

WEEKLY



KELSEA BALLERINI

Lainey Wilson Returns To CMA Awards Hosting Duties



Lainey Wilson

Lainey Wilson is set to return to the CMA Awards stage to host the 59th annual awards on Nov. 19 at Bridgestone Arena. This will be her second consecutive year hosting. The ceremony will air live at 7 p.m. CST on ABC with next-day streaming available on Hulu.

Wilson is tied for the most [nominations](#) at this year's ceremony, including a nod for Entertainer of the Year.

"I grew up watching the CMA Awards like it was the Super Bowl, so to be hosting for a second year is a true honor," says Wilson. "I'm humbled that CMA has trusted me with this role, and I can't wait to love on this genre that has given me so much."

Nominees and winners for the annual awards are populated by over 7,000 industry professionals that make up CMA membership. The peer-voted awards celebrates the artistry and dedication of each individual.

Performers for the 59th Annual CMA Awards will be announced soon. Tickets for the event are on sale [here](#).

The 59th Annual CMA Awards are produced by the Country Music Association. **Robert Deaton** serves as Executive Producer, **Alan Carter** is Director, and **Jon Macks** is Head Writer. **MR**

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THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES

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How Kelly Thomas Brought The Hill Country Flood Benefit To Life [Interview]

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And much more...

FOR YOUR GRAMMY AWARDS® CONSIDERATION

Kelsea Ballerini

PATTERNS IS ONE OF THE MOST CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED
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Kelsea Ballerini *Alysa Vanderheyem*

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Warren Denney To Retire From CMHOFM



Warren Denney

Warren Denney will retire from his position as Vice President of Creative at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum at the end of the year after more than 18 years of service to the organization.

Denney joined the museum in 2007 as a Creative Manager and Senior Production Manager. He began leading the creative department in 2009 and became a key partner in the creation of exhibitions in partnership with the museum services team, producing primary exhibit looks, contributing writing and original content, and aided in directing and producing exhibit-related programs.

Denney co-directed *Big Night (At the Museum)*, a 90-minute feature film in 2020, which earned a Silver Muse Award from the American Association of Museums for best video production and multiple Telly Awards. He also led art direction for *From Where I Stand: The Black Experience in Country Music*, an expanded box set by the museum and Warner Music Nashville released in 2024.

In his current role, Denney oversees artistic direction and design support for all exhibitions, education and marketing initiatives, as well as books published by the museum's CMF Press and records produced by CMF Records. He also supervises the museum's video production, photography and digital content creation, including for the museum's public programs and other events. **MR**

Ian Harrison Named A2IM CEO



Ian Harrison

Ian Harrison has been named CEO of A2IM.

Harrison brings more than 20 years of leadership in the independent music sector. Most recently, he served as Executive Vice President of Hopeless Records, guiding campaigns for more than 300 releases, selling over 15 million copies and earning over 20 Gold and Platinum certifications as well as securing No. 1 records in both the U.S. and the U.K. His work as part of the Hopeless Foundation (Sub City) has raised over 3.5 million dollars for a variety of music and mental health charities. He has been actively involved with A2IM since 2012 as an Indie Week committee member, five-time speaker, and mentor. He also serves on the Worldwide Independent Network's board and has previously held a board seat with the Music Business Association. He has earned recognition on *Billboard's* Indie Power Players list in 2024 and 2025, as well as the 30 Under 30 list earlier in his career.

Harrison succeeds **Dr. Richard James Burgess**, who will [step down](#) at the end of this year following a decade of service. Burgess built Indie Week and the Libera Awards into the world's largest independent conference and award show, respectively and has spent his career lobbying for the rights of independent artists and labels in Washington, D.C., and globally.

"I am honored to have served this extraordinary community for the past decade, and I could not be more pleased to welcome Ian Harrison as A2IM's next CEO," adds Burgess. "Ian's deep experience, and lifelong commitment to independent music position him perfectly to guide A2IM into its next chapter. I look forward to supporting a seamless transition and to watching him take the organization, and the indie community it represents, to new heights." **MR**

FOR YOUR CMA CONSIDERATION

BEST NEW ARTIST

**STEPHEN
WILSON
JR.**



"ALL STEPHEN WILSON JR. HAS TO DO IS THROW HIS NAME ON A MARQUEE AND THE SHOW WILL SELL OUT....WILSON JR., IS A FORCE YOU WILL BE HEARING A LOT ABOUT IN 2025."

Tennessean.

"THE INDIANA SONGWRITER STEPHEN WILSON JR. IS A STRANGE BEAST.. ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING ARTISTS TO WATCH... A TRUE ORIGINAL."

RollingStone

"THROUGHOUT THE ALBUM, WILSON JR. OFFERS THE KIND OF NUANCED STORYTELLING THAT HAS HELPED MAKE STARS OF ARTISTS LIKE ERIC CHURCH AND CHRIS STAPLETON, AND HE HAS THE VOCAL PROWESS TO BACK IT UP."

billboard

BIG LOUD

Kesha Signs With Mary Hilliard Harrington & Red Light Management



Kesha. Photo: Brendan Walter

Pop sensation **Kesha** has signed with **Mary Hilliard Harrington** and Red Light management for representation, joining Harrington's roster of Dierks Bentley and The Black Keys.

Throughout her career, Kesha has amassed billions of streams, released numerous No. 1 albums including *Animal* and *Rainbow*, and has cemented timeless No. 1 hits with "Tik Tok," "We R Who We R," her collaboration with Pitbull on "Timber" and more.

She recently finished her "Tits Out Tour" with sold-out arenas and amphitheaters across the U.S. including Kia Forum, Ascend Amphitheater, Madison Square Garden and more. She will continue the run in 2026 across Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the UK.

Kesha is also represented by CAA, Reed Smith and FBMM. **MR**

Bernie Leadon Inks With Warner Chappell Music

Bernie Leadon, Eagles founding member and Rock & Roll Hall of Famer, has signed with Warner Chappell Music to a long-term, worldwide publishing agreement. Leadon will release his first solo album in more than two decades, *Too Late to Be Cool*, on Oct. 10.

"It's no exaggeration to say that much of the music we call Americana today owes a deep debt to Bernie's boundary-crossing inspiration," adds WCM's **Guy Moot**, Co-Chair and CEO, and **Carianne Marshall**, Co-Chair and COO. "He has helped shape a canon of iconic music, from his early years with genre-defying groups like The Flying Burrito Brothers and Dillard & Clark to his generation-defining work with the Eagles to his countless collaborations with other artists. His creativity, musical brilliance, and pure devotion to his craft have made him a true American treasure, with six decades of extraordinary songs and sounds to his credit. We're honored and excited to welcome him into the Warner Chappell family."

In 1971, Leadon co-founded the Eagles alongside Glenn Frey, Don Henley, and Randy Meisner. After stepping away from the Eagles in 1975, he worked with Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris, Stephen Stills and Alabama among others. In 1998, he was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame with The Eagles.

Leadon penned all the songs on his upcoming album, including the recently released tracks "Too Many Memories," "Just a Little," and "Go On Down to Mobile." It also marks Leadon's reunion with esteemed producer/engineer and Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee **Glyn Johns**. **MR**



Pictured (L-R): Greg Sowders (WCM), Guy Moot (WCM), Bernie Leadon, Carianne Marshall (WCM) and Trevian Kutti. Photo: Courtesy of WCM

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Train Makes Grand Ole Opry Debut



Photo: Chris Hollo

Multi-Grammy Award-winning, diamond-selling band **Train** made their Grand Ole Opry debut on Sept. 19.

This year, the band is celebrating the 25th anniversary of their career-defining album *Drops of Jupiter*. Since its formation in 1994, Train has sold more than 10 million albums and 30 million tracks worldwide, amassing over six billion global streams. The band is known for its RIAA diamond-certified, now 11x platinum, No. 1 single “Hey, Soul Sister,” 8x platinum-certified, double-Grammy-winning “Drops of Jupiter” and 5x platinum-certified anthem “Drive By.” Train has had 14 songs on *Billboard*’s Hot 100 Chart and 13 albums on the *Billboard* 200 Albums Chart, six of which reached the Top 10, including *Drops of Jupiter*, *My Private Nation*, *California 37*, *Bulletproof Picasso*, *For Me, It’s You* and *a girl a bottle a boat*.

Last year, the band released its most recent project, *Live at Royal Albert Hall*, and is currently working on new music in Nashville. **MR**

Morgan Evans Teams With Virgin Music Group



Pictured (L-R): Jen Bontusa (SVP, Label Management, Virgin Music Group); Jordon Isbell (Director, Marketing, Virgin Music Group); Morgan Evans; John Mayer (Sr. Director, National Promotion and Streaming, Virgin Music Group) and René Symonds (Artist Manager, TaP Music)

Morgan Evans will partner with Virgin Music Group on his upcoming new music. Evans will drop his first track under the new partnership, “Beer Back Home,” on Oct. 10, with a full length album slated for early 2026.

“I’m stoked to partner with Virgin Music Group on this record,” says Evans. “They’ve built a global team that gets Nashville, Europe, Australia, and they get me. The industry’s changing fast, but their model keeps artists in control, especially creatively. I couldn’t be prouder of this new music or more excited to share it with the world alongside the legends at VMG. Let’s go!”

Hailing from Australia, Evans released his debut self-titled album in 2014, marking his burst into the country music scene. Over the course of his career, he has garnered more than 800 million streams. The new single “Beer Back Home” was recorded in Nashville, and co-produced by Evans and **Todd Clark**.

“Morgan is an artist dedicated to the continued growth of his loyal fanbase and country music around the world,” shares **Jen Bontusa**, SVP of Label Management for Virgin Music Group. “The Virgin Music Group global team will play an important role in helping to expand that fanbase with an incredible collection of new music. We can’t wait to get started.”

Evan’s next show will be a return to his hometown of Newcastle on Feb. 14 at Howlin’ Country Music Festival. **MR**

COUNTRYBREAKOUT RADIO CHART

CHART ACTION

New On The Chart—Debuting This Week

song/artist/label—Chart Position

The Hell You Are/Ashley Cooke/Big Loud Records - 65
 Pretty Much/MaRynn Taylor/Black River Entertainment - 71
 Coulda Been Love/Braden Hull/Melody Place - 75
 You Were There/Thompson Square/T2 Records - 76
 If You Call Me Again/Tanner Usrey/Atlantic Records - 79

Greatest Spin Increase

song/artist/label—Spin Increase

How Far Does Goodbye Go/Jason Aldean/BBR Music Group - 233
 Don't Mind If I Do/Riley Green feat. Ella Langley/Nashville Harbor - 131
 The Hell You Are/Ashley Cooke/Big Loud Records - 115
 6 Months Later/Megan Moroney/Columbia Nashville/Columbia Records - 112
 Perfume On My Jersey/Caleb Lathrop/CAL Production - 103

Most Added

song/artist/label—No. of Adds

The Hell You Are/Ashley Cooke/Big Loud Records - 10
 How Far Does Goodbye Go/Jason Aldean/BBR Music Group - 8
 Perfume On My Jersey/Caleb Lathrop/CAL Production - 8
 Turquoise & Silver/Billie Jo Jones/Get Joe Records - 7
 Me & A Beer/Chris Janson/Harpeth 60 Records - 4
 Wildfire featuring Cody Johnson/Michael Martin Murphey/Wildfire Productions - 4
 Pontiac (So Tell Me Momma)/Aaron Watson/Adub Records - 4

On Deck—Soon To Be Charting

song/artist/label—No. of Spins

Wildfire featuring Cody Johnson/Michael Martin Murphey/Wildfire Productions - 153
 Cowboy Pillows/Lexie Stevenson/Lexquisite Music - 143
 Turquoise & Silver/Billie Jo Jones/Get Joe Records - 140
 Sounds Like A Memory/Rob Fitzgerald/Riverbend Recordings/For The Record - 138
 We Can Always Move On/Cole Swindell/Warner Music Nashville - 135

NO. 1 SONG



Morgan Wallen notches a fifth week at No. 1 on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Radio Chart with his track, "I Got Better."

Off of Wallen's recent album, *I'm The Problem*, the song was written by Wallen, **Michael Hardy**, **Chase McGill**, **Blake Pendergrass**, **Ernest Smith**, **Charlie Handsome** and **Joe Reeves**.

"I Got Better" currently sits at No. 5 on the *Billboard* Country Airplay chart and No. 4 on the Mediabase chart.



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
 KDXY Jonesboro, AR
 KWCK Searcy, AR
 KRAZ Solvang, CA
 WCTY Norwich, CT
 WPPL Blue Ridge, GA
 WUBB Savannah, GA
 KXIA Marshalltown, IA
 KTHK Idaho Falls, ID
 WOOZ Carterville, IL
 WALS Peru, IL
 WAAG Galesburg, IL
 WYOT Rochelle, IL
 WRTB Rockford, IL

WFMB Springfield, IL
 WIFE Connersville, IN
 WYGB Franklin, IN
 KAIR Atchison, KS
 WKDZ Cadiz, KY
 WULF Elizabethtown, KY
 WSIP Paintsville, KY
 KRRV Alexandria, LA
 KQKI Morgan City, LA
 KJLO Monroe, LA
 WKPE Hyannis, MA
 WTCM Traverse City, MI
 KZPK St. Cloud, MN
 KFAV Warrenton, MO
 WBBN Laurel, MS

WFAY Fayetteville, NC
 WKVS Lenoir, NC
 KZZY Devils Lake, ND
 KYCK Thompson, ND
 KRVN Lexington, NE
 KFGE Lincoln, NE
 WMLL Manchester, NH
 KQBA Santa Fe, NM
 WDNB Monticello, NY
 WPIG Olean, NY
 WCJW Warsaw, NY
 KITX Hugo, OK
 KPNC Ponca City, OK
 KWEY Weatherford, OK
 KWOX Woodward, OK

KRKT Albany, OR
 KRWQ Medford, OR
 WNWN Battle Creek, MI
 WVNW Lewistown, PA
 WCFT Selinsgrove, PA
 WVPO Stroudsburg, PA
 KZZI Spearfish, SD
 WUCZ Carthage, TN
 WLLX Lawrenceburg, TN
 KFTX Corpus Christi, TX
 KYKX Longview, TX
 KLLL Lubbock, TX
 KXOX Sweetwater, TX
 WAKG Danville, VA
 WAXX Altoona, WI

WJVL Janesville, WI
 WGLR Platteville, WI
 WQPC Prairie du Chien, WI
 WJMQ Shawano, 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 +/-
15	1	1	I Got Better / Morgan Wallen / Big Loud/Mercury/Republic	2296/61	-1	-16
10	2	2	Back in the Saddle / Luke Combs / Sony Music Nashville	2292/63	3	75
17	4	3	Good Times & Tan Lines / Zach Top / Leo33	2128/68	3	67
19	6	4	Somewhere Over Laredo / Lainey Wilson / Broken Bow Records	1847/55	1	27
25	7	5	Favorite Country Song / HARDY / Big Loud/Mercury/Republic	1786/65	4	66
55	8	6	Heavens To Betsy / Jackson Dean / Big Machine	1673/54	-1	-16
12	12	7	Don't Mind If I Do / Riley Green feat. Ella Langley / Nashville Harbor Records	1665/60	9	131
27	9	8	House Again / Hudson Westbrook / River House Artists	1618/58	0	3
21	10	9	Stay Country or Die Tryin' / Blake Shelton / Wheelhouse Records	1609/61	1	18
29	11	10	3,2,1 / Tucker Wetmore / UMG Nashville/Back Blocks Music	1569/59	1	18
36	13	11	Darlin' / Chase Matthew / Warner Music Nashville	1537/47	3	44
26	15	12	What He'll Never Have / Dylan Scott / Curb	1384/64	2	22
12	16	13	A Song To Sing / Miranda Lambert & Chris Stapleton / Big Loud/Mercury/Republic	1372/65	3	41
45	18	14	Time's Ticking / Justin Moore / Valory	1336/58	2	32
51	14	15	What Kinda Man / Parker McCollum / MCA Nashville	1307/44	-4	-57
11	20	16	6 Months Later / Megan Moroney / Columbia Nashville/Columbia Records	1305/55	9	112
34	19	17	It Won't Be Long / George Birge / RECORDS Nashville	1232/50	2	23
26	21	18	This Side Of The Dirt / Boomtown Saints / 8 Track Entertainment	1160/50	1	13
23	22	19	It Ain't The Whiskey / Jake Worthington / Big Loud Texas/Big Loud	1131/53	2	20
37	23	20	Cowgirl / Parmalee / Stoney Creek Records	1106/44	0	3
26	24	21	Til The Last One Dies / Chris Young / Black River Entertainment	960/50	1	6
35	25	22	I Dare You / Rascal Flatts feat. Jonas Brothers / Big Machine Records	937/39	2	22
3	34	23	How Far Does Goodbye Go / Jason Aldean / BBR Music Group	897/52	35	233
14	28	24	Weak / Preston Cooper / The Valory Music Co.	835/49	5	39
23	26	25	The Fall / Cody Johnson / CoJo Music/Warner Music Nashville	820/45	1	6
22	30	26	Baggage / Kelsea Ballerini / Black River Entertainment	791/45	2	15
11	33	27	Fireworks / Kelsey Hart / Curb Records	735/46	8	54
27	31	28	Paper Umbrellas / Tim McGraw feat. Parker McCollum / Big Machine Records	732/41	0	-1
8	35	29	All My Exes / Lauren Alaina feat. Chase Matthew / Big Loud Records	699/44	6	41
13	32	30	Freedom / Harper Grace & Kelsey Hart / Curb Records	694/42	2	11
4	38	31	Ain't A Bad Life / Thomas Rhett feat. Jordan Davis / The Valory Music Co.	692/41	16	98
21	36	32	Hide and Go Cheat / Eric Lee Beddingfield / Marshals Of The Revolution	633/34	3	17
20	37	33	The Dirt / Jenna Paulette / Leo33	623/37	3	20
12	40	34	The Others / Cody Jinks / Late August Records	590/41	12	65
13	39	35	Turn the Night On / Chris Kizzia / CAL Records	590/35	7	39
31	42	36	Better Me For You (Brown Eyes) / Max McNown / Fugitive Recordings	551/32	10	48
29	45	37	Golden Child / Meghan Patrick / Riser House	546/29	14	69
22	44	38	Me & A Beer / Chris Janson / Harpeth 60 Records	510/31	3	13
26	41	39	I Wish You Would / Mackenzie Carpenter feat. Midland / The Valory Music Co.	509/28	-2	-12

MUSICROW

2025

MUSICROW

AWARDS

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Weeks On Chart	Last Week	This Week	Song / Artist / Label	Spins / Reports	% Spin Power	Spins +/-
14	43	40	Wrong Hearts / LOCASH / Galaxy Label Group	484/30	-4	-18
18	46	41	Kiss An Angel Good Mornin' / Danielia Cotton / CDX Records	411/19	3	12
23	47	42	Underneath That Old Cowboy Hat / Herrick / CDX Records	401/20	2	9
14	52	43	Ends of the Earth / Ty Myers / RECORDS Nashville	397/25	14	48
13	48	44	Red / Jet Jurgensmeyer / Simba Entertainment	391/27	3	11
11	50	45	When She Kissed Me / Casey Donahew / Almost Country Records	375/26	3	10
18	51	46	Easy To Love / Dustin Lynch / Broken Bow Records	369/23	1	5
16	53	47	Country Boy / Randy Cobb / South Sixty Five Entertainment Group	365/23	5	17
9	49	48	Making Good Time / Old Dominion / Three Up Three Down, LLC/Columbia Nashville	363/22	-1	-4
24	29	49	My Crazy / Ashley Ryan / Spinville Entertainment	346/22	-56	-448
3	55	50	Want You Back / Brantley Gilbert / The Valory Music Co.	331/24	9	28
10	61	51	Tow Truck Driver / Waylon Hanel / Waylon Hanel Music/CDX Records	312/19	14	38
14	56	52	Slow Go The Days / Tim & The Glory Boys / Sony Music Canada	310/21	7	20
8	57	53	Hard Fought Hallelujah / Brandon Lake feat. Jelly Roll / Lyric Ridge Records/Essential Records	305/18	6	18
6	62	54	Miss You More / Hunter Clark / Frontier Events	296/20	11	29
8	60	55	Don't Let The Gray Hair Fool Ya / Due West / Unwound Records	280/19	1	3
7	65	56	Said No Redneck Ever / Aaron Goodvin / New Motor Records/Warner Music Canada	266/21	6	15
5	64	57	Wish You Wouldn't Go / Ken Domash / Thunder Mountain Records	263/23	2	4
7	71	58	Trouble I Chase / Kaitlyn Croker / Independent	258/14	33	64
10	66	59	You've Seen Heaven / Karly C / Quirky Cowgirl Records	250/20	6	14
15	58	60	2 Pair / Kane Brown / RCA Nashville	245/15	-13	-36
23	63	61	I Ain't Coming Back / Morgan Wallen feat. Post Malone / Big Loud/Mercury/Republic	242/10	-8	-22
4	69	62	Blue Jean Crazy / Laura Bryna / LTD Entertainment	238/15	10	22
8	67	63	I Don't Know How To Say Goodbye / Dwight Yoakam feat. Post Malone / Via Records	231/18	1	2
8	68	64	Single Of The Year / Maddye Trew / TLG/Virgin/Trew Blue Music	222/19	1	3
1	94	65	the hell you are / Ashley Cooke / Big Loud Records	221/19	108	115
2	76	66	Never Call Again / Gavin AdCock / Thrivin Here Records LLC/Warner Music Nashville	220/17	22	39
7	73	67	She Gone / Dillon Carmichael / Riser House Records	218/14	15	29
2	77	68	Three Sheets to the Wind / Kelly & Sarah / Kelly Sarah Music	211/16	17	30
3	70	69	Hell That I Call Home / Porter Martin / Lovable Music	210/18	1	2
2	75	70	Hate How You Look / Josh Ross / Core Entertainment/Mercury Nashville	205/17	11	21
1	83	71	Pretty Much / MaRynn Taylor / Black River Entertainment	191/15	23	36
7	74	72	Long Live Country / Shane Profitt / Triple Tigers	188/13	0	0
5	78	73	Drink With You / Brett Young / Nashville Harbor Records & Entertainment	181/15	2	3
3	85	74	Summer Love / Andrew Salgado / Synapse Publishing & Entertainment®, LLC	171/10	10	16
1	82	75	Coulda Been Love / Braden Hull / Melody Place	171/14	9	14
1	81	76	You Were There / Thompson Square / T2 Records	168/15	5	8
3	80	77	Leaving Louisiana in the Broad Daylight / Flat River Band feat. The Oak Ridge Boys / Flat River Band/Early Bird Records	168/13	4	6
5	84	78	Wish You Well / Vincent Mason / MCA Nashville/Music Soup/Interscope Records	166/13	7	11
1	87	79	If You Call Me Again / Tanner Usrey / Atlantic Records	159/14	25	32
24	72	80	Not At This Party / Dasha / Warner Records	154/11	-21	-40

No. 1 Song
 Greatest Spin Increase
 Highest Debut

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Anthem Music Publishing Acquires Catalog Of Mark Holman [Exclusive]



Mark Holman

Anthem Music Publishing has acquired a catalog of songs from Grammy-nominated, Nashville-based songwriter and producer **Mark Holman**.

A native of Ewing, Illinois, Holman's catalog includes No. 1 country hits such as "Single Saturday Night" by Cole Swindell and "Simple" by Florida Georgia Line. His songwriting and production credits span a wide range of artists such as Luke Bryan, Thomas Rhett, Blake Shelton, Post Malone and more, including "Neon Eyes," "Me On Whiskey," and "Whatcha Think of Country Now," three tracks from Morgan Wallen's *Dangerous: The Double Album*.

Early in his career, Holman found success in the Christian rock space with hits like "Faceless" and "Feed the Machine" from RED's *Billboard* No. 1 album, *Until We Have Faces*. As an artist, his work has also been featured in major media, including *American Idol*, *The Biggest Loser*, and Disney's animated film *Planes*. **MR**

Make Wake Artists Expands With In-House Label Division

Make Wake Artists has expanded with a new in-house label division. The department will be led by **Alicia Mathews** (Head of Marketing & Commercial Partnerships), **Brianna Steinitz** (Director of Administration & Operations), and **Myles Hoffman** (Marketing Manager).

Make Wake Artists was launched in 2015 by **Chris Kappy** when he began managing Luke Combs. Through its "Fans.F1rst." strategy, its 20+ artist roster has earned multiple Diamond/Platinum/Gold certifications, No. 1 singles, and sold-out worldwide tours.



Pictured (L-R): Alicia Mathews, Myles Hoffman and Brianna Steinitz

"When I started Make Wake Artists in Nashville 10 years ago, my dream was to build a home where artists could thrive; where their music, their values, and their vision would be protected and amplified," Kappy shares. "Luke Combs was the first artist to believe in that vision, and together we've been able to share his music with millions of fans worldwide. I couldn't be prouder of what we've built, and this anniversary is as much a celebration of our entire roster, and our incredible team as it is of the company itself."

"My mission for this division is to support our independent artists with major-level execution while allowing them to maintain creative freedom, and the space to tell their story through music on their own terms," Mathews says. "It's been a dream to grow this from the ground up during my time here. I'm incredibly grateful to Kappy for championing my vision and for instilling his Fans.F1rst. philosophy into everything we do. I'm so proud of this team and what we're building, but what truly matters is fostering the connection between an artist and their fans. The fans are the ones who give us the opportunity to do meaningful work in this space." **MR**

Better Than Ezra Makes Grand Ole Opry Debut



Better Than Ezra perform at the Opry. Photo: Garrett Keafer

Better Than Ezra made their Grand Ole Opry debut last Wednesday (Sept. 24).

The quartet of **Kevin Griffin**, **Tom Drummond**, **Jim Payne** and **Michael Jerome** packed the house and delivered a three-song set of hits. They performed “Good” and “Coyote,” plus a cover of “Never Tear Us Apart” by INXS. They also surprised the audience by welcoming **Jeff Coffin**, saxophonist of **Dave Matthews Band**, to join them for a spirited rendition of “Never Tear Us Apart.”

“It’s such a pleasure to be here,” Griffin shared on stage. “You know we grew up country music fans in Northern Louisiana, so to be here and to be on stage is pretty amazing.” **MR.**

MÕRIAH Makes Grand Ole Opry Debut



Photo: Lorenzo Huerta

MÕRIAH stepped into the circle of the Grand Ole Opry for her debut performance last Friday (Sept. 26). Her debut included a performance of her single “Sombrero” and more.

“The Opry circle never holds just one person—it’s filled with family, friends, coworkers, and all their sacrifices that get you there,” MÕRIAH shares. “On Friday, I held my community close...and thought a lot about my Grandpa, a touring musician in Mexico who traded his trumpet for a busboy apron when he came to the U.S.—a sacrifice that made my music career possible. His box of thank you cards and Opry Debut memorabilia is en route to El Paso, Texas right now! Mil gracias, Grand Ole Opry for helping so many stories shine in that sacred circle.”

MÕRIAH released her duet with **Ana Bárbara**, “Supermujeres,” today (Oct 3).

How Kelly Thomas Brought The Hill Country Flood Benefit To Life [Interview]



Robert Earl Keen & Kelly Thomas. Photo: Erika Goldring

When **Kelly Thomas** left behind a two-decade career in luxury fashion, she never imagined she'd find herself managing one of Texas music's most beloved icons, **Robert Earl Keen**, or organizing a star-studded benefit concert in less than two weeks. But that's exactly where life has taken her.

Thomas' entry into the music industry came unexpectedly, but not without purpose. After years spent in the high-paced world of fashion as a buyer for major department and specialty stores in Dallas, she reached a turning point both personally and professionally.

"I had burned the candle at both ends for many years, both personally and professionally and needed a change," she tells *MusicRow*. During her time in a recovery center, she met Keen.

"He needed some short-term help with a few events he had booked. And what was meant to be a temporary arrangement blossomed into a wonderful working relationship and point of change we both needed to step into the next chapter of our lives."

Though she was new to artist management, Thomas found that her fashion career had equipped her with the tools she needed. "It's another financial business built on and sprung from a creative process. So my skills translated very easily into my new role and industry."

That perfect fit was put to the test this summer, when massive flooding devastated the Texas Hill Country just before Keen was scheduled to perform at Kerrville's Fourth on the River celebration.

"Once we were able to digest the shocking news and shuddering morning phone call, we knew we had to act fast. People needed help, and Robert is the voice of the affected region of Texas." From that urgency, the idea for the benefit concert "[Applause for the Cause](#)" was born.

Starting the next day, Thomas sprang into action, juggling every moving part of the event. "I have never been on my phone more than in those weeks of planning the event," she recalls. "I would have to switch gears from run of show creative planning, to livestream execution, to logistics and sound and light production, to charitable giving organizations."

A key early challenge was selecting the right venue. While they had interest from large partners that could have filled a stadium, Thomas and Keen were focused on keeping the event rooted in the community. "We had to hold the event 'in the Hill Country, and for the Hill Country,'" she said. When **Will Koriath** of Whitewater Amphitheater in New Braunfels offered the space, it felt right.

The artist community responded immediately. "No one shows up for Texas, like Texans," Thomas said. Within days, over 30 artists confirmed their participation, including some of the biggest names in music, including **Tyler Childers**, **Miranda Lambert**, **Jamey Johnson** and more.

One of the defining moments behind the scenes wasn't just the music, but the atmosphere it created. "I overheard multiple artists saying it was the best event they had been to, and how it felt like 'the best family reunion for Texas country music.' Seeing artists shaking hands and hugging those who had not collaborated in years, or making new connections which might breed future partnerships was truly a beautiful thing."

Crucially, the event wasn't just about music, it was about real help. Thomas and Keen chose the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country as the beneficiary due to their direct presence in the area and their ability to respond quickly. "That was our biggest desire, for the money to get to those who needed it, and fast." The Foundation's CEO, **Austin Dickson**, and his small team impressed Thomas with their efficiency and dedication.

Partnerships came together quickly thanks to longtime relationships. One pivotal call was to Buc-ee's owner **Beaver Aplin**. "Robert made the call to his friend, who quickly and without hesitation jumped on board with enthusiasm. It started with their \$1 million pledge and grew from there."

Reflecting on the event, Thomas said the outpouring of support and the final results left her speechless. "It was pure gratitude. To see the results and feel the energy in that amphitheater on the day of the event from artists to patrons, I knew we had done something truly impactful and special no one who was there will forget."

It's clear that for Thomas, both her career change and the flood benefit were about more than just professional milestones. They were about showing up, for her artist, her community, and for the people of the Hill Country when they needed it most. **MR**



Photo: Erika Goldring



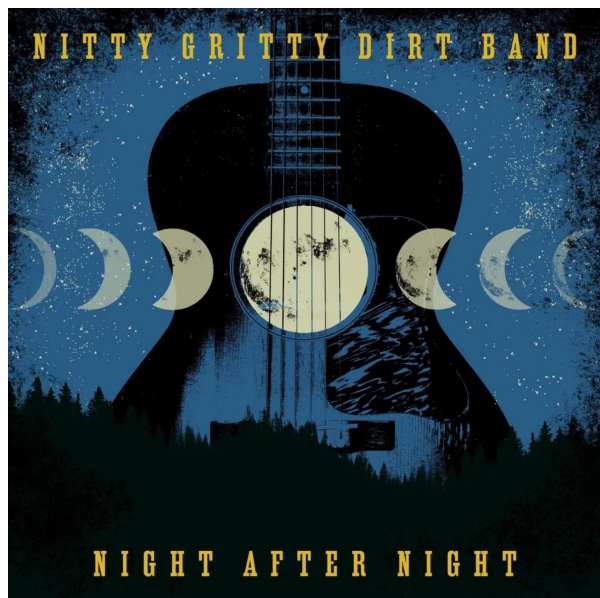
2025
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NEW ISSUE | AVAILABLE NOW



DISClaimer Single Reviews: Nitty Gritty Dirt Band Release 'Catchy Country Rocker'



I can't remember when I enjoyed a listening session more. The reason is that this edition of DISClaimer reviews current country records that are actually country music. Thanks for that, Joshua Hedley, Jake Worthington, Avery Anna, Alex Miller, HARDY and the rest of you fine folks.

It also says something about the depth of our talent pool when Jon Randall, Ray Benson, Shooter Jennings, Alan Jackson, Daniel Tashian, Jerry Salley and Jerry Douglas are names in the credits and not out front. How cool is that?

The Disc of the Day belongs to the legendary, enduring Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. The group may be retiring, but it clearly still has plenty of gas in its tank.

Give a DIScovery Award to Brandon Wisham.

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

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[Weekly Register: Morgan Wallen Dominates Streaming Charts](#)

TOP SONGWRITER CHART

This Week	Last Week	Songwriter's Name	Song(s)	Artist
1	2	Chase McGill	20 Cigarettes Brunette Happen To Me I Got Better It Won't Be Long Miami Straight Line TN	Morgan Wallen Tucker Wetmore Russell Dickerson Morgan Wallen George Birge Morgan Wallen Keith Urban Morgan Wallen
2	1	Riley Green	Don't Mind If I Do	Riley Green (feat. Ella Langley)
3	3	Ryan Vojtesak	Hell At Night Holy Water I Ain't Comin' Back I Got Better I'm The Problem Just In Case Miami Superman TN What I Want	BigXthaPlug (feat. Ella Langley) Marshmello & Jelly Roll Morgan Wallen (feat. Post Malone) Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen (feat. Tate McRae)
4	4	Blake Pendergrass	20 Cigarettes Brunette Heart Of Stone I Got Better Just In Case Miami Superman Wish You Well	Morgan Wallen Tucker Wetmore Jelly Roll Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Vincent Mason
5	5	Morgan Wallen	I Ain't Comin' Back I Got Better I'm The Problem Just In Case Miami Superman TN What I Want	Morgan Wallen (feat. Post Malone) Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen (feat. Tate McRae)
6	6	Josh Miller	20 Cigarettes 3,2,1 Brunette Friday Night Heartbreaker	Morgan Wallen Tucker Wetmore Tucker Wetmore Jon Pardi
7	7	Ernest Keith Smith	I Ain't Comin' Back I Got Better I'm The Problem Just In Case Miami	Morgan Wallen (feat. Post Malone) Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen
8	8	Ben Johnson	All The Way Bar None Not At This Party	BigXthaPlug (feat. Bailey Zimmerman) Jordan Davis Dasha
9	10	Jason DeFord	Amen Hard Fought Hallelujah Heart Of Stone Holy Water	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll Brandon Lake & Jelly Roll Jelly Roll Marshmello & Jelly Roll
10	9	Jessie Jo Dillon	Baggage Friday Night Heartbreaker Happen To Me Wish You Well	Kelsea Ballerini Jon Pardi Russell Dickerson Vincent Mason
11	11	Michael Hardy	Favorite Country Song I Ain't Comin' Back I Got Better Miami	Hardy Morgan Wallen (feat. Post Malone) Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen

This Week	Last Week	Songwriter's Name	Song(s)	Artist
12	12	Chris LaCorte	20 Cigarettes Brunette Happen To Me Wish You Well	Morgan Wallen Tucker Wetmore Russell Dickerson Vincent Mason
13	13	John Byron	After All The Bars Are Closed Just In Case Superman TN What I Want	Thomas Rhett Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen (feat. Tate McRae)
14	14	Hunter Phelps	Bar None	Jordan Davis
15	15	Lydia Vaughan	Bar None	Jordan Davis
16	16	Luke Combs	Back In The Saddle	Luke Combs
17	17	Dan Isbell	Back In The Saddle	Luke Combs
18	18	Jonathan Singleton	Back In The Saddle	Luke Combs
19	19	Neil Medley	House Again Sober	Hudson Westbrook Hudson Westbrook
20	20	Hudson Westbrook	House Again Sober	Hudson Westbrook Hudson Westbrook
21	23	Dan Alley	House Again	Hudson Westbrook
22	24	Scooter Carusoe	Hands Of Time	Eric Church
23	25	Eric Church	Hands Of Time	Eric Church
24	26	Jacob Kasher	After All The Bars Are Closed Just In Case What I Want	Thomas Rhett Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen (feat. Tate McRae)
25	21	Carson Chamberlain	Good Times & Tan Lines South Of Sanity	Zach Top Zach Top
26	22	Zach Top	Good Times & Tan Lines South Of Sanity	Zach Top Zach Top
27	27	Ty Myers	Ends Of The Earth	Ty Myers
28	30	Joe Reeves	I Got Better What I Want	Morgan Wallen Morgan Wallen (feat. Tate McRae)
29	28	Megan Moroney	6 Months Later You Had To Be There	Megan Moroney Megan Moroney (feat. Kenny Chesney)
30	29	Ben Williams	6 Months Later You Had To Be There	Megan Moroney Megan Moroney (feat. Kenny Chesney)
31	35	Zach Crowell	Heart Of Stone	Jelly Roll
32	36	Shy Carter	Heart Of Stone	Jelly Roll
33	32	Jeremy Spillman	What Kinda Man	Parker McCollum
34	33	Parker McCollum	What Kinda Man	Parker McCollum
35	34	Natalie Hemby	What Kinda Man	Parker McCollum
36	37	Trannie Anderson	It Won't Be Long Somewhere Over Laredo	George Birge Lainey Wilson
37	31	Wyatt McCubbin	Good Times & Tan Lines	Zach Top
38	38	Collins Obinna Chibueze	Amen Good News	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll Shaboozey
39	39	Sean Cook	Amen Good News	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll Shaboozey
40	40	Nevin Sastry	Amen Good News	Shaboozey & Jelly Roll Shaboozey
41	41	Russell Dickerson	Happen To Me	Russell Dickerson
42	42	Robert Hazard	Happen To Me	Russell Dickerson
43	44	Beau Bailey	Favorite Country Song Sober Stay Country Or Die Tryin'	Hardy Hudson Westbrook Blake Shelton
44	43	Jeremy Stover	The Fall Time's Ticking	Cody Johnson Justin Moore & Dierks Bentley
45	53	Hunter Huff	Darlin'	Chase Matthew

This Week	Last Week	Songwriter's Name	Song(s)	Artist
46	54	Ciaran Wilkie	Darlin'	Chase Matthew
47	55	Alex Maxwell	Darlin'	Chase Matthew
48	56	Chase Matthew	Darlin'	Chase Matthew
49	45	Ashley Gorley	Favorite Country Song Me & A Beer Not At This Party TN	Hardy Chris Janson Dasha Morgan Wallen
50	49	Summer Overstreet	3,2,1	Tucker Wetmore
51	50	Jordan Reynolds	3,2,1	Tucker Wetmore
52	51	David Mescon	6 Months Later	Megan Moroney
53	52	Rob Hatch	6 Months Later	Megan Moroney
54	46	Michael Pollack	Good News	Shaboozey
55	47	Jake Torrey	Good News	Shaboozey
56	48	Sam Romans	Good News	Shaboozey
57	57	Jackson Dean	Heavens To Betsy	Jackson Dean
58	58	Driver Williams	Heavens To Betsy	Jackson Dean
59	59	Benjy Davis	Heavens To Betsy	Jackson Dean
60	220	John Morgan	How Far Does A Goodbye Go Kid Myself	Jason Aldean John Morgan

CALENDAR

Single/Track Releases And Radio Add Dates

October 3

The Red Clay Strays/People Hatin'/RCA Records
for KING & COUNTRY (feat. Taylor Hill)/World on Fire/Curb Records
Tyler Nance/Shovel/Santa Anna Nashville
Ryan Charles (feat. Randy Savvy)/Shiny Stones/River House Artists
Owen Riegling/Taillight This Town/Big Loud Records/Universal Music Canada
Emerson Day/This House Won't Fall
Elijah Scott/Stay Forever/Santa Anna Nashville
Noah Brigden/Seventeen/Santa Anna Nashville
Zach Smith/Where You At?/Santa Anna Nashville
Kaleb Sanders/Heartbreak Carousel/Red Street Records
Drew Parker/Blame Jesus
Harper Grace/Take It To The Grave/Curb Records
Kade Hoffman/Echos
MÖRIAH & Ana Bárbara/Supermujeres
Kyle Jenkins/Need You Here/Santa Anna Nashville
Faith Schueler & Levi Hummon/Love Me To Pieces
Calamity Jane (feat. Jake Fisher)/Playing With Fire
Seth Flurry/Nothing Short Of Blessed/Santa Anna Nashville
Hailee Taylor/Can't Say That

October 6

Ashley Cooke/the hell you are/Big Loud Records
Aaron Watson/Pontiac (So Tell Me Momma)
Mark209/Family/MCMG
Tori Rose/Easy Going Girl/Rose Thorn Music, LLC

Album/EP Releases

October 3

Waylon Jennings (posthumously)/Songbird/Son of Jessi/Thirty Tigers
Luke Combs/The Prequel/Sony Music Nashville
Ink/BIG BUSKIN'/Big Loud Records/Electric Feel Records
Dierks Bentley/BROKEN BRANCHES EXTENDED/Capitol Records Nashville
Ole 60/Smokestack Town
Pat Barrett/I've Got A Fire/Bowyer & Bow/CCMG
Colby Acuff/Enjoy The Ride
CORY MARKS/Sorry For Nothing Volume 2/Better Noise Music
Noah Floersch/Francis Aquarius/Concord Records
Natalie Grant/Christmas/Capitol CMG
Emily Ann Roberts/Memory Lane/RECORDS/Sony Music Nashville
Annie Bosko/California Cowgirl/QHMG/Stone Country Records
Whitney Fenimore/State of Being
Trace Nixon/Hand Me Down Name/Charlotte Avenue Entertainment

CALENDAR

Industry Events

October 5-7

IEBA 2025

October 6

55th annual Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame Gala

October 7

56th Annual GMA Dove Awards

Upcoming Nashville Concerts

October 3

The Lumineers/The Automatic World Tour/Bridgestone Arena

Brantley Gilbert/The Tattoos Tour/FirstBank Amphitheater

Cuco/Ridin' Tour/Brooklyn Bowl

Andy Bell of Erasure/Ten Crowns Tour/The Basement East

The Dare/EXIT/IN

Juan Waters & Tristen/Cannery Hall (Row One Stage)

October 4

Loud Luxury/Five Star Dive Bar Tour/The Pinnacle

Alex G/Ryman Auditorium

Peach Pit/Marathon Music Works

Kneecap/Brooklyn Bowl

Madison Ryann Ward/The Standing Tall Tour/Cannery Hall (Main Stage)

Hollow Coves/The Basement East

October 5

Melissa Etheridge & Indigo Girls/Yes We Are Tour/Ryman Auditorium

Mipso/Farewell For Now/The Basement East

JONAH MARAIS/HEARTS BACK HOME TOUR/City Winery

October 6

Ziggy Marley & Burning Spear/Do The Reggae Tour/Ryman Auditorium

Wisp/If Not Winter Tour/The Basement East

October 7

Judas Priest & Alice Cooper/FirstBank Amphitheater

Various Artists/Wags & Walks Benefit Concert/Skydeck

Felly/For the Crows Tour/The Basement East

The Frights/Ready When You Are Tour/Cannery Hall (The Mil)

This Will Destroy You/EXIT/IN

Born Ruffians/The Blue Room