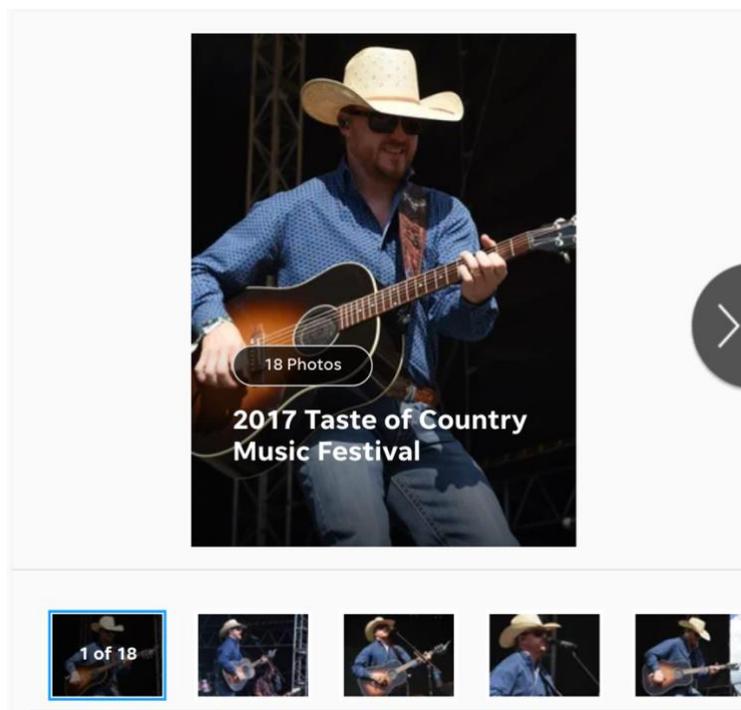


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LUKE BRYAN, DIERKS BENTLEY TO PLAY FORMER TASTE OF COUNTRY FESTIVAL, NOW NAMED TRAILBLAZER



The [Taste of Country Music Festival](#) at Hunter Mountain has a new name — the TrailBlazer Country Music and Camping Festival — a new owner and big names scheduled to perform in June.

Dierks Bentley, Luke Bryan and Thomas Rhett will christen the re-branded gathering when they perform in the Catskills June 12-14, 2020.

Kelsea Ballerini, Gabby Barrett, Blanco Brown, HARDY, Cole Swindell and The Cadillac Three will be also among the acts to perform at the new incarnation of the Greene County gathering that launched in 2013. More acts will be announced.

Attendees this year should also expect an additional stage of acts and a revised layout for the grounds.



Country music star Luke Bryan performs Saturday night, Sept. 28, 2019, at the Miller family farm near Pleasantville. Bryan, Cole Swindell, The Peach Pickers and Mitchell Tenpenny performed as part of Bryan's Farm Tour 2019. More than 20,000 people attended the concert which was held in a field in rural Fairfield County. (Photo: Matthew Berry/Eagle-Gazette)

Tickets go on sale at 10 a.m. on Dec. 13 at www.trailblazerfest.com.

All of this is according to a Thursday morning announcement from Live Nation, the new owner of the festival.

Regarding the name change, Brian O'Connell, president of country touring for Live Nation, told the Journal that "We felt that a re-brand was essential. We wanted to put our own stamp on it... We want to take the best of what has happened at Taste of Country previously and we want to improve on it."

The TrailBlazer becomes the second music festival, along with [Mountain Jam](#), to originate at Hunter Mountain prior to Live Nation becoming involved.

And it underscores how Live Nation, one of the nation's largest concert promotion companies, continues to strengthen its foothold in the country music festival industry. TrailBlazer joins other Live Nation country music gatherings that include Watershed in Washington State; Faster Horses in Michigan; Seven Peaks in Colorado; and the Tortuga Music Festival in Florida.

In addition to the new name, the TrailBlazer will feature a new stage, the Next from Nashville Stage, featuring up-and-coming country music acts. The layout of the country music festival will be changed. Live Nation is re-assessing how attendees enter and exit the event. VIP options will be enhanced and a new glamping option will be available.

"Will you see different things?" O'Connell said. "Absolutely. Will you have a different experience? If you had a good experience, we want to make it great."



Meghan Arnolds, right, 21, of Wappingers Falls, and Ashley Mazzei, left, 21, of New Paltz, lead a group in line dancing at the 2017 Taste of Country Music Festival on Hunter Mountain. (Photo: Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal)

The changes expand on the Hudson Valley's music festival landscape, which also includes the [Clearwater](#) Festival in Westchester County and [KFEST](#) at [Bethel Woods Center for the Arts](#), on the Woodstock site in Sullivan County. Also, Dutchess County this past year hosted the the inaugural [Tail Winds Music Fest](#) at [Hudson Valley Regional Airport](#) in Wappingers Falls.

Launched in 2013, the Taste of Country Music Festival annually attracted thousands of country music fans to the heart of the Catskill Mountains for live music from some of the industry's biggest acts.

Bentley, Bryan and Rhett will allow the TrailBlazer to build on Hunter Mountain's strong track record of drawing big names, as Kenny Chesney, Lady Antebellum and Keith Urban have all played the Taste of Country. Taste of Country was launched as a partnership between [Townsquare Media](#), which owns a cluster of radio stations in Dutchess County; and Chet-5 Festivals, which is owned by [Gary Chetkof](#), owner of Radio Woodstock (WDST/100.1 FM) in Ulster County.

Chetkof announced in February that Chet-5 Festivals was no longer working with Townsquare on the Taste of Country Music Festival. Chetkof at that time also announced that Mountain Jam was leaving Hunter Mountain for Bethel Woods and taking on Live Nation as its new partner.

Mountain Jam is poised to return to Bethel Woods in 2020, as a message on www.mountainjam.com reads, "See you at Bethel Woods in 2020! Dates and info coming soon."