

New Country Acts for the Rest of 2017: Women, Bands and Throwback Sounds



Country music has looked more and more like a trend-driven format in recent years. The bro-country movement is officially dead, and R&B-leaning material already seems to be on a downward trend.

What's around the corner? It appears that labels are betting on a more traditional brand of country, a healthy dose of duos and groups, and killing the moratorium on female acts. Some 11 new artists are expected to release their debut albums during the last half of 2017, and that batch includes four groups or duos, four solo women and a healthy sprinkling of old-school sounds.

Midland, with "Drinkin' Problem" at No. 11 on Country Airplay, has the highest 2017 chart success thus far of the current crop. It represents two of those forward-looking trends, since the three-piece band is a prime example of the neo--classic sensibilities increasingly finding their way into the music.

With a bevy of marketing strategies at their fingertips — particularly, smaller EPs and the possibility of releasing tracks one at a time — labels are less apt to pull the trigger on a full album. But when they do, it's a signal of their belief in the artist.

- LANco (Arista) — "Greatest Love Story," which is in the top 40 on Country Airplay, is a tender first exposure for many listeners, but it just scratches the surface for LANco. The five-piece offers an energetic live show and songs with an upbeat worldview, a welcome elixir for the pessimism of modern times.