



**2015 AWARDS VOTING CRITERIA**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

AWARDS SHOW VOTING PROCEDURES .....	1
ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR .....	2
MALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR .....	2
FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR .....	2
VOCAL DUO OF THE YEAR.....	2
VOCAL GROUP OF THE YEAR.....	2
NEW ARTIST OF THE YEAR .....	2
TRIPLE CROWN AWARD.....	3
ALBUM OF THE YEAR.....	3
SINGLE RECORD OF THE YEAR.....	3
SONG OF THE YEAR.....	4
SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR.....	4
VIDEO OF THE YEAR.....	4
VOCAL EVENT OF THE YEAR.....	4
CASINO OF THE YEAR - SMALL CAPACITY.....	5
CASINO OF THE YEAR - MEDIUM CAPACITY.....	5
NIGHTCLUB OF THE YEAR .....	5
VENUE OF THE YEAR – SMALL CAPACITY.....	5
VENUE OF THE YEAR – MEDIUM CAPACITY.....	5
VENUE OF THE YEAR – LARGE CAPACITY .....	5
DON ROMEO TALENT BUYER OF THE YEAR.....	5
PROMOTER OF THE YEAR.....	6
BASS PLAYER OF THE YEAR.....	6
DRUMMER OF THE YEAR.....	6
GUITAR PLAYER OF THE YEAR.....	6
PIANO/KEYBOARDS PLAYER OF THE YEAR.....	6
SPECIALTY INSTRUMENT(S) PLAYER OF THE YEAR.....	7
STEEL GUITAR PLAYER OF THE YEAR.....	7
AUDIO ENGINEER OF THE YEAR.....	7
PRODUCER OF THE YEAR.....	7
RADIO AWARDS.....	8
NOT BEING AWARDED IN 2015.....	8-11

## **AWARDS SHOW VOTING PROCEDURES**

### **EFFECTIVE FOR 2015 ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS SHOW**

The following are the official criteria and voting procedures used by the Academy of Country Music (ACM) to determine its annual award winners. The criteria and voting procedures are set forth by the ACM Board of Directors ("the Board") in accordance with the bylaws, the Academy recognizes that criteria will constantly be evolving with the introduction of new methods of introducing and promoting artists and their music to the mainstream and may be amended from time to time as the Board deems appropriate in the best interest of country music. Any disputes shall be resolved by the Chairman of the Board in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

#### **VOTING PROCEDURE**

The voting procedure shall comply with all legal requirements and any requirements of any network airing the awards show. Disputes as to voting procedure shall be resolved by a majority vote of the Board. Ballots will be tabulated by an independent accounting firm. ACM members will vote via the Internet. The voting eligibility period is November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014 for all awards, with the exception of the ACM Radio Awards where the voting eligibility period is January 1, 2014 to December 8, 2014.

#### **NOMINATION ROUND:**

The professional membership will submit one nomination in each of the following categories: Entertainer of the Year, Male Vocalist of the Year, Female Vocalist of the Year, Vocal Duo of the Year, Vocal Group of the Year, Album of the Year, Single Record of the Year and Vocal Event of the Year. The professional membership will submit two nominations in the following category: New Artist of the Year (see "New Artist of the Year" criteria on page 2).

The Top 20 vote getters will go before a review committee to ensure the entry meets all eligibility criteria (see "criteria" below). The Top 20 vote getters must also have achieved a minimum of 2% or more of the vote within the respective category.

#### **SECOND ROUND:**

In the second round, up to two (2) votes may be cast in each category for the category to be counted. The five (5) nominees receiving the most votes in each category will be placed on the third ballot, with the exception of New Artist of the Year where the top eight (8) vote getters from the nomination round will compete via the Great American County (GAC) fan vote (online), combined with the ACM professional membership vote, to determine the final three (3) nominees. In the case of a tie, the additional nominees will be included on the third and final ballot.

#### **FINAL ROUND:**

In the final round, only one (1) vote will be cast in each category. The nominee receiving the most votes in each category will be deemed the winner. In the case of a tie, all winners will receive an award.

#### **ADDITIONAL CATEGORIES VOTED ON THE THIRD BALLOT**

A Professional Panel will submit five (5) nominees to be approved by the Board for the third and final ballot in the following categories; Song of the Year, Video of the Year, Casino of the Year – Small Capacity, Casino of the Year – Medium Capacity, Nightclub of the Year, Venue of the Year – Small Capacity, Venue of the Year – Medium Capacity, Venue of the Year – Large Capacity, Don Romeo Talent Buyer of the Year and Promoter of the Year, based on the criteria for each category (see "criteria" below). The nominee receiving the most votes in each category will be deemed the winner. In the case of a tie, all winners will receive an award.

#### **STUDIO RECORDING BALLOT (FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE MUSICIAN-BANDLEADER-INSTRUMENTALIST (MBI) BALLOT)**

The Studio Recording ballot is voted on by only those members classified in the Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist category, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category].

A Professional Panel will submit five (5) nominees to be approved by the Board for the Studio Recording ballot in the following categories: Bass Player of the Year, Drummer of the Year, Guitar Player of the Year, Piano/Keyboards Player of the Year, Specialty Instrument(s) Player of the Year, Steel Guitar Player of the Year, Audio Engineer of the Year and Producer of

the Year. The nominee receiving the most votes in each category will be deemed the winner. In the case of a tie, all winners will receive an award.

#### **SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR BALLOT**

The Songwriter of the Year award is voted on by only those members classified in the following categories: Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist, Composer, Music Publisher/PRO, Record Company, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category]. A Professional Panel will submit five (5) nominees to be approved by the Board for the third and final ballot. The nominee receiving the most votes in the category will be deemed the winner. In the case of a tie, all winners will receive an award.

#### **ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to the individual, duo or group who showed the most overall success in the country music industry during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, success at radio, sales of pre-recorded music, success of music videos, vocal performances, live concert ticket sales, artistic merit, appearances on television, appearances in films, songwriting, success in digital media, and contributions to the country music industry. The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The final nominees are voted on by the ACM professional membership with the winner being determined by a combination of votes from the professional membership of the ACM and fan voting (online and/or text).

#### **MALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding individual male vocalist in the country music industry during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, success at radio, sales of pre-recorded music, success in digital media, live concert ticket sales and vocal performances. The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The winner shall be determined by a vote of the ACM professional membership.

#### **FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding individual female vocalist in the country music industry during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, success at radio, sales of pre-recorded music, success in digital media, live concert ticket sales and vocal performances. The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The winner shall be determined by a vote of the ACM professional membership.

#### **VOCAL DUO OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding duo featuring at least one vocalist in the country music industry during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, success at radio, sales of pre-recorded music, success in digital media, live concert ticket sales and vocal performances. The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The winner shall be determined by a vote of the ACM professional membership.

In the event that the Board of Directors determines that there are not enough nominees in this category in any particular year, this category may be merged with the Vocal Group by the Board, and shall be called Vocal Duo or Group of the Year.

#### **VOCAL GROUP OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding group featuring at least one vocalist in the country music industry during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, success at radio, sales of pre-recorded music, success in digital media, live concert ticket sales and vocal performances. The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The winner shall be determined by a vote of the ACM professional membership.

In the event that the Board of Directors determines that there are not enough nominees in this category in any particular year, this category may be merged with the Vocal Duo by the Board, and shall be called Vocal Duo or Group of the Year.

#### **NEW ARTIST OF THE YEAR**

The Board of Directors may elect to give out this award from time to time, in lieu of, or in addition to, the New Male Vocalist, New Female Vocalist and New Vocal Duo or Group, or New Solo Vocalist and New Vocal Duo or New Vocal Group by a majority vote of

the Board of Directors. **For the 2015 awards show, the Board of Directors elected to give an overall New Artist of the Year award in lieu of New Male Vocalist, New Female Vocalist and New Vocal Duo or Group.**

This award is presented to an outstanding male vocalist, female vocalist, vocal duo or vocal group in the country music industry who gains either initial fame or significantly greater recognition, through efforts surrounding the promotion of a debut or sophomore album, during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The artist(s) must have success in digital media; in addition to having charted a single record in the Top 40 on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or selling 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period. (Any albums self-released by an artist through an independent label that the artist owns and operates may not be counted as a debut or sophomore album, unless it produces a Top 40 single record reported by Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or sells 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period.) The top eight (8) vote getters determined by a nomination ballot, subject to the approval of the Board, will be considered semi-finalists, with the final three (3) nominees being determined by a combination of votes from the ACM professional membership and fan voting (online). The winner is determined by a combination of votes from the ACM professional membership and fan voting (online).

Any artist(s) that previously served (or currently serving) as lead vocalists for, or otherwise fronted duos or groups that have sold 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible for the this category. Additionally, any artist(s) who gained initial fame as a solo vocalist, vocal duo or vocal group in another genre selling 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible in this category.

An artist may be a nominee two times in a three-year period. Once an artist releases the lead single from a third studio album, they will no longer be eligible in this category. If an artist is a winner in the New Male Vocalist, New Female Vocalist, New Solo Vocalist, New Vocal Duo, New Vocal Group or New Vocal Duo or Group categories, their first year on a ballot, they will not be eligible in any New categories again. Any artist who has previously won the award for Entertainer, Male Vocalist, Female Vocalist, Vocal Duo or Vocal Group of the Year is ineligible for a New Artist nomination.

#### **TRIPLE CROWN**

This award is presented to an artist, duo or group upon receiving the New Artist *or* New Male Vocalist *or* New Female Vocalist *or* New Solo Vocalist *or* New Vocal Duo *or* New Vocal Group *or* New Vocal Duo or Group **and** Male Vocalist *or* Female Vocalist *or* Vocal Duo *or* Vocal Group *or* Vocal Duo or Group **and** Entertainer of the Year awards.

The Board decides when and where the recipient will be honored with this award (not always an annual award).

#### **ALBUM OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to the primary artist(s), producer(s) and record company of an outstanding country music album released during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. An album is defined as a unified released body of work with a minimum of either seven (7) full-length musical works and/or thirty (30) minutes in length. The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The winner shall be determined by a vote of the ACM professional membership.

An album is considered released on the first available date that the material can be possessed by a consumer via a purchase in its entirety and/or streamed legally in its entirety by a royalty-generating service. If the album was released during the two (2) prior eligibility periods, but achieved its largest annual sales during the eligibility period according to SoundScan, it is eligible unless it has appeared on a final ACM ballot in this category.

To be eligible, a minimum of 51% of the standard edition of the album must contain songs that have not been previously released by the artist prior to thirty (30) days from the album's release date. "Best Of" and "Greatest Hits" albums are ineligible.

Only the standard edition of an album may be submitted for eligibility, as determined by the record company. Once an album is nominated in the final round, it may not be nominated in alternate configurations for future voting.

#### **SINGLE RECORD OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to the artist(s), producer(s) and record company of an outstanding country music single record during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, success at radio, record sales, success in digital media and impact of the single record on consumers and the country music industry. The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The winner shall be determined by a vote of the ACM professional membership.



Any single record released and achieving a Top 20 charted position on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the eligibility period is eligible. If the single was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest Top 20 charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible unless it has appeared on a final ACM ballot in this category.

#### **SONG OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to the songwriter(s), publisher(s), and artist(s) of an outstanding country music song during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, success at radio, record sales, success in digital media and impact of the song on consumers and the country music industry with emphasis on the creative integrity of the song. A Professional Panel of one (1) representative from each Membership Class, one (1) representative from each Performing Rights Organization (PRO), and three (3) established songwriters will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the final ballot once approved by the Board. The winner shall be determined by a vote of the ACM professional membership.

Any song released reaching its highest charted position on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the eligibility period is eligible. If the song was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible unless it has appeared on a final ACM ballot in this category.

#### **SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an individual known predominately as a songwriter, selected by a Professional Panel of judges composed of songwriters, publishers, producers, and performing rights organization (PRO) representatives. The Panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the final ballot once approved by the Board. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, a commercially released single crediting the songwriter that charted on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014.

If the single was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible, unless it appeared on a final ACM ballot. The winner shall be determined by a vote of ACM members classified in the following categories; Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist, Composer, Music Publisher/PRO, Record Company, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category].

#### **VIDEO OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to the producer(s), director(s) and artist(s) performing in an outstanding country music video during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. Emphasis shall be placed on creativity, production, visual appeal and impact on consumers and the country music industry. The winner shall be determined by a vote of the ACM professional membership.

A Professional Panel from the video/production industry whose members are approved by the ACM officers will submit the final nominees, which will be placed on the final ballot once approved by the Board. The Panel will choose the final nominees from a pool of eligible videos submitted by record labels, as well as any other country music video that the panel deems worthy for consideration based on its artistic merit. If the video was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its biggest impact during the eligibility period, it is eligible unless it has appeared on a final ACM ballot in this category.

#### **VOCAL EVENT OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to the artist(s), producer(s) and record company of an outstanding country music vocal event single record during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, success at radio, record sales, success in digital media, video exposure and artistic merit of the single. The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The winner shall be determined by a vote of the ACM professional membership.

Any vocal event single record released and achieving a Top 50 charted position in Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the eligibility period is eligible. If the vocal event single record was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest Top 50 charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible unless it has appeared on a final ACM ballot in this category. To be eligible, the vocal event must be a collaboration between two or more artists who do not normally perform together and are all credited on the album track listing.

In the event that the Board of Directors determines that there are not enough nominees in this category in any particular year, this category may not be awarded.

## OFF-CAMERA AWARDS

### INDUSTRY AWARDS

VOTED ON BY THE PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP OF THE ACM IN THE THIRD AND FINAL ROUND OF VOTING

#### CASINO OF THE YEAR – SMALL CAPACITY

This award is presented to an outstanding casino, with a maximum capacity of 4,000 seats, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The casino must have bought or promoted at least five (5) country concerts/dates during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014, be in good standing with all agents and help promote country ticket sales. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category.

#### CASINO OF THE YEAR – MEDIUM CAPACITY

This award is presented to an outstanding casino, with a capacity of 4,001 to 11,000 seats, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The casino must have bought or promoted at least four (4) country concerts/dates during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014, be in good standing with all agents and help promote country ticket sales. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category.

#### NIGHTCLUB OF THE YEAR

This award is presented to an outstanding country music nightclub, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The nightclub must have bought or promoted at least ten (10) country concerts/dates during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014, be in good standing with all agents and help promote country ticket sales. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category.

#### VENUE OF THE YEAR – SMALL CAPACITY

This award is presented to an outstanding venue, with a maximum capacity of 4,000 seats, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The venue must have bought or promoted at least five (5) country concerts/dates during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014, be in good standing with all agents and help promote country ticket sales. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category.

#### VENUE OF THE YEAR – MEDIUM CAPACITY

This award is presented to an outstanding venue, with a capacity of 4,001 to 11,000 seats, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The venue must have bought or promoted at least four (4) country concerts/dates during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014, be in good standing with all agents and help promote country ticket sales. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category.

#### VENUE OF THE YEAR – LARGE CAPACITY

This award is presented to an outstanding venue of any type, with a minimum capacity of 11,001 seats, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The venue must have bought or promoted at least three (3) country concerts/dates during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014, be in good standing with all agents and help promote country ticket sales. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category.

#### DON ROMEO TALENT BUYER OF THE YEAR

This award is presented to an outstanding talent buyer, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The buyer must have bought at least twenty (20) country concerts/dates during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014, be in good standing with all agents and help promote country ticket sales. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category.

### **PROMOTER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding promoter, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The promoter must have promoted at least twenty (20) country concerts/dates during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014, be in good standing with all agents and help promote country ticket sales. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category.

## **STUDIO RECORDING AWARDS**

### **FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE MUSICIAN-BANDLEADER-INSTRUMENTALIST (MBI) AWARDS**

**VOTED ON BY MEMBERS CLASSIFIED IN THE ARTIST-ENTERTAINER/MUSICIAN-BANDLEADER-INSTRUMENTALIST CATEGORY, AND THE PRODUCER-ENGINEER-STUDIO MANAGER *SUBCATEGORY* [CONTAINED WITHIN THE AFFILIATED CATEGORY]**

### **BASS PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding session bass player, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, a commercially released single or album embodying the player's performance, which achieves Top 20 or better on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS), Billboard's Top Country Albums or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. If the single was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible in this category. If the album was released during the two (2) prior eligibility periods, but achieved its largest annual sales during the eligibility period according to SoundScan, it is eligible. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner shall be determined by a vote of ACM members classified in the Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist category, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category].

### **DRUMMER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding session drummer, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, a commercially released single or album embodying the player's performance, which achieves Top 20 or better on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS), Billboard's Top Country Albums or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. If the single was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible in this category. If the album was released during the two (2) prior eligibility periods, but achieved its largest annual sales during the eligibility period according to SoundScan, it is eligible. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner shall be determined by a vote of ACM members classified in the Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist category, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category].

### **GUITAR PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding session guitar player, in any capacity, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, a commercially released single or album embodying the player's performance, which achieves Top 20 or better on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS), Billboard's Top Country Albums or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. If the single was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible in this category. If the album was released during the two (2) prior eligibility periods, but achieved its largest annual sales during the eligibility period according to SoundScan, it is eligible. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner shall be determined by a vote of ACM members classified in the Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist category, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category].

### **PIANO/KEYBOARDS PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding session piano/keyboards player, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, a commercially released single or album embodying the player's performance, which achieves Top 20 or better on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS), Billboard's Top Country Albums or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. If the single was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible in this category. If the album was released during the two (2) prior eligibility periods, but achieved its largest annual sales during the eligibility period according to SoundScan, it is eligible. The winner



from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner shall be determined by a vote of ACM members classified in the Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist category, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category].

#### **SPECIALTY INSTRUMENT(S) PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding session specialty instrument(s) player, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, a commercially released single or album embodying the player's performance, which achieves Top 20 or better on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS), Billboard's Top Country Albums or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. If the single was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible in this category. If the album was released during the two (2) prior eligibility periods, but achieved its largest annual sales during the eligibility period according to SoundScan, it is eligible. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner shall be determined by a vote of ACM members classified in the Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist category, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category].

#### **STEEL GUITAR PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding session steel guitar player, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, a commercially released single or album embodying the player's performance, which achieves Top 20 or better on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS), Billboard's Top Country Albums or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. If the single was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible in this category. If the album was released during the two (2) prior eligibility periods, but achieved its largest annual sales during the eligibility period according to SoundScan, it is eligible. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner shall be determined by a vote of ACM members classified in the Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist category, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category].

#### **AUDIO ENGINEER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding audio engineer, primarily involved in the recording and/or mixing process, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, a commercially released single or album crediting the outstanding audio engineer, which achieves Top 20 or better on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS), Billboard's Top Country Albums or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. If the single was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible in this category. If the album was released during the two (2) prior eligibility periods, but achieved its largest annual sales during the eligibility period according to SoundScan, it is eligible. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner shall be determined by a vote of ACM members classified in the Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist category, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category].

#### **PRODUCER OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding producer, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The panel will submit five (5) nominees, which will be placed on the ballot once approved by the Board. The factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, a commercially released single or album crediting the producer, which achieves Top 20 or better on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS), Billboard's Top Country Albums or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. If the single was released prior to the eligibility period, but achieved its highest charted position during the eligibility period, it is eligible in this category. If the album was released during the two (2) prior eligibility periods, but achieved its largest annual sales during the eligibility period according to SoundScan, it is eligible. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner shall be determined by a vote of ACM members classified in the Artist-Entertainer/Musician-Bandleader-Instrumentalist category, and the Producer-Engineer-Studio Manager *subcategory* [contained within the Affiliated category].

## **RADIO AWARDS**

### **ON-AIR PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding country music on-air radio personality, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. A demonstration of the disc jockey/personality's on-air presentation of a maximum length of ten (10) minutes must be uploaded to the ACM voting site along with their dayparts market share/ratings information for the submissions period of January 1, 2014 to December 8, 2014, the nominee's community service, industry involvement, charitable contributions, etc. All entries become the property of the ACM. A Professional Panel of judges, approved by the Board of Directors, shall give consideration to ratings, community service, industry involvement, entertainment and professionalism of the demo tape in determining the top five (5) nominees for the ballot. Only submissions from radio professionals with current Academy of Country Music memberships will be accepted. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner will be notified in advance of the Academy of Country Music Awards so they may make arrangements to be in attendance for the presentation of the award.

Entries will be judged using market size consideration based on Arbitron markets: 1-25 Major, 26-50 Large, 51-100 Medium, and 101+ Small.

### **NATIONAL ON-AIR PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding national country music on-air radio personality, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. National on-air personality entrants must provide information showing that they air on a minimum of ten (10) markets with a minimum of 36 shows airing in the submissions period of January 1, 2014 to December 8, 2014. A demonstration of the disc jockey/personality's on-air presentation of a maximum length of ten (10) minutes must be uploaded to the ACM voting site along with a description of any industry involvement. All entries become the property of the ACM. A Professional Panel of judges, approved by the Board of Directors, shall give consideration to industry involvement, entertainment and professionalism of the demo tape in determining the top five (5) nominees for the ballot. Only submissions from radio professionals with current Academy of Country Music memberships will be accepted. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner will be notified in advance of the Academy of Country Music Awards so they may make arrangements to be in attendance for the presentation of the award.

### **RADIO STATION OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding country music radio station, selected by a Professional Panel of judges. The radio station will upload a ten (10) minute (maximum length) composite demonstration of the station's on-air presentation to the ACM voting site along with description of the radio station's best attributes including market share/ratings information for the submissions period of January 1, 2014 to December 8, 2014, community service, industry involvement, charitable contributions, etc. All entries become the property of the ACM. A Professional Panel of judges, approved by the Board of Directors, shall give consideration to ratings, community service, industry involvement, entertainment and professionalism of the demo tape in determining the top five (5) nominees for the ballot. Only submissions from radio professionals with current Academy of Country Music memberships will be accepted. The winner from the previous year is ineligible for a consecutive nomination in this category. The winner will be notified in advance of the Academy of Country Music Awards so they may make arrangements to be in attendance for the presentation of the award.

Entries will be judged using market size consideration based on Arbitron markets: 1-25 Major, 26-50 Large, 51-100 Medium, and 101+ Small.

*\*Radio award dates change annually due to the voting timeline.*

## **CATEGORIES NOT AWARDED ON THE 2015 AWARDS SHOW**

### **NEW MALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding individual male vocalist in the country music industry who gains either initial fame or significantly greater recognition, through efforts surrounding the promotion of a debut or sophomore album, during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The artist must have success in digital media; in addition to having charted a single record in the Top 40 on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or selling 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period. (Any albums self-released by an artist through an independent label that the artist owns and operates may not be counted as a debut or sophomore album, unless it

produces a Top 40 single record reported by Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or sells 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period.) The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The final nominees are voted on by the ACM professional membership with the winner being determined by a combination of votes from the ACM professional membership and fan voting (online and/or text).

Any artist(s) that previously served (or currently serving) as lead vocalists for, or otherwise fronted duos or groups that have sold 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible for the this category. Additionally, any artist(s) who gained initial fame as a solo vocalist, vocal duo or vocal group in another genre selling 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible in this category.

An artist may be a nominee two times in a three-year period. Once an artist releases the lead single from a third studio album, he will no longer be eligible in this category. If an artist is a winner in the New Male Vocalist category his first year on a ballot, he will not be eligible in any New categories again. Any artist who has previously won the award for Entertainer, Male Vocalist, Female Vocalist, Vocal Duo or Vocal Group of the Year is ineligible for a New Artist nomination.

In the event that the Board of Directors determines that there are not enough nominees in this category in any particular year, this category may be merged with the New Female Vocalist by the Board, and shall be called New Solo Vocalist.

#### **NEW FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding individual female vocalist in the country music industry who gains either initial fame or significantly greater recognition, through efforts surrounding the promotion of a debut or sophomore album, during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The artist must have success in digital media; in addition to having charted a single record in the Top 40 on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or selling 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period. (Any albums self-released by an artist through an independent label that the artist owns and operates may not be counted as a debut or sophomore album, unless it produces a Top 40 single record reported by Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or sells 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period.) The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The final nominees are voted on by the ACM professional membership with the winner being determined by a combination of votes from the ACM professional membership and fan voting (online and/or text).

Any artist(s) that previously served (or currently serving) as lead vocalists for, or otherwise fronted duos or groups that have sold 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible for the this category. Additionally, any artist(s) who gained initial fame as a solo vocalist, vocal duo or vocal group in another genre selling 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible in this category.

An artist may be a nominee two times in a three-year period. Once an artist releases the lead single from a third studio album, she will no longer be eligible in this category. If an artist is a winner in the New Female Vocalist category her first year on a ballot, she will not be eligible in any New categories again. Any artist who has previously won the award for Entertainer, Male Vocalist, Female Vocalist, Vocal Duo or Vocal Group of the Year is ineligible for a New Artist nomination.

In the event that the Board of Directors determines that there are not enough nominees in this category in any particular year, this category may be merged with the New Male Vocalist by the Board, and shall be called New Solo Vocalist.

#### **NEW SOLO VOCALIST OF THE YEAR**

The Board of Directors may elect to give out this award from time to time in lieu of New Male Vocalist and New Female Vocalist by a majority vote of the Board of Directors. This award is presented to an outstanding individual male or female vocalist in the country music industry who gains either initial fame or significantly greater recognition, through efforts surrounding the promotion of a debut or sophomore album, during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The artist must have success in digital media; in addition to having charted a single record in the Top 40 on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or selling 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period. (Any albums self-released by an artist through an independent label that the artist owns and operates may not be counted as a debut or sophomore album, unless it produces a Top 40 single record reported by Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or sells 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period.) The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The final nominees are

voted on by the ACM professional membership with the winner being determined by a combination of votes from the ACM professional membership and fan voting (online and/or text).

Any artist(s) that previously served (or currently serving) as lead vocalists for, or otherwise fronted duos or groups that have sold 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible for the this category. Additionally, any artist(s) who gained initial fame as a solo vocalist, vocal duo or vocal group in another genre selling 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible in this category.

An artist may be a nominee two times in a three-year period. Once an artist releases the lead single from a third studio album, they will no longer be eligible in this category. If an artist is a winner in the New Solo Vocalist category their first year on a ballot, they will not be eligible in any New categories again. Any artist who has previously won the award for Entertainer, Male Vocalist, Female Vocalist, Vocal Duo or Vocal Group of the Year is ineligible for a New Artist nomination.

#### **NEW VOCAL DUO OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding duo featuring a vocalist (herein called “duo”) in the country music industry who gains either initial fame or significantly greater recognition, through efforts surrounding the promotion of a debut or sophomore album, during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The duo must have success in digital media; in addition to having charted a single record in the Top 40 on Billboard’s Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or selling 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period. (Any albums self-released by an artist through an independent label that the artist owns and operates may not be counted as a debut or sophomore album, unless it produces a Top 40 single record reported by Billboard’s Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or sells 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period.) The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The final nominees are voted on by the ACM professional membership with the winner being determined by a combination of votes from the ACM professional membership and fan voting (online and/or text).

Any artist(s) that previously served (or currently serving) as lead vocalists for, or otherwise fronted duos or groups that have sold 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible for the this category. Additionally, any artist(s) who gained initial fame as a solo vocalist, vocal duo or vocal group in another genre selling 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible in this category.

A duo may be a nominee two times in a three-year period. Once a duo releases the lead single from a third studio album, they will no longer be eligible in this category. If the duo is a winner in the New Vocal Duo category their first year on a ballot, they will not be eligible in any New categories again. Any artist who has previously won the award for Entertainer, Male Vocalist, Female Vocalist, Vocal Duo or Vocal Group of the Year is ineligible for a New Artist nomination.

In the event that the Board of Directors determines that there are not enough nominees in this category in any particular year, this category may be merged with the New Vocal Group by the Board, and shall be called New Vocal Duo or Group.

#### **NEW VOCAL GROUP OF THE YEAR**

This award is presented to an outstanding group featuring a vocalist (herein called “group”) in the country music industry who gains either initial fame or significantly greater recognition, through efforts surrounding the promotion of a debut or sophomore album, during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The artist(s) must have success in digital media; in addition to having charted a single record in the Top 40 on Billboard’s Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or selling 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period. (Any albums self-released by an artist through an independent label that the artist owns and operates may not be counted as a debut or sophomore album, unless it produces a Top 40 single record reported by Billboard’s Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or sells 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period.) The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The final nominees are voted on by the ACM professional membership with the winner being determined by a combination of votes from the ACM professional membership and fan voting (online and/or text).

Any artist(s) that previously served (or currently serving) as lead vocalists for, or otherwise fronted duos or groups that have sold 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible for the this category. Additionally, any artist(s) who gained initial fame as a solo vocalist, vocal duo or vocal group in another genre selling 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible in this category.



The group may be a nominee two times in a three-year period. Once a group releases the lead single from a third studio album, they will no longer be eligible in this category. If the group is a winner in the New Vocal Group category their first year on a ballot, they will not be eligible in any New categories again. Any artist who has previously won the award for Entertainer, Male Vocalist, Female Vocalist, Vocal Duo or Vocal Group of the Year is ineligible for a New Artist nomination.

In the event that the Board of Directors determines that there are not enough nominees in this category in any particular year, this category may be merged with the New Vocal Duo by the Board, and shall be called New Vocal Duo or Group.

#### **NEW VOCAL DUO OR GROUP OF THE YEAR**

The Board of Directors may elect to give out this award from time to time in lieu of New Vocal Duo and New Vocal Group by a majority vote of the Board of Directors. This award is presented to an outstanding duo or group featuring a vocalist (herein called "duo or group") in the country music industry who gains either initial fame or significantly greater recognition, through efforts surrounding the promotion of a debut or sophomore album, during the prior calendar year of November 28, 2013 to November 26, 2014. The artist(s) must have success in digital media; in addition to having charted a single record in the Top 40 on Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or selling 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period. (Any albums self-released by an artist through an independent label that the artist owns and operates may not be counted as a debut or sophomore album, unless it produces a Top 40 single record reported by Billboard's Country Airplay (BDS) or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) country charts; and/or sells 100,000 album units reflected in Nielsen SoundScan during the eligibility period.) The nominees shall be determined by a nomination ballot(s) and are subject to the approval of the Board. The final nominees are voted on by the ACM professional membership with the winner being determined by a combination of votes from the ACM professional membership and fan voting (online and/or text).

Any artist(s) that previously served (or currently serving) as lead vocalists for, or otherwise fronted duos or groups that have sold 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible for the this category. Additionally, any artist(s) who gained initial fame as a solo vocalist, vocal duo or vocal group in another genre selling 500,000 copies of previously released albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, are not eligible in this category.

A duo or group may be a nominee two times in a three-year period. Once a duo or group releases the lead single from a third studio album, they will no longer be eligible in this category. If the duo or group is a winner in the New Vocal Duo or Group category their first year on a ballot, they will not be eligible in any New categories again. Any artist who has previously won the award for Entertainer, Male Vocalist, Female Vocalist, Vocal Duo or Vocal Group of the Year is ineligible for a New Artist nomination.