

Nominees Announced For 56th ACM Awards



The Academy of Country Music has revealed the nominees for the 56th ACM Awards. The 56th *ACM Awards* will broadcast live from Nashville on Sunday, April 18 (8:00-11:00 PM, live ET/delayed PT) on the CBS Television Network and will also be available to stream live and on demand on Paramount+, ViacomCBS' upcoming global streaming service.

Kelsea Ballerini and **Brothers Osborne** appeared live on *CBS This Morning* to announce this year's nominees for Entertainer of the Year, Female Artist of the Year, Male Artist of the Year, Duo of the Year, Group of the Year and Single of the Year.

Maren Morris and **Chris Stapleton** lead with 6 nominations each. **Miranda Lambert** garners five nominations, continuing her streak as the most nominated female artist in Academy history with 68 lifetime nominations.

For the first time in ACM Awards history, four Black artists are nominated for awards in a single year including **Jimmie Allen**, **Kane Brown**, **Mickey Guyton** and **John Legend**.

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MIKE KUSTER

“THE COVID FLOOR”

After a few weeks of his wife working as a nurse on the COVID floor at the beginning of the pandemic, Mike wrote “The COVID Floor” to describe what he witnessed his wife going through every day.

Mike Kuster

MJK Music

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Produced by: Dr. Ford

Radio Promotion: Ed Carter Promotions

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Mike Kuster's

“Hurt Again”

Available March 12

Additionally, for the first time in ACM Awards history, every Single of the Year nominee is a female artist. Notably, no female artists are represented in the Entertainer of the Year category.

Producer **Jay Joyce** leads the Studio Recording nominations with four entries. **Dann Huff** receives three nominations, and busbee posthumously earns two.

Legend receives his first-ever ACM Awards nomination for Video of the Year for his duet with **Carrie Underwood** on "Hallelujah," while **Gwen Stefani** and **Blake Shelton** received a nomination for Music Event of the Year for their duet, "Nobody But You," marking Stefani's first ACM Award nomination.

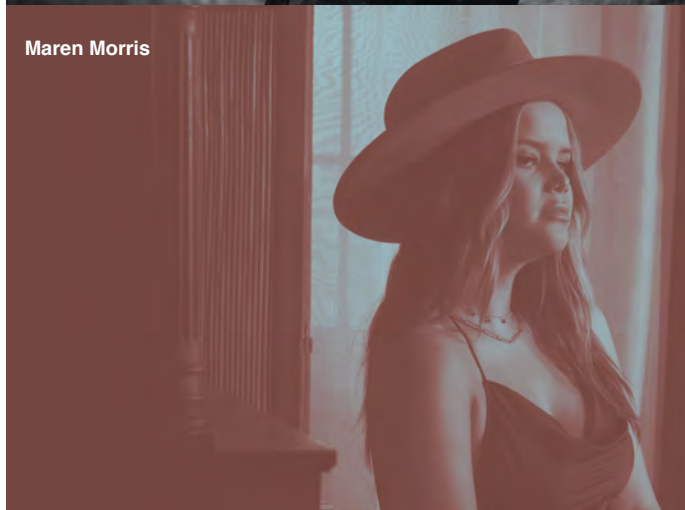
14 artists and industry creators received their first-ever ACM Awards nominations, including: Legend, Stefani, **Tenille Arts**, **Spencer Cullum**, **Travis Denning**, **Kris Donegan**, **Alicia Enstrom**, **Jason Hall**, **Gena Johnson**, **P!nk**, **Steve Mackey**, **Benmont Tench**, **Chris Tomlin** and **Kristin Wilkinson**.

[Read the full list of ACM nominees here.](#)

Chris Stapleton



Maren Morris



CMA Fest Is Canceled For 2021



CMA CEO **Sarah Trahern** announced on March 2 that CMA Fest will not take place in 2021, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In a letter to CMA Members, Trahern said: "We are deeply disappointed that yet another summer will pass without

seeing so many of you who help bring country music to our fans around the world. While we are optimistic with the pace at which COVID-19 vaccines are becoming more widely available, we still face several challenges that prevent us from bringing our many artists, crew members and fans together safely for the full CMA Fest experience we know everyone has come to expect."

Passes will be honored at CMA Fest 2022 for fans who purchased four-day passes for CMA Fest 2020. Refunds will also be available.

CMA Fest 2022 is slated for June 9-12, 2022. **MR**

Miranda Lambert To Become First Female Country Artist With A Bar On Broadway



Miranda Lambert will be the first female country artist with a branded bar on Broadway in Nashville.

The restaurant will be called Miranda Lambert's Casa Rosa and, according to a report by the *Nashville Business Journal*, will be located at 308 Broadway.

TC Restaurant Group—the restaurant and hospitality company behind Jason Aldean's Kitchen & Rooftop Bar, FGL House, Luke Bryan's 32 Bridge, and more—has teamed with Lambert on the establishment. The most nominated female artist in ACM history will join Aldean, Bryan, Florida Georgia Line, Dierks Bentley, Blake Shelton and more male country artists with bars and restaurants on lower Broadway.

TC Restaurant Group provided the following statement to *MusicRow*: "In true Miranda Lambert fashion, the two-time Grammy Award winning artist will make history in 2021 by partnering with TC Restaurant Group to become the first female country star to have a bar and restaurant on Broadway in Nashville, Tennessee. TC Restaurant Group and Miranda Lambert are excited to release more details in the coming week." **MR**

Brian Callihan Signs With Reviver Entertainment



Country artist **Brian Callihan** has signed a deal with Reviver Entertainment.

The Georgia native has made a name for himself among country songwriters, working with artists including Dylan Scott, Trent Tomlinson and Halfway to Hazard. He released his debut self-titled album last November, which caught the attention of David Ross, president of Reviver Entertainment Group.

Callihan joins the independent country label's roster of artists including Big & Rich, David Lee Murphy, Aaron Goodvin and more.

"I feel extremely blessed to sign with Reviver Records. **David Ross** has a great team with a proven track record, so I'm really excited to see what the future brings and the great things we can accomplish together," says Callihan.

"I believe micro-managing creativity kills it," says Ross. "To encourage creative brilliance, I strive to foster an atmosphere where it can thrive, and then I stay behind the scenes and let it happen. Brian Callihan is a pure talent that has the capability to create music that stands out amongst his peers." **MR**

COUNTRYBREAKOUT RADIO CHART

CHART ACTION

New On The Chart —Debuting This Week

song/artist/label—Chart Position

Knowing You/Kenny Chesney/Blue Chair Records/Warner Music Nashville — 64

I Can't/Caitlyn Smith feat. Old Dominion/Monument Records — 65

Come On Over/Kyle Elliott — 72

All About You/Steve Zuwala/Crossroads Music — 75

It's All Yours/Dave Wilbert/Wilbilly Records — 77

Gotta Go Rodeo/Darlinghurst/Helium — 78

Home Sweet/Russell Dickerson/Triple Tigers Records — 79

Same Dirt Road/Eric Lee/Blue Hill Records — 80

Greatest Spin Increase

song/artist/label—Spin Increase

Forever After All/Luke Combs/River House Artists/Columbia Nashville — 295

I Can't/Caitlyn Smith feat. Old Dominion/Monument Records — 175

Just The Way/Parmalee x Blanco Brown/Stoney Creek Records — 138

Glad You Exist/Dan + Shay/Warner Music Nashville/WAR — 132

Knowing You/Kenny Chesney/Blue Chair Records/Warner Music Nashville — 118

Most Added

song/artist/label—No. of Adds

Forever After All/Luke Combs/River House Artists/Columbia Nashville — 18

I Can't/Caitlyn Smith feat. Old Dominion/Monument Records — 17

Knowing You/Kenny Chesney/Blue Chair Records/Warner Music Nashville — 10

Why Can't It Be Tonight/Mercy Shine/CCB Nashville — 8

Good Day/Brett Eldredge/Warner Music Nashville — 7

On Deck—Soon To Be Charting

song/artist/label—No. of Spins

Good Day/Brett Eldredge/Warner Music Nashville — 144

Camp Jackson/Michael B. Whit — 141

Hands On The Bible/Chelsey James — 138

NO. 1 SONG



Topping the CountryBreakout Radio Chart this week is “Made For You” by Jake Owen. The single gained an additional 73 spins this week for a total of 1808 spins and 60 stations playing the single.

“Made For You” was written by **Benjy Davis, Joey Hyde, Neil Medley**. It appears on his debut album for Big Loud Records, *Greetings From... Jake*, which was produced by Joey Moi.

This marks 85 No. 1 singles for independent record promotion company, Jerry Duncan Promotions. “Made For You” quickly followed their last chart success “7 Summers” by Morgan Wallen, which hit No. 1 in January.



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
KHBZ Harrison, AR
KQUS Hot Springs, AR
KDXY Jonesboro, 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
WOOZ Carterville, IL

WAAG Galesburg, IL
WMCI Mattoon, IL
WYOT Rochelle, IL
WRTB Rockford, IL
WCCI Savanna, IL
WIFE Connersville, IN
KAIR Atchison, KS
WKDZ Cadiz, KY
WBKR Owensboro, KY
WDHR Pikeville, KY
KRRV Alexandria, LA
WUUU Covington, LA
WKPE Hyannis, MA
WVMD Cumberland, MD

WTCM Traverse City, MI
KYSM Mankato, MN
KZPK St. Cloud, MN
KWWR Mexico, MO
KFAV Warrenton, MO
KZZY Devils Lake, ND
KRVN Lexington, NE
Jersey Shore Country
KQBA Santa Fe, NM
WDNB Monticello, NY
WOLF Syracuse, NY
WCJW Warsaw, NY
WFRY Watertown, NY
KWHW Altus, OK

KITX Hugo, OK
KWEY Weatherford, OK
KWOX Woodward, OK
KRKT Albany, OR
WNBT Mansfield, PA
WCFT Selinsgrove, PA
WFGE State College, PA
WMIR Myrtle Beach, SC
KIQK Rapid City, SD
WUCZ Carthage, TN
WCKN Dickson, TN
WLLX Lawrenceburg, TN
KAYD Beaumont, TX
KFTX Corpus Christi, TX

KYKX Longview, TX
KMRK Odessa, TX
KYYK Palestine, TX
KXOX Sweetwater, TX
WAKG Danville, VA
WAXX Altoona, WI
WJVL Janesville, WI
WGLR Platteville, WI
WQPC Prairie du Chien, WI
WCOW Sparta, WI
WTNJ Beckley, WV
WDGG Huntington, WV

COUNTRYBREAKOUT RADIO CHART

Weeks On Chart	Last Week	This Week	Song / Artist / Label	Spins / Reports	% Spin Power	Spins +/-
43	2	1	Made For You / Jake Owen / Big Loud Records	1808/60	4	73
21	3	2	One Too Many / Keith Urban & P!nk / Capitol	1706/59	3	47
34	6	3	The Good Ones / Gabby Barrett / Warner Music Nashville	1600/54	3	42
24	4	4	Settling Down / Miranda Lambert / Vanner Records/RCA Records	1597/59	-1	-14
53	5	5	Nobody / Dylan Scott / Curb	1594/54	0	-3
8	7	6	Undivided / Tim McGraw and Tyler Hubbard / Big Machine Records	1583/62	3	47
18	10	7	Just The Way / Parmalee x Blanco Brown / Stoney Creek Records	1493/44	10	138
7	9	8	Minimum Wage / Blake Shelton / Warner Music Nashville	1468/59	3	41
21	8	9	Next Girl / Carly Pearce / Big Machine	1440/64	-1	-13
26	1	10	Good Time / Niko Moon / RCA Nashville	1416/38	-19	-326
19	11	11	Breaking Up Was Easy In The 90's / Sam Hunt / MCA Nashville	1390/54	7	92
18	13	12	We Didn't Have Much / Justin Moore / Valory	1281/60	2	26
15	14	13	Blame It On You / Jason Aldean / Broken Bow	1273/56	4	53
59	15	14	Somebody Like That / Tenille Arts / 19th & Grand	1187/44	3	37
9	16	15	Famous Friends / Chris Young & Kane Brown / RCA Nashville	1115/55	5	54
55	18	16	Momma's House / Dustin Lynch / Broken Bow	1030/38	5	49
37	17	17	Hard Days / Brantley Gilbert / Valory	1014/45	2	15
16	19	18	Memory I Don't Mess With / Lee Brice / Curb	951/52	0	-1
36	20	19	Wine, Beer, Whiskey / Little Big Town / Capitol	911/41	4	34
17	21	20	Heaven On Dirt / Teddy Robb / Monument	853/47	2	13
19	22	21	If It Wasn't For Trucks / Riley Green / BMLG	829/40	0	3
4	28	22	Glad You Exist / Dan + Shay / Warner Music Nashville/WAR	809/47	19	132
8	23	23	Tequila Little Time / Jon Pardi / Capitol	801/46	4	32
19	24	24	Where I Find God / Larry Fleet / Big Loud Records	799/41	5	39
13	25	25	Ain't Gonna Be Today / Ward Davis / Ward Davis Music/Thirty Tigers	763/44	6	44
11	26	26	Drinkin' Beer. Talkin' God. Amen. / Chase Rice feat. Florida Georgia Line / Broken Bow/Dack Janiels	728/40	2	16
17	27	27	Just About Over You / Priscilla Block / Mercury Nashville	719/42	5	31
8	29	28	Give Heaven Some Hell / HARDY / Big Loud Records	712/47	5	37
2	49	29	Forever After All / Luke Combs / River House Artists/Columbia Nashville	655/41	82	295
14	32	30	Anybody Else / Mira Goto / ArtistMax/Copperline	606/31	7	37
12	34	31	Cold Beer Calling My Name / Jameson Rodgers feat. Luke Combs / River House Artists/Columbia Nashville	552/31	8	42
8	37	32	My Boy / Elvie Shane / Wheelhouse Records	532/37	17	76
6	38	33	To Be Loved By You / Parker McCollum / MCA Nashville	513/35	15	67
5	41	34	Freedom Was A Highway / Jimmie Allen & Brad Paisley / Stoney Creek Records	502/33	16	71
21	30	35	Waste Of A Whiskey Drink / Gary Allan / EMI	499/27	-23	-145
27	35	36	Single Saturday Night / Cole Swindell / Warner Music Nashville	484/33	4	17
12	36	37	Just Like You / Paige King Johnson / PCG Artist Development	478/36	4	17
13	39	38	Heartland / Hailey Whitters / Big Loud Records/S&D	476/28	9	38
3	46	39	Lonely Drum / Aaron Goodvin / Reviver Records/Warner Music Canada	472/38	20	80



2021
**COUNTRY RADIO
& STREAMING
ISSUE**

**NEW ISSUE
AVAILABLE NOW**

MUSICROW

Weeks On Chart	Last Week	This Week	Song / Artist / Label	Spins / Reports	% Spin Power	Spins +/-
14	43	40	God Save The World / Jeff Carson / MC1 Nashville	462/22	12	48
16	44	41	You Time / Scotty McCreery / Triple Tigers Records	444/30	9	35
19	33	42	Comin' Home / The Desert City Ramblers / Crane Kick Records	439/24	-20	-107
20	47	43	I Can Tell By The Way You Dance / Josh Turner / MCA Nashville	428/25	12	45
11	42	44	Extra / Kylie Trout / Kylie Trout Music	415/27	-3	-11
25	40	45	Waitin' On 5 / Chris Janson / Warner Music Nashville	398/22	-9	-38
9	48	46	What Would Dolly Do? / Tori Martin / LuckySky Music	389/25	7	26
9	51	47	Just Friends / Caylee Hammack / Capitol	375/26	11	37
12	50	48	River Bent / Caleb Kelley / River Bend Entertainment	366/22	5	17
9	53	49	Chain Breaker / Zach Williams / Provident Label Group	351/28	7	22
14	52	50	Worship You / Kane Brown / RCA Nashville	337/19	1	3
7	54	51	Right Place Now / Hudson Valley / Hudson Valley	322/20	11	32
29	45	52	We Were Rich / Runaway June / Wheelhouse Records	318/20	-22	-89
4	58	53	Okfuskee Whiskey / James Robert Webb / Bison Creek Records	312/28	29	71
9	57	54	Freedom And Wings / Heather Smith /	278/16	6	16
9	55	55	You're Gonna Love Me / Tim Dugger / Curb	276/19	-4	-12
4	64	56	What The Whiskey's For / Tom Sexton / Lots To Do Music	274/24	25	55
11	56	57	Whiskey And Rain / Michael Ray / Warner Music Nashville	263/15	0	1
4	62	58	Together / for KING & COUNTRY feat. Hannah Ellis, Jackson Michelson / Curb Word Entertainment	261/23	17	38
2	70	59	Getting Over Him / Lauren Alaina feat. Jon Pardi / Mercury Nashville	254/22	26	53
7	66	60	No Body, No Crime / Taylor Swift feat. Haim / MCA Nashville	252/16	21	44
5	61	61	Shallow / Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood / Pearl Records	251/17	8	18
6	63	62	Can't Stop / Chloe Collins / Collins House Music	250/20	12	27
8	60	63	Kickstart / Owen Howell / Kojax Entertainment	248/16	6	13
1	92	64	Knowing You / Kenny Chesney / Blue Chair Records/Warner Music Nashville	244/21	94	118
1	115	65	I Can't / Caitlyn Smith feat. Old Dominion / Monument Records	239/22	127	175
7	65	66	I Do Thing / Kylie Frey / Deep Frey'd Music Group	213/17	2	5
5	68	67	Head Over Wheels / Joe Hanson /	211/14	4	9
23	71	68	Dear Rodeo / Cody Johnson / CoJo Music/Warner Bros.	197/11	-2	-4
5	74	69	New To Neon / Andrew Hopson / Tower Road Records	183/14	6	11
3	72	70	Do Ya / Tiffany Woys /	181/12	2	3
7	73	71	More With Less / Frank Vieira / Frank Vieira Music	180/9	2	3
1	83	72	Come On Over / Kyle Elliott /	175/12	26	36
4	69	73	See You Here / Courtney Dickinson / 117 Music	174/14	-14	-28
5	75	74	He Looks Good On Her / Michael McCall / MDM Entertainment	171/12	-1	-1
1	87	75	All About You / Steve Zuwala / Crossroads Music	168/8	27	36
2	77	76	Gettin' Her Over You / Bobby Wills / Willing	163/15	8	12
1	88	77	It's All Yours / Dave Wilbert / Wilbilly Records	162/16	24	31
1	84	78	Gotta Go Rodeo / Darlinghurst / Helium	154/13	12	16
1	82	79	Home Sweet / Russell Dickerson / Triple Tigers Records	154/11	8	12
1	81	80	Same Dirt Road / Eric Lee / Blue Hill Records	147/14	2	3

No. 1 Song
Greatest Spin Increase
Highest Debut





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Richie McDonald Exits Lonestar, Joins Frontmen Of Country Full-Time



Pictured (L-R): Richie McDonald, Tim Rushlow, Larry Stewart. Photo Credit: Trae Edwards for 5 West Media Group

Richie McDonald, lead singer of multi-Platinum group **Lonestar**, has exited the band to tour full-time with **The Frontmen of Country**. The group also includes former lead singer of **Little Texas**, **Tim Rushlow**, and lead singer of **Restless Heart**, **Larry Stewart**. The trio has also signed an exclusive deal with The Kinkead Entertainment Agency.

"I've been with Lonestar for almost 30 years and have enjoyed my time with the guys," says McDonald. "With everything that has happened in the past year, it has made me think about other things I want to do in life. This opportunity with The Frontmen came up and I've decided to go a new direction. I've always enjoyed performing with Tim and Larry and I can't wait to see how this new chapter unfolds. I want to thank my bandmates Dean, Keech and Michael for a great run. I wish them nothing but the best."

"The three of us have proudly performed for our country on battleships USS Bush and USS Truman, in the Middle East and even the Presidential Inauguration," says Stewart. "Touring the United States for country music fans coast-to-coast, backed by a world class band, performing hit after hit, will be exciting and something we have never done together. I'm looking forward to hitting the stage with these two great singers!"

"We are ecstatic to have this amazing opportunity to bring this show on the road and celebrate the music of three of the biggest bands from the '90s in one night," says Rushlow. "I don't know that I have ever seen three lead vocalists on a tour like this. There's a common thread that runs through our collective catalog of hits and it will be awesome to sing them all in one concert event!" **MR**

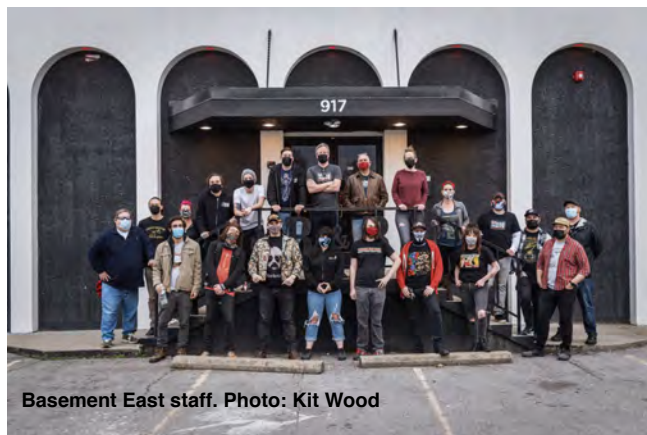
The Basement East Reopens

The Basement East reopened with events on March 4, 5 and 6, for what it is describing as "a much needed socially distanced hang to commemorate one year since the tornado ravaged our city."

The beloved music venue in East Nashville was heavily damaged during the March 2020 storm. The 5,000 square foot space has since been repaired, including getting a new roof, and is ready to receive fans.

On Saturday, March 6 the party moves to the 2,000 square foot deck with performances by **The Minks**, **The Tigerbeats**, **Lilly Hiatt**, **Adams Street Trio**, **India Ramey** and **Tim Easton** from 3 until 7 p.m., followed by **DJ Spice J** at 8 p.m.

In an Instagram post announcing the reopening event, The Beast thanked fellow venues Mercy Lounge, Nashville



Urban Winery and Marathon Music Works for loaning them tables and chairs for the weekend. The venue has outlined a core safety policy including face coverings and temperature checks. [Click here for more details.](#) **MR**

Luke Bryan's 'Down To One' Hits No. 1



Luke Bryan picks up his 26th No. 1 hit with “Down to One” on the *Billboard* Country Airplay and Mediabase charts. The song hit No. 1 on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart in December.

“Down To One,” written by **Dallas Davidson**, **Justin Ebach** and **Kyle Fishman** is the country singer’s fourth consecutive No. 1 off of his album *Born Here Live Here Die Here*, produced by **Jeff Stevens** and **Jody Stevens**.

The album’s deluxe edition will be available on April 9 with six brand new songs. The 2021 CRB Artist Humanitarian Award winner’s album originally debuted at No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Top Country Albums chart last August, Bryan’s sixth consecutive album at the top position. **MR**

Big Machine Music Taps Peermusic To Sub-Publish Catalog Outside U.S.

Big Machine Music and peermusic have entered a long-term sub-publishing agreement for peermusic to represent the music copyrights controlled by Big Machine Music in all ex-US territories. Big Machine Music will continue to administer itself within the U.S.

Through the deal, peermusic will work with BMM’s catalog of over 12,000 songs and three dozen chart-toppers, including the recent five-week country No. 1 “Better Together” (written and recorded by **Luke Combs**), **Laura Veltz**’s “The Bones” (recorded by Maren Morris) and **Jessie Jo Dillon**’s “10,000 Hours” (recorded by Dan + Shay and Justin Bieber), which holds the highest streaming first-week in country music history. Named to *Billboard*’s Year End Top Ten Hot 100 Publisher Corp and Hot Country Publisher Corp from 2017-2020, BMM’s current roster also includes **Brett Young**, **Brandy Clark**, **Eric Paslay**, **Ryan Hurd**, **Justin Moore**, **Maddie & Tae**, **Tyler Rich**, **Benjy Davis**, **Callista Clark**, **Laci Kaye Booth**, **Daniel Ross**, **Lauren Weintraub**, **Kenton Bryant**, and **Reid Isbell**.

“We see in peermusic a reflection of our own independent spirit and dedication to delivering personalized service to our songwriters,” said **Mike Molinar**, General Manager, BMM. “The international team under the guidance of Nigel shares our business and creative values and we look forward to working with their team.”



Pictured (L-R): **Mike Molinar**, General Manager, Big Machine Music; **Nigel Elderton**, President, Europe & Managing Director, peermusic U.K.

Nigel Elderton, President, Europe & Managing Director, peermusic said: “Mike, **Alex Heddle**, and the Big Machine Music team put their service to their clients first and foremost—we share that ethos. What the Big Machine Music team have built in the past eight years is phenomenal. They are exceptional music publishers that have developed a rich catalog, overflowing with hits. We are thrilled to partner with them for global sub-publishing.” **MR**

EMPIRE Nashville's Eric Hurt And Heather Vassar Talk Early Success [Interview]

EMPIRE was formed in 2010 by **Ghazi Shami**. The San Francisco-based company has been instrumental in launching the careers of multi-Platinum, Grammy Award-winning artists such as Kendrick Lamar, Cardi B, DRAM, and Anderson.Paak.

In 2018, EMPIRE tapped former Black River Publishing executive **Eric Hurt** to start the Nashville office, which serves as an independent label, distributor, and publisher. Hurt had helped to secure a publishing deal at Black River for **Willie Jones**, who was signed to EMPIRE proper.

"Willie's manager connected me with Ghazi, we actually met at SXSW," Hurt, now VP of A&R, tells *MusicRow*. "We hit it off and then Ghazi just started talking his goals and desires of opening up a Nashville branch and getting more into country music and into Nashville."

Ghazi was intrigued by the way country fans consume music.

"It started off with Kane Brown. EMPIRE released his first EP and it blew up, the numbers were great. So they were like, 'What's going on over here?' Kane went on to do what he did and they signed Willie Jones to develop that out more," Hurt says. "A lot of what this town is built on is radio, which serves a big purpose in our market and I don't want to downplay that at all, but with that comes a lot of waiting. EMPIRE is really about content and super serving the fans first, getting things out on a digital level, rolling it out quickly,



Pictured (L-R): Sarah-Beth Gerlec (Counsel, EMPIRE), Eric Hurt (VP of A&R, EMPIRE), Heather Vassar (VP of Marketing, EMPIRE), Nick Wayne, William Dyer (Product Manager, EMPIRE), Janine Ebach (CEO, Ebach Entertainment), Leslie Roberts (Executive Director, Creative, BMI). Photo: Steve Lowry



(L-R): Eric Hurt, Heather Vassar

moving quickly and building up the value on that digital level first, and then going to radio when the time is right."

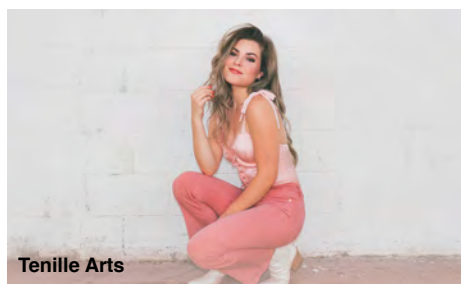
Heather Vassar joined EMPIRE Nashville as VP of Marketing early in 2020. Vassar came to EMPIRE from Universal Music Group Nashville, where she most recently led Strategy and Research. She oversees day-to-day artist strategies and development, marketing and digital initiatives, as well as partner relationships with sales and streaming services for EMPIRE's Nashville roster.

Now, country/hip-hop artist Jones, country up-and-comer **Tenille Arts**, singer-songwriter **Waylon Payne**, and newly-signed songwriter **Nick Wayne** make up the EMPIRE Nashville roster.

EMPIRE Nashville structures their deals a bit differently.

"To understand how our deals are structured, especially for the Nashville office, we very rarely put those tent poles down of like, 'You're just a distribution artist,' or anything like that. It's not defined that way. We're super serving the town and investing in the town," says Vassar. "We bring [the artist] into the family, then the goal is to essentially grow the family and grow all of the tent poles with them."

Arts has a top-15 hit, "Somebody Like That," was named part of the CMT Next Women of Country Class of 2021, and just performed as part of the prestigious



Tenille Arts



Willie Jones



Waylon Payne

CRS New Faces of Country Music Show. Last week, she was announced as a nominee for the ACM's New Female Artist of the Year.

"Obviously radio is a huge player for her and have been big advocates for her. But it's such an old school mentality, thinking you have to wait on one [single]," Vassar says. "We just dropped her most recent track, which will be her Canadian single. That will go for adds in a couple of weeks over there. [Our strategy is] being able to establish the U.S. single, but then also feeding the fans content and making sure the DSPs have content and music that doesn't hinder the radio single, but instead adds value to it."

Singer-songwriter Payne released his *Blue Eyes, The Harlot, The Queer, The Pusher & Me*, to critical acclaim in late 2020. It hit the iTunes No. 2 spot on the country albums chart and No. 3 on the all genre albums chart upon release.

Payne is the son of country artist Sammi Smith and guitarist Jody Payne, who played for Willie Nelson.

"We rolled out his project pretty differently than we rolled out any other ones. We did it in four acts to help tell his story. He has such a compelling story with the narrative of his past and his life. I mean, Waylon Jennings as his godfather? There are so many layers there," Vassar says.

"We're all about trying new things, pushing the boundaries," Vassar says. "It's all the way from digital strategy, marketing, roll-out strategy, and then playlist placements, making sure that [Waylon] is in the conversation and that his story is being told in the way that they want it to be told."

Genre-bending Jones caters to country and hip-hop fans with the release of his debut album, *Right Now*. Alongside his new record, Jones partnered with the newly opened National Museum of African American Music (NMAAM) to launch the #IHaveAnAmericanDream initiative to coincide with the release of his single "American Dream." Donations to the initiative ran through Black History Month, and went to the museum.

He was named to Spotify's Hot Country Artists To Watch list, and currently hosts his own Apple Music show, *The Cross Roads Radio*, which serves as a sounding board for fellow production fanatics interested in how country and rap music intertwine.

Vassar says that the marketing strategy behind Jones crosses genres. "Willie is so authentic to both [country and hip-hop] that to only focus on one genre would just be a disservice to who he is at his core. To be able to captivate both audiences is definitely always at the forefront.

"It would not be authentic to Willie if we tried to say, 'This is only who you are and this is it.' In telling the story of who he is and maintaining that narrative, it opens up more doors in that realm. If it make sense, [we will pitch him] for a hip-hop playlist or a workout playlist," Vassar says.

EMPIRE Nashville joins a handful of Nashville companies whose parent company's success is rooted in hip-hop and R&B music, including Reservoir and Roc Nation's Rhythm House. Hurt says that burgeoning lane is a testament to Nashville's talent.

"I love seeing these kind of companies making an investment in Nashville," Hurt says. "I think that it shows a lot of respect for the level of talent of the artists and songwriters that Nashville has to deliver. All genres are recognizing that there's a lot to pull from here in this town that can spill over into other genres." **MR**

DISClaimer Single Reviews: Eric Church, Miranda Lambert, Brandy Clark



Eric Church Photo: Reid Long

I must be living right.

How else can you explain new music in the same listening session from three of my very favorite artists—**Miranda Lambert**, **Eric Church** and **Brandy Clark**? They are among the reasons I still listen to country music, no matter how bad most of the rest of it is. Any one of them could be the Disc of the Day. I'm giving the nod to my main man, Eric Church.

There are bright rays of hope in this edition of DISClaimer. I refer to the dandy disc debuts by **Ian Munsick**, **Hannah Dasher** and **Callista Clark**. Hannah Dasher wins this week's DISCOVERY Award. I look forward to hearing much, much more from her.

[Click here to read Robert K. Oermann's reviews of Eric Church, Miranda Lambert, Brandy Clark, Ian Munsick, Hannah Dasher and more.](#)

MORE TOP STORIES

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[Weekly Register: Morgan Wallen Continues Reign Over Album Chart](#)

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On The Row: Ian Munsick Brings The West To The Rest

Warner Music Nashville's **Ian Munsick** is on a mission to bring back western influenced country music. With his recently released debut album, *Coyote Cry*, the Wyoming native describes the project as "a firm handshake of the cowboy and the hippy, the traditional and the contemporary."

Munsick grew up on a ranch, playing country and western music with his family band, The Munsick Boys.

"Modern western culture is one that is extremely underrepresented in today's country music. Most people think that cowboys only existed in that age of the 1800s, but cowboys are still out there," Munsick told *MusicRow* in a recent virtual visit. "They're still out there doing work and being model Americans. They're honest, hard-working people that you want as your neighbor and as your friends."

He counts a wide array of musical artists as influences. "Being in the generation that I was born in, we've had access to Spotify, MTV, Apple and just everything. But growing up in Wyoming, we never had artists come through our state. The only ones were Chris LeDoux and more of that cowboy western [music]. I just remember as a young kid—probably eight years old was when it started—I was glued to MTV and to music videos, taking in all this music from System Of A Down to Eminem, to just everything that I could get my hands on."

The 27-year-old's access to music discovery via multiple platforms and his varietal taste in music inspired him to start producing his own music.

"That opened up the whole new world of hip-hop, pop, and rock music," Munsick said. "Then trying to incorporate that into a country feel that I feel most



connected to has been what I've been trying to do for the last few years. I think that this album is a strong interpretation of how modern the west is."

He came to Warner Music Nashville with *Coyote Cry* fully formed, and made his WMN introduction with the dreamy, strikingly visual "Long Haul." The tune will be his first single to country radio.

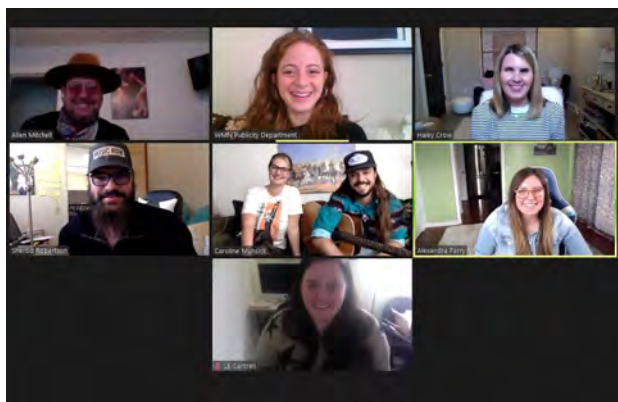
The 10-song project also includes a stomping romp about confidence called "Humble," a Fleetwood Mac cover of "Dreams," and a slow burner, "Come Home To You," among other unique songs.

Munsick is signed under a co-management deal with The Erv Woolsey Company and his wife's **Caroline Rudolph Munsick** / Not A Public Figure Management. After moving to Nashville in 2012 to attend Belmont, the singer-songwriter met Caroline, who was looking to start her own management company. They released an EP in 2017 and worked hard to establish a fully-formed brand with cohesive imagery.

"[The EP] started to grow some legs and we started to figure out our brand and how to capitalize on it. We decided that it was time to make a new album and went into the studio at the beginning of 2018," Munsick said. "Once we had the project all done, Caroline and I were like, 'Hey, this album deserves as much help as we can get.' So Caroline and I reached out to **Allen [Mitchell]** and **Erv [Woolsey]**."

A few months later the team partnered with Warner Music Nashville.

"I'm definitely glad that we waited to form the right team around us because, as you guys know, the artist is only as good as the team around us. Our team is awesome and I'm very grateful to be with them." **MR**



TOP SONGWRITER CHART

This Week	Last Week	Songwriter's Name	Song(s)	Artist
1	1	Josh Osborne	Beers And Sunshine Sand In My Boots How They Remember You Breaking Up Was Easy In The 90's Next Girl	Darius Rucker Morgan Wallen Rascal Flatts Sam Hunt Carly Pearce
2	3	Jesse Frasure	Hole In The Bottle What's Your Country Song Almost Maybes Minimum Wage	Kelsea Ballerini Thomas Rhett Jordan Davis Blake Shelton
3	2	Ashley Gorley	We Were Rich Hole In The Bottle What's Your Country Song Sand In My Boots Warning Single Saturday Night	Runaway June Kelsea Ballerini Thomas Rhett Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Cole Swindell
4	6	Ross Copperman	We Were Rich Beers And Sunshine Lady	Runaway June Darius Rucker Brett Young
5		Taylor Swift	Love Story	Taylor Swift
6	10	Corey Crowder	Drinkin' Beer. Talkin' God. Amen Long Live Minimum Wage Famous Friends	Chase Rice feat. Florida Georgia Line Florida Georgia Line Blake Shelton Chris Young + Kane Brown
7	7	Luke Combs	Better Together Forever After All	Luke Combs Luke Combs
8	5	Ernest Keith Smith	Wasted On You Somebody's Problem Breaking Up Was Easy In The 90's Warning Dangerous	Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Sam Hunt Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen
9	8	Mike Henderson	Starting Over	Chris Stapleton
10	9	Chris Stapleton	Starting Over	Chris Stapleton
11	13	Tyler Hubbard	Long Live Undivided Lil Bit	Florida Georgia Line Tim McGraw & Tyler Hubbard Nelly & Florida Georgia Line
12	11	Jon Nite	I Hope Lady	Gabby Barrett Brett Young
13	12	Randy Montana	We Didn't Have Much Better Together	Justin Moore Luke Combs
14	4	Morgan Wallen	Wasted On You Somebody's Problem Still Goin Down Dangerous Neon Eyes Livin' The Dream	Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen
15	14	Hillary Lindsey	Hole In The Bottle Almost Maybes	Kelsea Ballerini Jordan Davis
16	16	Gabby Barrett	I Hope The Good Ones	Gabby Barrett Gabby Barrett
17	17	Zachary Kale	I Hope The Good Ones	Gabby Barrett Gabby Barrett
18	15	Niko Moon	Good Time Gone More Surprised Than Me	Niko Moon Dierks Bentley Morgan Wallen
19	26	Nicolle Galyon	We Were Rich Minimum Wage Gone	Runaway June Blake Shelton Dierks Bentley

This Week	Last Week	Songwriter's Name	Song(s)	Artist
20	19	Dan Isbell	Better Together	Luke Combs
21	23	Kevin Bard	Just The Way	Parmalee x Blanco Brown
22	24	N.W. Sipe	Just The Way	Parmalee x Blanco Brown
23	25	Matt Thomas	Just The Way	Parmalee x Blanco Brown
24	21	Dallas Davidson	Down To One Silverado For Sale	Luke Bryan Morgan Wallen
25	20	Ryan Vojtesak	Wasted On You Warning Still Goin Down Worship You	Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Kane Brown
26	27	Kyle Fishman	Down To One	Luke Bryan
27	28	Justin Ebach	Down To One	Luke Bryan
28	18	Michael Hardy	What Do I Know Sand In My Boots Still Goin Down Livin' The Dream Single Saturday Night	Robert Counts Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Cole Swindell
29	29	Rodney Clawson	Somebody's Problem Momma's House	Morgan Wallen Dustin Lynch
30	30	Brett Young	Lady	Brett Young
31	34	Chris Loocke	Undivided	Tim McGraw & Tyler Hubbard
32	31	John Thomas Harding	Beers And Sunshine	Darius Rucker
33	32	Darius Rucker	Beers And Sunshine	Darius Rucker
34	35	Allison Veltz Cruz	Somebody Like That	Tenille Arts
35	36	Tenille Arts	Somebody Like That	Tenille Arts
36	37	Alex Kline	Somebody Like That	Tenille Arts
37	41	Rhett Akins	Tequila Little Time What's Your Country Song Your Bartender	Jon Pardi Thomas Rhett Morgan Wallen
38	38	Eric Church	Hell Of A View	Eric Church
39	39	Monty Criswell	Hell Of A View	Eric Church
40	40	C. Beathard	Hell Of A View	Eric Church
41	58	B. Davis	Memory I Don't Mess With Made For You	Lee Brice Jake Owen
42	42	Allen Shamblin	How They Remember You	Rascal Flatts
43	43	M. Beeson	How They Remember You	Rascal Flatts
44	55	Dallas Wilson	Nobody	Dylan Scott
45	56	Dylan Scott	Nobody	Dylan Scott
46	57	Matt Alderman	Nobody	Dylan Scott
47	54	Jordan Davis	Almost Maybes	Jordan Davis
48	44	Emily Landis	The Good Ones	Gabby Barrett
49	45	J. McCormick	The Good Ones	Gabby Barrett
50	66	N. Medley	Made For You	Jake Owen
51	67	Jeffery Hyde	Made For You	Jake Owen
52	50	Josh Murty	Good Time	Niko Moon
53	51	Anna Moon	Good Time	Niko Moon
54	52	Jordan Minton	Good Time	Niko Moon
55	53	Mark Trussell	Good Time	Niko Moon
56	59	Justin Wilson	Momma's House	Dustin Lynch
57	60	Michael Lotten	Momma's House	Dustin Lynch
58	61	Dylan Schneider	Momma's House	Dustin Lynch
59	65	Josh Miller	Whiskey'd My Way Long Live	Morgan Wallen Florida Georgia Line
60	68	David Garcia	Long Live	Florida Georgia Line

CALENDAR

Singles

March 5

Travis Tritt/Smoke In A Bar/Big Noise Label Group

Caroline Jones/Come In(But Don't Make Yourself Comfortable)/Spectacle Entertainment

Lindsay Adamson/He Ain't Worth The Makeup/Heart Songs

True Villains/Dig Your Grave

March 8

Luke Combs/Forever After All/River House/Columbia

Heath Sanders/Old School's In/Valory

Lily Rose/Villan/Big Loud

Veronika/Homesick/Whattaguy Music

March 12

The Highway Women/Dead Man Walking/Heart Songs

Albums

March 12

CeCe Winans/*Believe For It*

March 19

Loretta Lynn/*Still Woman Enough*/Legacy Recordings

Midland/*Midland: The Sonic Ranch (Soundtrack)*/Big Machine

Steve Gulley & Tim Stafford/*Still Here*/Mountain Home Music

Morgan Wade/*Reckless*

March 26

Carrie Underwood/*My Savior*/Capitol Records Nashville

David Olney & Anana Kaye/*Whispers and Sighs*/Schoolkids Records

The Alex Leach Band/*I'm The Happiest When I'm Moving*/Mountain Home Music

Chevel Shepherd/*Everybody's Got A Story* (EP)

Industry Events

March 14

Grammy Awards

March 15 - 21

SXSW