

# [***Country Music's Popularity Is at an All-Time High***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BFV-J4D1-JBR6-951J-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** Country isn't a new genre of music but it's having a new lease on life thanks to a variety of exciting artists, including Beyoncé.

**Body**

Country music is enjoying a huge resurgence this year—and it's also showing signs that it could become more inclusive.

With both Beyoncé and Lana Del Rey having announced that they're releasing country albums and country songs regularly going viral on [*TikTok*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/tiktok?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), it's safe to say that the genre is more popular than ever before.

During a Verizon ad that ran during Super Bowl LVIII, Beyoncé revealed that [*she was dropping her new album*](https://www.newsweek.com/beyonce-teases-country-album-1868928?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) on March 29. A short time later, a teaser clip was uploaded to the performer's [*Instagram*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/instagram?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) account before she released two songs, "Texas Hold 'Em" and "16 Carriages."

Then in February, she became the first Black female artist ever to achieve a number-one country song. The Grammy-winning artist claimed the record-breaking feat with her single "Texas Hold 'Em" after it debuted at No. 1.

Before Beyoncé had shared her news, Del Rey revealed that she too would be releasing a country LP in September titled *Lasso*. At a pre-Grammys event honoring producer Jack Antonoff in January, Del Rey reaffirmed that an industry shift is here. "If you can't already tell by our award winners and our performers, the music business is going country. We're going country. It's happening," she said.

Then, country music artist Kacey Musgraves revealed at the 2024 Grammy Awards on February 4 that her eagerly awaited new album, *Deeper Well*, would be available on March 15. The charts are also full of exciting new country and folk artists, including the likes of Noah Kahan, Lainey Wilson and Zach Bryan.

*Newsweek* contacted Beyoncé, Del Rey, Musgraves, Kahan and Wilson for comment via email Tuesday. Bryan declined to comment.

Country music was one of 2023's fastest growing streaming genres in the U.S., according to industry data firm Luminate, with country on-demand audio streams exceeding 20 billion, a 23.7 percent increase over the prior year.

It's safe to say that country music is taking over but the genre isn't new, as it has an often debated history. It draws influences from both African and European musical traditions but today, it is often largely associated with white people. This has been linked to record companies attempting to segregate the music industry, which dates back to the 1920s. Fans online have theorized that Beyoncé's latest projects—including her house album *Renaissance*—are about [*claiming back music created by Black people*](https://www.newsweek.com/beyonce-rock-n-roll-internet-country-album-1869399?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

**Black Artists Bring More Diverse Audience**

Singer/songwriter Kaia Kater told *Newsweek* that country music has long been exclusionary, but the likes of Beyoncé are helping to change that—and it's "absolutely" had a positive impact on her own career.

She believes country music is becoming more popular thanks to Black artists, who are bringing in a more diverse audience base.

"Historically, country music has been a white space and an exclusionary space at that. This is in direct contrast to the little-known but increasingly talked about fact that country music actually began with Black people. And Beyoncé making a country album only solidifies this fact," she said.

"On 'Texas Hold 'Em' you can hear Rhiannon Giddens playing the clawhammer banjo—I believe this was an intentional inclusion on Beyoncé's part because the banjo is originally a West African instrument. I'm a Black banjo player and songwriter so this is particularly pertinent to a lot of the work I've been doing. It all ties in together—it's a re-awakening of sorts."

She added: "More people are starting to understand that country music is a genre that belongs to everyone. And for Black country and folk musicians specifically, the question doesn't start with 'why are you playing this [white] music [if you're Black]?' It changes to 'Tell me about the Black history and diverse future of this music.' Because Black country musicians have always been here, if just slightly out of frame and focus."

Country musician Ryan Cassata, who was the first openly transgender musician to play on the Vans Warped Tour, has also noticed this change.

He told *Newsweek* that certain country artists are taking back the genre for "queer people, trans people and all minorities."

"The future of country music is queer. The future of country music is trans. The future of country music is black. The future of country music belongs to minorities and the oppressed because it was an essential part of its past. Amiri Baraka makes this clear in his historical book 'The Blues People,' describing that the roots of all popular American music originate from the African diaspora," he said.

Cassata believes country music has been overrun with racism, homophobia and transphobia, which he puts down to the ***politics*** of the "white, straight, cisgender men" who dominate the genre.

"Making music in this genre, to call out oppression, bigotry and hate, is powerful because we are claiming a genre that the oppressors mistakenly think they own," he continued. "Our voices need to be heard, and country music, one of the most popular genres of music, is a powerful way to share our experiences. I am proud to participate in this genre for those reasons."

**Breaking Down Musical Barriers**

Damon Whiteside, the CEO of the Academy of Country Music, has an idea why country music is seeing such a resurgence. He's also noticed a shift in the genre, which he believes is making it more inclusive and creative.

"Country music songs old and new have found success over the years thanks to the genre's focus on world-class songwriting, musicianship, and honest relatability," he told *Newsweek*.

"The incredible stories that country songs have been telling for decades are what makes the genre so relatable to every type of listener and have helped country music continue to reach and engage broad audiences all over the world.

"We're seeing country music embraced by the masses like never before thanks to a new crop of superstars and songwriters that are breaking down musical barriers and expressing themselves in fresh and dynamic ways. The traditional genre lines are as blurry as ever to fans, and people are experiencing that country music is for everyone, no matter your background or where you're from."

While country music has history and appeal in certain parts of the U.S., it has become more mainstream in recent years, with an increasing number of new fans and artists.

One person who has noticed this is country music artist Blanco Brown. Brown's debut single "The Git Up" was released in 2019 and has over 330 million streams on Spotify. The song peaked at number 14 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and was certified 4× Platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).

Lainey Wilson [*posted a YouTube video*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeUBwpx8FEg) with Brown to teach people how to do the "The Git Up" challenge, which was a dance routine that went along with his popular song. The challenge went viral on TikTok and helped his song increase in popularity, which has been featured in over 130,000 videos on the video platform.

"Country Music is at an all-time high! The fact that my music invites others to do their music is top-tier. It was the love of country music that inspired me to attract others with Trailer Trap," Brown told *Newsweek*, with the term "Trailer Trap" referring to his own blend of hip-hop and country.

"The bridge is being crossed and it appears to be closing the gap for all to enjoy the sweetness of Good Ol' Country Music! So let the 'Sunshine Shine' on country music!"

**Country Music Reflects Our Struggles**

Diana D'Angelo, the CEO of Breaking Creatives Agency, is a publicist who specializes in music and entertainment. During her career, she has worked with a variety of country artists, including [*Dolly Parton*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/dolly-parton?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), Jessi Alexander, Jon Randall and Reckless Kelly.

She told *Newsweek* that the increase in country music's popularity is due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Country music is relatable content. We see reflections of our own struggles, our own triumphs, and our relentless pursuit of a better tomorrow," D'Angelo said.

"Many of us can relate to lost love and wanting to key someone's car. Many of us know the feeling of working our tails off for a few bucks. After the pandemic, followed by so many social injustices and current wars around the world, maybe we are leaning into country music because it allows us to take refuge in the simplicity of tales spun from the heartland, where honesty reigns supreme and vulnerability is celebrated. Maybe this is our collective healing era—one can hope."

Tammy Donham is an associate professor at Middle Tennessee State University who is an expert in country music and music marketing. For nearly 17 years she worked for the Country Music Association, where she rose through various positions, including vice president of marketing.

While she doesn't disagree with D'Angelo, she has attributed the genre's increase in popularity to young people.

"Country music is one of the fastest-growing genres in the U.S., fueled in large part by younger fans," she told *Newsweek*. "Artists and industry insiders across genres are certainly taking note of the strength and appeal of country to reach and attract music fans."

The fact that country music's evolving consumption trends are being shaped by the listening habits of Gen Z and millennials can also be proven by statistics from TikTok. The video-sharing platform has a large impact on the music industry as it has become a hub for labels to promote new releases and back catalog tracks.

At the time of writing, the hashtag #CountryTok has 952.5 million views on the social media app.

"Fans are using country music to be their soundtracks on the platform for major life moments ... The community aspect of country music is always front and center with the genre and that is still the case when translating to the TikTok community," a TikTok spokesperson told *Newsweek*.

The hashtag #BlackCountryMusic has also been growing on the platform. The spokesperson added: "[It] has become a place for Black country artists to build their profile and share their music with a global audience. With over 1 million views of the hashtag #BlackCountryMusic, Black country artists are increasingly finding a home on TikTok."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2355683/country-music-has-never-been-more-popular.jpg)

**Graphic**

Country Music Has Never Been More Popular

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