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(6.15.18) - <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-country-lists/10-new-country-artists-you-need-to-know-june-2018-628784/travis-denning-628813/>

10 New Country Artists You Need to Know: June 2018

From the indie-country of Liz Cooper + the Stampede to the small-town nostalgia and fake IDs of Travis Denning

Travis Denning



Sounds Like: Heart-tuggin' nostalgia for rowdy bars, random hookups and cruising small towns with a beer bong.

For Fans of: Justin Moore, Florida Georgia Line, Chase Rice, McLovin

Why You Should Pay Attention: Denning caught the music bug early, but it hit him hard. Hearing AC/DC's "Back in Black" blasting in the truck with his father as a kid set him on a straight path to the gigging life. The Warner Robins, Georgia, native picked up guitar at age 11, wrote his first song at 16 and bailed on college after one semester to play any corner bar and festival that would take him. Denning's everyman worldview evokes his small-town, big-hearted upbringing, but his sound is a wide tent – fun, modern country with rock-guitar licks and atmospherics from the U2 and Jimmy Eat World playbook. He just came off the road opening for Chase Rice and Justin Moore, two likeminded artists who have recorded his songs, and stepped onto the Ryman stage for the first time. His clever debut solo single, "David Ashley Parker From Powder Springs" [UMG], is getting big spins at radio now.

He Says: In "David Ashley Parker From Powder Springs," Denning assumes the persona of a fake ID he and a friend used to get into bars in Athens, Georgia. "We'd go to some bars and do the pass back – he'd walk in, come around and throw it out, and I would grab it and come right in. Any of those times when it worked, you just felt like a total king. You felt a responsibility of,

‘All right, I have to take advantage of this because I don’t know if I’ll get back in next time.’ So most nights we were out with ol’ David Ashley Parker, we took it to the limit for sure. What’s so special about it is that was everybody’s story. Everybody had that fake ID, or they knew somebody who did.” And yes, the guy is real.

Hear for Yourself: “David Ashley Parker From Powder Springs” is a summertime chill-out/grill-out anthem, with acoustic guitar anchoring Denning’s story before taking off on a soaring chorus with a massive hook. *Jim Beaugez*