

CMT News

Summer 2011 Recap: Luke Bryan, Pistol Annies and More

Trace Adkins, Eric Church, Blake Shelton Also Offer New Music

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Luke Bryan

Over the course of the summer, more than 100 new albums crossed my desk. And, yes, I listened to each one. However, I didn't have time to write about all of them when they came out. So, before the season slips away entirely, I'd like to share some songs that made my summer soundtrack, including familiar country stars, longtime Americana favorites and newcomers who are worth the attention.

Let's start with the big names. [Trace Adkins'](#) insightful "Proud to Be Here" recalls his tougher times -- playing for tips, spending too much on beer -- and acknowledges the guardian angel that's blessed him all these years. Although he's known for his goodtime hits, [Luke Bryan](#) tones down the goofiness on "Tailgate Blues," which captures the essence of a sad Southern night.

[Eric Church](#) smokes another kind of smoke when his ex-lover gets hitched. To borrow the title, she got a rock and ... "I'm Getting Stoned." Meanwhile, [Jake](#)

[Owen's](#) "The One That Got Away" is an ode to a summer love that fades with the season.

If you're curious about new albums by the [Pistol Annies](#), [Blake Shelton](#), [George Strait](#) or [Chris Young](#), check out the title tracks. Pistol Annies' sultry "Hell on Heels" proves that [Miranda Lambert](#), [Ashley Monroe](#) and [Angaleena Presley](#) are a force to be reckoned with. Lambert also harmonizes on Shelton's "Red River Blue," a lovely breakup ballad. Strait co-wrote his latest upbeat single (his 84th Top 10 hit) with his son Bubba and songwriter Dean Dillon. Finally, Young's twangy "Neon" gets its buzz from the glowing sign in the bar window.

For country stars on the rise, check out the [Eli Young Band's](#) "Even if It Breaks Your Heart," [Randy Montana's](#) "Back of My Heart," [Ashton Shepherd's](#) "Rory's Radio" and [Sunny Sweeney's](#) "Staying's Worse Than Leaving," which are all inspired, in their own way, by a look in the rearview mirror.

Country stars are popping up on other people's albums as well. Listen for [Zac Brown](#) on [Sonia Leigh's](#) sing-along "Bar," [Vince Gill](#) on Keb Mo's clever "My Baby's Telling Lies" and [Sugarland](#) on Matt Nathanson's dramatic "Run." Also, don't miss [Pam Tillis](#) on [Blackie & the Rodeo Kings'](#) "This Town Has Moved Away" and [Lee Ann Womack](#) on [Stoney LaRue's](#) "Travelin' Kind."

If you've been listening to country music for a long time, you'll be happy to hear some old favorites. [Suzy Bogguss'](#) folk album delivers pleasing campfire classics like "Get Along Little Dogies" and "Red River Valley." [Glen Campbell's](#) latest album features the poignant farewell song, "Any Trouble," while [Ronnie Milsap](#) and [Connie Smith](#) keep on plugging with new tunes like "Almost Mine" and "Long Line of Heartaches," respectively.

For fans of '80s country, seek out [Michael Martin Murphey's](#) "Texas Cowboy," [Ricky Skaggs'](#) "Heartbroke" (newly recorded in a bluegrass style) and [Gene Watson](#) and [Rhonda Vincent's](#) "Out of Hand."

In the fall, Nashville hosts the [Americana Music Festival and Conference](#), as well as the [IBMA's World of Bluegrass](#). To get up to speed, here are a few playlists inspired by the genres.

For bluegrass fans, add these picks to your mix: [Darin and Brook Aldridge's](#) "Lonely Ends Where Love Begins," [Blue Highway's](#) "Sounds Like Home," [Dale Ann Bradley's](#) "Leaving Kentucky," [Cumberland River's](#) "Harlan Man," [Dehlia Low's](#) "Ravens & Crows," [Rodney Dillard & the Dillard Band's](#) "Don't Wait for the Hearse to Take You to Church" and [Elephant Revival's](#) philosophical "What Is Time?"

Other favorites include [the Greencards'](#) bright "Adelaide," [Jim Lauderdale's](#) "Reason and Rhyme," [Michelle Nixon & Drive's](#) "Your Kind of Love," [NuBlu's](#) "Other Woman's Blues" (an answer song to [Dolly Parton's](#) "Jolene"), [Donna Ulisse's](#) "An Easy Climb," [April Verch's](#) "Indian Ate a Woodchuck," [Paul Williams & the Victory Trio's](#) spiritual "Satisfied" and [Robin & Linda Williams'](#) "Stonewall Country."

Meanwhile, Americana listeners might enjoy [Paul Burch's](#) "Words of Love," [Kasey Chambers'](#) "Little Bird," [John Hiatt's](#) "Til I Get My Lovin' Back," [Robert Earl Keen's](#) "I Gotta Go," [NRBQ's](#) "Keep This Love Goin'," [John Oates'](#) "Dance Hall Girls," [Jimmie Vaughan's](#) "I Ain't Never" and [Gillian Welch's](#) "The Way It Will Be." Also check out new, live versions of "One of You" by the [Bottle Rockets](#), "L.A. Freeway" by [Guy Clark](#), "Horseshoe Lounge" by [Slaid Cleaves](#) and "Perfume" by the [Old 97's](#).

The Texas music scene continues to offer an array of interesting music, from Red Dirt to folk to blues to straight-up country. Some recommended tunes coming from the Lone Star State this summer include [Ariel Abshire's](#) "The Great Pretender," [Back Porch Mary's](#) "Drove Her to Drinkin'," [Beck & Cauthen's](#) "The Country," [Cody Canada & the Departed's](#) "Staring Down the Sun," [Jason Cassidy's](#) "Why Not Now," [Suzanna Choffel's](#) "Hold of the Night," [Charlie Faye's](#) "Whirlwind," [Kevin Fowler's](#) "Chippin' Away," [Philip Gibbs'](#) "Gallows Orphan," [Gary Nicholson's](#) "Listen to Willie," [Rich O'Toole's](#) "Kiss of a Liar," [Sarah Pierce's](#) "Twenty Dollar Silver Ring" and the [Wheeler Brothers'](#) "Mississippi."

If you're interested in discovering singer-songwriters, these tracks might introduce you to a new favorite: [Zee Avi's](#) "Siboh Kitak Nangis," [Ray Bonneville](#), "Funny 'Bout Love," [Ange Boxall's](#) "The Salt Plains," [Paul Brady's](#) "Living the Mystery," [David Adam Byrnes'](#) "She Only Wanted Flowers," [Grayson Capps'](#) "Highway 41," [Chris Cook's](#) slow-burning "Get Over the One" and [Jonny Corndawg's](#) "Night Rider."

Other cool singer-songwriter tracks include [John Doe's](#) "Lucky Penny" (with guest [Patty Griffin](#)), [Angela Easterling's](#) "A Married