74	I Don't Live There Anymore / Andrew Marshall / Serenity Records	174/12	5	8
19	73	75	Better Than You're Used To / Tyler Rich / Valory	164/12	-21	-43
21	63	76	Evangeline / Sammy Kershaw / White Mustang Records	162/11	-40	-106
2	80	77	Midnight Goodbye / Lucie Tiger / 2120 Music	158/14	1	2
1	98	78	Baby Don't / Paige King Johnson / PCG Records	157/15	44	48
1	83	79	If I Were Rock & Roll / Chase Rice / Dack Janiels/Broken Bow	154/14	0	0
1	91	80	Hypocrite / Ruthie Collins / MCC/Curb	149/14	22	27

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UMG Nashville Promotes Annie Ortmeier To Sr. VP Streaming Marketing



Universal Music Group Nashville has promoted **Annie Ortmeier** to Sr. Vice President, Streaming Marketing. She will now oversee the company's streaming department.

Ortmeier joined UMG Nashville in 2013 as Director of Digital Marketing where she managed digital partner relationships including all domestic audio and video streaming services. Since then she has earned promotions to Sr. Director, Streaming & Digital Marketing followed by Vice President, Marketing – Digital Accounts.

During her tenure, Ortmeier has played a vital role in making UMG Nashville the country music market leader in streaming. In her new role, Ortmeier will oversee all DSP relationships as well as be responsible for overseeing both audio and video streaming marketing strategy for all UMG Nashville artists globally.

"Over the years Annie's industry knowledge, leadership and dedication has played a large part in UMG Nashville's overall success," says UMG Nashville's EVP / COO, **Mike Harris**. "Having Annie oversee all streaming and video strategy going forward is the perfect fit to position both UMG Nashville and artists for continued success in the future. Congratulations to Annie on this well-deserved promotion."

Ortmeier was honored by *MusicRow* in its 2018 class of Rising Women on the Row. **MR**

Big Machine Records Ups Erik Powell To VP, Promotion & Marketing



Big Machine Records has elevated **Erik Powell** to VP, Promotion & Marketing. In his new role, he will continue to report to Sr. VP, Promotion & Digital **Kris Lamb**.

Powell is celebrating his 15th year with the company this year, formerly serving as Director of National Promotion for Big Machine. Since joining the label in 2007, Powell has helped chart various No. 1 hits, including Tim McGraw's "I Called Mama," Carly Pearce's "I Hope You're Happy Now," and Midland's "Drinkin' Problem." Before joining Big Machine, Powell spent time at Katapult Records and Diane Richey Promotions.

"Erik has proven time and time again to be a valued leader and always gets the job done at a very high level with great integrity," says Big Machine Records General Manager, **Clay Hunnicutt**. "His belief in our process, our people, and our artists is second to none. I can't wait to see what Erik will do over the next 15 years!"

"[Erik] embodies all the positive attributes of what it means to be a Machinist. He is an integral part of this team and it's a privilege for all of us at Big Machine to have him on board in a leadership capacity as we pursue new and unique ways to drive exposure for our artists," Lamb shares. "There is no doubt—with Erik as a VP—the Machine is running HOT." **MR**

Josh Osborne, Ashley Gorley, More Win Big At ASCAP Country Music Awards



ASCAP revealed the winners list on Monday (Nov. 8) for the 59th Annual ASCAP Country Music Awards.

In place of an in-person event, the writers and publishers of country music's most-performed songs of the past year were honored by ASCAP on their social media platforms.

Hitmaker **Josh Osborne** was named this year's ASCAP Country Music Songwriter of the Year for the first time. He is credited with eight chart-topping songs this year, including "7 Summers" (Morgan Wallen), "Beers and Sunshine" (Darius Rucker), "Breaking Up

Was Easy in the 90's" (Sam Hunt), "Happy Anywhere" (Blake Shelton & Gwen Stefani), "Hard to Forget" (Sam Hunt), "How They Remember You" (Rascal Flatts), "Next Girl" (Carly Pearce) and "Nobody But You" (Blake Shelton & Gwen Stefani). This is Osborne's 35th ASCAP Award, including Song of the Year wins in 2015, 2018 and 2020.

Ashley Gorley's chart-topping "One of Them Girls" (recorded by Lee Brice) received ASCAP Country Music Song of the Year honors.

Sony Music Publishing won Publisher of the Year for the first time since 2012. Its winning songs include "Breaking Up Was Easy in the 90's" (Sam Hunt), "Hole in the Bottle" (Kelsea Ballerini), "Lady" (Brett Young) and "Things a Man Oughta Know" (Lainey Wilson). SMP CEO Nashville, **Rusty Gaston**, appeared on @ASCAP social media thanking the company's songwriters and staff.

For a full list of winners, visit <https://www.ascap.com/countryawards21>. **MR**

CRB Announces Nominees For CRS 2022 New Faces Of Country Music Show

Country Radio Broadcasters (CRB) has released the list of nominees for the 2022 New Faces of Country Music Show. The nominated artists for the show are **Gabby Barrett, Priscilla Block, Blanco Brown, Callista Clark, Walker Hayes, Ryan Hurd, Parker McCollum, Niko Moon, Jameson Rogers, Elvie Shane, and Lainey Wilson.**

Voting for the Class of 2022 will be open Monday, Nov. 15 through Friday, Nov. 19 at countryradioseminar.com. The five acts with the most votes will make the lineup up for the New Faces show, to be held Friday, Feb. 25 at Omni Nashville Hotel during Country Radio Seminar (CRS) 2022.

"These 11 artists represent a bright future for country music," says CRB New Faces Committee chair, **Chuck Aly**. "They also give this year's voters some very difficult choices to make." **MR**



Sony Music Nashville Signs Nate Smith



Pictured (L-R, front row): Randy Goodman, Sony Music Nashville Chairman & CEO; Nate Smith; Chief Zaruk, The Core Entertainment; (L-R, back row): Steve Hodges, SMN EVP, Promotion and Artist Development; Caryl Atwood, SMN SVP, Sales and Streaming; Ken Robold, SMN EVP and COO; Margaret Tomlin, SMN VP, A&R; Jennifer Way, SMN SVP, Marketing; Gaby Zelhof, SMN A&R Representative; Nicole Hunt, SMN Director, Marketing; Simon Tikhman, The Core Entertainment. Photo: Alan Poizner

Sony Music Nashville has signed country singer-songwriter **Nate Smith**.

The powerful vocalist first earned acclaim soon after releasing the poignant “One of These Days,” which he wrote after a wildfire devastated his hometown of Paradise, California. The reaction to the track inspired Smith to move to Nashville.

After he arrived in Music City, Smith released his biggest song to date, “Wildfire,” and signed a publishing deal with Sony/ATV. He has since released new music including “Sleeve” and “Under My Skin,” which has amassed over 40 million on-demand streams to date. Smith is managed by **Kevin “Chief” Zaruk** and **Simon Tikhman** with The Core Entertainment.

To celebrate his newfound record deal, Smith released a new emotive track co-written with **Trannie Anderson** and **Jonathan Smith**, “Raised Up.” **MR**

Hang Your Hat Music Inks Publishing Deal With Cary Barlowe



Hang Your Hat Music, a creative joint venture with Concord Music Publishing founded by two-time ACM Songwriter of the Year **Hillary Lindsey**, has signed **Cary Barlowe** to a worldwide publishing deal. The agreement includes Barlowe’s future works.

Originally from North Carolina, Barlowe's first dip into country music came with Taylor Swift’s “Untouchable” from her 2008 multi-Platinum album *Fearless*. He has since scored five No. 1 songs on country radio, including Lady A’s “American Honey,” Dustin Lynch’s “Where It’s At,” Florida Georgia Line’s “Sun Daze,” Billy Currington’s “It Don’t Hurt Like It Used To” and “Famous Friends” recorded by Chris Young and Kane Brown. Barlowe has also had cuts with Carrie Underwood, Tim McGraw, Chris Lane, Dierks Bentley, Gary Allan, Martina McBride, Steven Tyler, Jimmie Allen, Little Big Town, Rascal Flatts, and more.

“Cary’s multi-faceted talents make him a publisher’s dream,” says **Jake Gear**, GM at Hang Your Hat Music. “He’s a musical ‘swiss army knife.’ His ability to topline hits across multiple genres, produce demos and tracks, be a session grade multi-instrumentalist, all in addition to his energy and personality make him an asset to any writing room. I couldn’t be more stoked to get to work with him!”

“We are incredibly fired up to welcome Cary to the Concord and Hang Your Hat team!” adds **Brad Kennard**, Sr. VP A&R at Concord Music Publishing in Nashville. “Cary’s a hit songwriter with the unique ability to bring top-level writing, production, and musicianship to any session. A true triple threat. On top of that, he brings the best passion and energy wherever he goes. He’s just universally loved.” **MR**

King Pen, Warner Chappell Music Nashville Sign Jay DeMarcus



Pictured (L-R): Spencer Nohe (WCM), Bethany Mako (WCM), Kelly King (King Pen), DeMarcus, Ben Vaughn (WCM), Harrison Sokoloff (King Pen), Christina Wiltshire (WCM)

King Pen Music and Warner Chappell Music (WCM) Nashville have signed a worldwide publishing deal with Grammy-winning songwriter and producer **Jay DeMarcus**.

A member of the country group **Rascal Flatts**, DeMarcus has racked up 17 No. 1 hits, over 23 million albums sold, 35 million digital downloads, and 2 billion streams throughout his career. As one of the most awarded country groups of the past decade, the trio has earned more than 40 trophies from the ACM, CMA, People's Choice, and more.

DeMarcus is also a Grammy-winning producer, working with acts like Chicago, Ronnie Dunn, Kix Brooks, Shenandoah, and Reba. He was honored in 2018 for producing Jason Crabb's album *Unexpected*, which was named Best Roots Gospel Album by The Recording Academy.

Also on the executive side of the music business, Demarcus is the CEO and owner of Christian record label Red Street Records, home to Crabb, Avalon, Lauren Camey, Cade Thompson, and Iveth Luna.

"I'm so excited for this opportunity, and this new chapter in my life," DeMarcus says. "To partner with Kelly in this capacity after 20 years of working together, just feels like such a natural, and easy fit. Ben is one of the absolute best in our business, and I'm honored to be a small part of such an extraordinary team. Exciting things are ahead!" **MR**

Erik Dylan Signs With 50 Egg Music, Duckman & Warner Chappell Music

Singer-songwriter **Erik Dylan** has signed a global publishing deal with 50 Egg Music, Duckman, and Warner Chappell Music Nashville.

A frequent collaborator to Luke Combs and Riley Green, Dylan contributed to Combs' record-breaking album *What You See Is What You Get* and co-wrote Green's No. 1 hit "There Was This Girl." The Kansas native also has cuts by Parker McCollum, Brantley Gilbert, Elvie Shane, Ashland Craft, Kip Moore, Trisha Yearwood, Ray Fulcher, Justin Moore, Eli Young Band, Brent Cobb, and more.

An artist Dylan has enjoyed success as well. His "JJ's Market" was named one of *American Songwriter's* Top 20 Songs of 2020, and his full-length projects include his 2016 debut album *Heart of a Flatland Boy* and the follow-up *Baseball on the Moon* (2018), which features duets with Steve Earle and Combs. **MR**



Pictured (L-R): Joey Harris (50 Egg), Molly Reinold (50 Egg), Tali Canterbury (50 Egg), Jonathan Singleton (50 Egg), Riley Green, Dylan, Ben Vaughn (WCM), Jessi Stevenson (WCM)

DISCLAIMER Single Reviews: Brothers Osborne, Brandi Carlile, The Kentucky Gentlemen



Brothers Osborne

Wednesday's CMA Awards marked new maturity for the country genre.

There were still drinkin' and cheatin' songs, to be sure. But there were also a great many truly transcendent musical moments—**Jennifer Hudson** soul singing with **Chris Stapleton**, the electrifying showmanship of **Jimmie Allen**, the rocking delight of **Eric Church** and sterling duet work by **Carly Pearce & Ashley McBryde**, plus the three songs highlighted in today's column.

They are "Doin' This" by **Luke Combs**, "Love My Hair" by **Mickey Guyton** and our Disc of the Day winner, "Younger Me" by **Brothers Osborne**. This is a stand-alone song with its own video, not a track from the Osbornes' *Skeleton*. The clip is as moving as the live performance was.

Our DISCOVERY Award goes to the charming duo **The Kentucky Gentlemen**.

[Read Robert K. Oermann's weekly single reviews column](#)

MORE TOP STORIES

[Blake Shelton, Ryman Hospitality Properties Announce Plans For Ole Red Expansion To Vegas](#)

[Walker Hayes, Monument Records Snag First No. 1 At Country Radio](#)

[AIMP Nashville Board Forms New Young Professional Committee](#)

[Lori McKenna Tackles The Ups & Downs Of The Holidays With Debut Christmas Collection](#)

[Spotify Launches Expanded Charts Website](#)

[Live In The Vineyard Goes Country Wraps Star-Studded 2021 Event](#)

[Trisha Yearwood Cooks Up Some Thanksgiving Fun At The White House](#)

[Eddie Montgomery Carries The Torch For Montgomery Gentry With Debut Solo Album \[Interview\]](#)

[Combustion Music & Jameson Rodgers Partner To Sign Tom Whall](#)

[Sam Hunt & Friends To Head To Cancun In March For Casa Fiesta Experience](#)

[Big Machine's Scott Borchetta Wraps Undefeated Sportscar Season](#)

[Love And Theft Sign With ONErpm Ahead Of New Single Release](#)

[Nashville Guitarist Adam Shoenfeld To Release Solo Debut 'All the Birds Sing'](#)

[Keb' Mo' Signs With WME](#)

From YEP Mixers To Guiding A Star In The Making: Meet Andrew Cohen [Interview]



Andrew Cohen knew from a young age that he had a special interest in the business side of the music industry. After reading about Belmont University and eventually attending in 2008, he could've never guessed how his interest in tracking his favorite songs in *Country Weekly* would put him where he is now: the owner of Cohencidence Projects and managing one of the hottest rising country acts of 2021, **Brittney Spencer**.

Graduating from Belmont in 2009, Cohen spent his first year out of college trying to get his foot in the door of Nashville's music business, including a four-month stint at a booking agency that wasn't the right fit.

In 2011, Cohen co-founded YEP—Young Entertainment Professionals—which today acts as a critical, free tool for young jobseekers in the music industry to network and learn the business, as well as a resource for professional development. The organization held educational events and mixers with Cohen at the helm for nearly six years before his departure.

"YEP was based on me and my friends getting out of Belmont and being thrust into the industry with no safety net," Cohen explains to *MusicRow*. "The day that the idea started, I was at Tin Roof with **MaryAnn Keen** [of BMI] and she mentioned somebody that I didn't know. I was like, 'How do I not know all of your friends? All we do is hang out in bars while we don't have jobs. I should know people you know and you should know people I know.'" So, the two co-founded YEP.

In October of 2011, Cohen got a job at Crush Management under **John Grady**'s leadership. Over his five year tenure, Cohen became a jack of all trades. Starting off as a day-to-day manager for **Kristen Kelly**, Cohen worked with **Striking Matches** and **Ashley Monroe** during the week, while spending the weekends with Kelly on **Brad Paisley**'s tour. Cohen also began running marketing for the management company's Nashville office and eventually took on the marketing for Grady's I.R.S. Records in 2013.

However, he missed being in the trenches with the artists. Cohen left to start up his own management company, which only lasted for a few years. Since then, he has found success consulting through his own Cohencidence Projects, and filling a special niche that he feels was missing in the artist's toolbox.

"At first, it was mainly DSP promotion and helping independent artists land on playlists to get their music heard. I've worked on DSP promotion projects with **Kameron Marlowe**, **Brandon Davis**, and **Andrew Jannakos**, who we launched a song with that hit No. 12 on *Billboard*," Cohen says. "I found a niche within the industry that was really needed to help artists get their music heard by editors at Spotify, Apple, Amazon, and Pandora."

He continues, "It led me back into management. I ended up signing Andrew and Brittney last year and it's been a wild year. It's been really fun and I get to do my favorite part, which is being at the very beginning with an artist and helping to build a team."

Of Cohencidence Projects, he says: "It's built to be whatever iteration it needs to be for an artist. I've done management consulting where I've helped an artist [in a pseudo-manager role] over the years. He's got a great head on his shoulders and he really knows what he wants to do. He just needed some help executing it from time to time and somebody to bounce ideas off of." He adds, "For artists out there that really know how to work independently or don't have the funds to have a manager yet, I help whoever needs it."

Cohen's biggest leap came with country newcomer **Brittney Spencer**, who just this year was named *People Magazine's* One to Watch, a 2021 Spotify Hot Country Artist to Watch, a Pandora 2021 Artist to Watch, and is a member of CMT Next Women of Country. On Wednesday Spencer performed alongside **Mickey Guyton** and **Madeline Edwards** at the *CMA Awards*.

Having met Spencer six years ago at a YEP event, Cohen began working with the young act with DSP promotion for her 2020 *Compassion* EP. With each single release, the pair started to see better and better responses from the DSPs. After releasing her viral cover of **The Highwomen's** "Crowded Table," and receiving a name drop from The Highwomen's **Maren Morris** at the 2020 *CMA Awards*, Spencer and Cohen have seen a busy year full of collaborations, performances, and building out the right artist team.



Brittney Spencer & Andrew Cohen. Photo: Courtesy of Andrew Cohen

"This has been a massive year of growth and we're starting to navigate what her team looks like as we roll into next year... We're trying to surround her with the right people to help amplify everything we're doing," Cohen offers. "I'm still learning a ton as we go. Every artist is so drastically different with what they need and what their team looks like."

He continues, "It seems like every two weeks something drops into Brittney's world. Opportunities are showing up and we're chasing them. Seeing her interact and build her community has been so cool. She's out there making noise and there's going to be a long career here, so I'm excited to be a part of it." Cohen adds, "I'm very glad to be back on this side. If you have the right artists, the right music, and the right story to tell, I would much rather be in the trenches with the artists telling that story. Brittney's got so much to tell and that's where people are connecting with her story."

While the world was navigating their way through a raging pandemic, Cohen and Spencer were grateful for the ability to slow down and focus on the creative aspects of her career rather than juggling the challenges of touring with it.

"There were some advantages to the remote world because it didn't throw [going on] the road at these artists that were emerging right away." Cohen elaborates, "It's pretty intensive to get players and rehearsals, and to make sure everything's ready. During the pandemic, we could just release music, do interviews, and she was writing a ton. We were in this creative space and she got to stay in that creative space rather than balance it all at the same time."

He adds: "It was a little bit of an advantage for it to marinate a little bit, and for us to really lean in on the writing side and build relationships with her team. She's been building it out little by little, and it was nice to be able to do that with a little less urgency."

Along the way, Cohen has had his fair share of people champion him, among them are some Nashville music business heavy hitters, such as **Beth Laird**, **Jody Williams**, and **Leslie Roberts**. He notes that Grady, his former boss, has been one of his biggest supporters and teachers throughout his career.

"He taught me everything I know about the business. He was so great about letting us get to know his contacts, which is something that I hope to do down the road. He opened up his Rolodex and said, 'Those contacts are yours. The people I've built relationships with, you can build relationships with too.'" **MR**

TOP SONGWRITER CHART

This Week	Last Week	Songwriter's Name	Song(s)	Artist
1	1	Ashley Gorley	New Truck You Should Probably Leave Sand In My Boots Give Heaven Some Hell Beers On Me Steal My Love Take My Name What He Didn't Do	Dylan Scott Chris Stapleton Morgan Wallen HARDY Dierks Bentley, Hardy & Breland Dan + Shay Parmalee Carly Pearce
2	2	Jesse Frasure	Whiskey And Rain One Mississippi If I Was A Cowboy	Michael Ray Kane Brown Miranda Lambert
3	3	Michael Hardy	New Truck Sand In My Boots Give Heaven Some Hell Beers On Me Come Back As A Country Boy	Dylan Scott Morgan Wallen HARDY Dierks Bentley, Hardy & Breland Blake Shelton
4	5	Rhett Akins	Tequila Little Time To Be Loved By You	Jon Pardi Parker McCollum
5	4	Jonathan Singleton	Cold as You Same Boat	Luke Combs Zac Brown Band
6	12	Eric Church	Heart On Fire	Eric Church
7	10	Josh Osborne	My Masterpiece I Was On A Boat That Day Sand In My Boots 23	Darius Rucker Old Dominion Morgan Wallen Sam Hunt
8	15	Shane McAnally	I Was On A Boat That Day Half Of My Hometown 23 Never Wanted To Be That Girl	Old Dominion Kelsea Ballerini feat. Kenny Chesney Sam Hunt Carly Pearce & Ashley McBryde
9	9	Josh Thompson	Whiskey And Rain Come Back As A Country Boy	Michael Ray Blake Shelton
10	13	Matt Rogers	'Til You Can't Freedom Was A Highway	Cody Johnson Jimmie Allen & Brad Paisley
11	7	J. Flowers	Chasing After You	Ryan Hurd with Maren Morris
12	8	Brinley Addington	Chasing After You	Ryan Hurd with Maren Morris
13	11	Josh Jenkins	Fancy Like Buy Dirt	Walker Hayes Jordan Davis feat. Luke Bryan
14	14	Martin Johnson	Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home) Like A Lady	Elle King and Miranda Lambert Lady A
15	6	Hunter Phelps	Best Thing Since Backroads New Truck Thinking 'Bout You Give Heaven Some Hell	Jake Owen Dylan Scott Dustin Lynch feat. MacKenzie Porter HARDY
16	17	Elle King	Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home)	Elle King and Miranda Lambert
17	24	Andy Albert	Thinking 'Bout You Steal My Love	Dustin Lynch feat. MacKenzie Porter Dan + Shay
18	21	Walker Hayes	Fancy Like U Gurl	Walker Hayes Walker Hayes
19	22	Ben Simonetti	Same Boat	Zac Brown Band
20	23	Zac Brown	Same Boat	Zac Brown Band
21	25	Parker McCollum	To Be Loved By You	Parker McCollum
22	18	Brian Davis	Memory I Don't Mess With	Lee Brice
23	19	Lee Brice	Memory I Don't Mess With	Lee Brice
24	20	Billy Montana	Memory I Don't Mess With	Lee Brice

This Week	Last Week	Songwriter's Name	Song(s)	Artist
25	26	Kat Higgins	Knowing You	Kenny Chesney
26	27	Adam James	Knowing You	Kenny Chesney
27	28	Brett James	Knowing You	Kenny Chesney
28	29	Chris Stapleton	You Should Probably Leave	Chris Stapleton
29	30	Chris DuBois	You Should Probably Leave	Chris Stapleton
30	37	Ernest Keith Smith	Fill Them Boots Memory One Mississippi	Chris Lane Kane Brown & Blackbear Kane Brown
31	45	Ben Stennis	'Til You Can't	Cody Johnson
32	38	Kane Brown	Memory One Mississippi	Kane Brown & Blackbear Kane Brown
33	31	Kurt Allison	If I Didn't Love You	Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood
34	32	Tully Kennedy	If I Didn't Love You	Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood
35	33	Lydia Vaughan	If I Didn't Love You	Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood
36	34	John Morgan	If I Didn't Love You	Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood
37	35	Shane Stevens	Fancy Like	Walker Hayes
38	36	Cameron Bartolini	Fancy Like	Walker Hayes
39	39	Jon Pardi	Tequila Little Time	Jon Pardi
40	40	Luke Laird	Tequila Little Time	Jon Pardi
41	41	Jimmie Allen	Freedom Was A Highway	Jimmie Allen & Brad Paisley
42	42	Ash Bowers	Freedom Was A Highway	Jimmie Allen & Brad Paisley
43	16	Luke Combs	Cold as You	Luke Combs
44	43	Randy Montana	Cold as You	Luke Combs
45	44	S. Minor	Cold as You	Luke Combs
46	54	Will Weatherly	Thinking 'Bout You	Dustin Lynch feat. MacKenzie Porter
47	55	Dustin Lynch	Thinking 'Bout You	Dustin Lynch feat. MacKenzie Porter
48	50	Jordan Davis	Buy Dirt	Jordan Davis feat. Luke Bryan
49	51	Jacob Davis	Buy Dirt	Jordan Davis feat. Luke Bryan
50	52	Matt Jenkins	Buy Dirt	Jordan Davis feat. Luke Bryan
51	61	Ross Copperman	My Masterpiece Half Of My Hometown Beers On Me	Darius Rucker Kelsea Ballerini feat. Kenny Chesney Dierks Bentley, Hardy & Breland
52	62	Ben Johnson	Best Thing Since Backroads New Truck Give Heaven Some Hell Take My Name	Jake Owen Dylan Scott HARDY Parmalee
53	56	Emily Kroll	Just About Over You	Priscilla Block
54	57	Sarah Jones	Just About Over You	Priscilla Block
55	58	Priscilla Block	Just About Over You	Priscilla Block
56	59	Brad Tursi	I Was On A Boat That Day Wild Hearts	Old Dominion Keith Urban
57	63	Charles Kelley	Home Sweet	Russell Dickerson
58	64	Casey Brown	Home Sweet	Russell Dickerson
59	65	Russell Dickerson	Home Sweet	Russell Dickerson
60	53	Miranda Lambert	If I Was A Cowboy	Miranda Lambert

CALENDAR

Single/Track Releases

November 12

Tyler Rich/*A Little Bit Of You*/The Valory Music Co.
Rod + Rose/*Mary Had A Little Lamb*/Curb Records
Alex Miller/*That's What Christmas Is For*/Billy Jam
Stephanie Ryann/*What Christmas Means To Me*
Mike Kuster/*Seeing Less Than Half of Their Faces*

November 15

Brett Young/*You Didn't*/BMLGR
Jameson Rodgers/*Missing One*/River House/Columbia

Album/EP Releases

November 12

Elvis Presley/*Elvis: Back In Nashville*/RCA/Legacy Recordings
Ronnie Milsap/*Christmas with Ronnie Milsap*/Craft Recordings
Jason Aldean/*Macon*/BBR
Amanda Shires/*For Christmas*/Silver Knife/Thirty Tigers
Cody Jinks/*Mercy*/Late August Records
Caned By Nod/*None The Wiser*/Late August Records
Skip Ewing/*Skip Ewing – Christmas*
Sarah Reeves/*More The Merrier*/Curb I Word Entertainment
Caroline Jones/*Aintpodes*

November 16

Lucas Hoge/*12.25*

Industry Events

November 15

69th Annual BMI Country Music Awards – Online

November 16

2021 SESAC Nashville Awards – Online

November 21

The American Music Awards