

Josie Music Awards Light Up the Grand Ole Opry House with a Huge Crowd for the 12th Annual Celebration

Thousands of Independent Music Artists, Songwriters, and Industry Legends Pack Nashville for a Night of Standing Ovations and Unforgettable Surprises



Nashville, Tennessee Sep 25, 2026 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.IssueWire.com)) - The Grand Ole Opry House was filled this past Sunday, September 20, 2026, as the 12th Annual Josie Music Awards transformed Music City into what many in the room called the biggest party in Nashville for the independent music community. Thousands of attendees, nominees, artists, songwriters, musicians, and industry professionals gathered under one legendary roof for a night of awards, performances, and unforgettable moments.

The evening opened with a standing ovation. A well-deserved one for co-founder Josie Passantino-Boone, followed by another for Tinamarie Passantino, as the two were introduced by Jay Harper (a Nashville-based, award-winning voice actor and audio production specialist who is also a network news anchor and on-air radio personality in major markets across the country). The founders and owners of the Josie Music Awards were visibly moved by the outpouring of love for them and for what they have built over the past twelve years.

The show then kicked off with Carolina Bluegrass Style performing their song "*Ain't Coming Back*". A warm, high-energy start that sets the tone for the night. It turned out to be a banner evening for the band: Tyler Chasteen was named Vocalist of the Year in Bluegrass, and David Prosser took Musician of the Year for String Instruments, Banjo. Starting out the night with bluegrass was an incredible decision on the part of the JMA founders.

The Josie Music Awards honor independent music artists, songwriters, musicians, and independent businesses, and each year also recognizes the legends and icons who have shaped the industry. Established in 2015 and led by the mother-daughter team of Tinamarie Passantino and Josie Passantino-Boone, the organization selected this year's nominees from more than 101,000 submissions. Organizers divided several country categories into additional divisions this year to accommodate the extraordinary volume of entries.

The 2026 show kept the incredible surprises coming, with award presentations, live performances, and special moments that repeatedly brought the audience to its feet. As one attendee described it, "The stars just kept coming all night long; they were there to be celebrated and to celebrate all of us in the independent music community".

Legendary Honors of the Night:

Tony Orlando: Icon Award, following a performance that earned three separate standing ovations, Tony Orlando's Icon Award presentation became the moment the room will remember for years. Honored for a career spanning more than six decades, Orlando performed his signature hit "*Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree*" alongside L. Russell "Larry" Brown: the songwriter who, with the late Irwin Levine, wrote it more than fifty years ago. Each time the chorus arrived, the crowd rose again. Fans traveled from Iceland specifically to be in the room for his honor, a reminder that these songs belong to a global audience.

Vince Gill: Country Icon Award, with a performance that added another layer of magic to the evening. This moment was made extra special as it was presented to him by the legendary producer Mr. Tony Brown.

John Berry, Best Tour Award, everyone listened closely as he made a beautiful, heartfelt acceptance speech.

Kent Wells, Champion for Independent Voices

Roxane Atwood, Lifetime Career Achievement in Journalism

Billy Dean, Lifetime Career Achievement Award, followed by his performance of "Billy the Kid," had everyone reminiscing of their younger days.

Brent Mason, Musician Achievement Award, such an honor to see this incredible musician walk across the stage to be honored. Brent has played on songs you hear on the radio, including hundreds of hit singles.

Billy Yates: Songwriter Legend Award, presented by Josie and Tinamarie and featuring a surprise on-stage appearance by Nancy Jones. This was a beautiful surprise for Billy Yates as he completed the song he wrote, *"I Don't Need Your Rockin' Chair,"* which was a song everyone knows was a hit by George Jones.

The Tex Ritter Award was presented to Bobby Tomberlin by Tommie Ritter. It is always a thrill to see a member of the Ritter family.

Standout moments from the 12th Annual Josie Music Awards included a tribute to the late Mr. Kenny Rogers by Scott Innes. The moment in the program to remember those music members that we have lost was done with such class and grace, from the photos to the incredible vocal performance of Carolina Rial. From the first ovation to the final standing tribute, the 12th Annual Josie Music Awards was a night of pure celebration for the independent music community: a reminder of how far independent artists have come, and how many voices now have a stage of their own. There were just over 204 awards presented in a full weekend of two events. Preceding the 12th Annual Josie Music Awards was the JMA Music Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center.

Tinamarie and Josie also announced the upcoming release of their all-in-one music app currently in the testing stages named StatureMusic. The founders and now app developers offered the JMA music family the opportunity to be a tester prior to the app release. So many opportunities were offered throughout the night to those in attendance, including an opportunity to apply to sing the National Anthem at The Gap Gauntlet; check the Josie Music Awards official Facebook page and website for details.

Evening performances: Tony Orlando, Vince Gill, Billy Dean, Scott Innes, Billy Yates, Carolina Rial, Carolina Bluegrass Style, Nia Renee, and Paisley Grace.

Award Presenters: Scott Innes, Tayla Lynn, Cody McCarver, Heidi Parton, Tony Jackson, Kent Wells, Billy Yates, Jack & Davis Reid, Tonya Mitchell, David Gaschen, Leon Everette, Mr. Tony Brown, and Nancy Jones.

The Josie Music Association, LLC continues its mission of "A World of Opportunities" for independent creators through One Network. Eighteen Brands. For more information, visit josiemusicawards.com.

Josie Music Awards 2026 Sponsors: TheThrill.TV, The Vic Hill Show, Volunteer Speedway, and Passantino's Concert Café.

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