

Music

Jazz fest ends

Bryan 'wins' artist of year

NEW YORK, May 2, (Agencies): The American Country Countdown Awards returned in 2016, and relied on big name stars performing their most recent hits.

It was a night of big performances and top stars at the American Country Countdown Awards in Los Angeles. Album of the Year was awarded to Chris Stapleton for "Traveller."

Many of the big winners throughout the night, like Carrie Underwood, Luke Bryan and Brooks & Dunn, thanked God during their acceptance speeches.

The show kicked off with a performance by **Martina McBride**, Jennifer Nettles and Cam that had the crowd singing along. McBride also

performed toward the end of the show.

The first award of the night, Male Vocalist of the Year, was announced by Underwood and was awarded to Bryan. Bryan performed immediately after his win was announced to the cheering crowd of country music greats, which included stars like Reba McEntire and Toby Keith.

Hard

"It's hard to do a speech after that," Bryan said as he thanked the crowd out-of-breath following his song. "I want to thank the good Lord above... We love you! Thank you country radio."

Group Duo of the Year was awarded to Florida Georgia Line, and they performed next.

Newcomer Cam then took the stage, followed by Cole Swindell. Chris Janson then had the crowd singing along to his hit "Buy Me A Boat."

The show took a moment to remember Prince, who died on April 21st at the age of 57. The crowd wore purple glow bands to light the room in purple in honor of the pop star.

Following is the list of winners in the 12 categories for the 2016 American Country Countdown Awards:

- Artist of the Year: Luke Bryan
- Male Vocalist of the Year: Luke Bryan
- Female Vocalist of the Year: Carrie Underwood
- Group/Duo of the Year: Florida Georgia Line
- Breakthrough Male of the Year: Sam Hunt
- Breakthrough Female of the Year: Kelsea Ballerini
- Breakthrough Group/Duo of the Year: Old Dominion
- Song of the Year: "Die A Happy Man" — Thomas Rhett
- Album of the Year: "Traveller" — Chris Stapleton
- Digital Song of the Year: "Girl Crush" — Little Big Town
- Digital Album of the Year: "Montevallo" — Sam Hunt

Wind, rain and a lightning strike beside the stage where **Bonnie Raitt** was singing didn't stop the soggy last day of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival from rolling to a close.

Lightning hit the scaffolding for a giant TV screen showing fans the close-ups of Raitt and the band performing "Keep Your Mouth Shut."

People nearby jumped backward at the bright flash at the screen's top outer corner. Then came a thunderclap, sounding like a brief explosion. Raitt kept singing and her band played on. A day earlier, thunderstorms had canceled the headliners' performances.

"I'm still wondering why the facilities manager hasn't pulled them off," said **Christy Gross** of New Orleans shortly after the lightning strike. "If that was my band, they would be in the trailer now."

As the festival wound down, a standing-room-only jammed the Blues Tent to hear **Arlo Guthrie**, who's on an "Alice's Restaurant" 50th anniversary tour. Some members of the audience were old enough to have heard its first performance; others appeared to be in their 20s. They all sang heartily along to the chorus of "Alice's Restaurant" and of "This Land is Your Land," written by Guthrie's father, folksinger **Woody Guthrie**.

Outside, the rain had lightened but winds gusted hard enough to turn umbrellas inside-out. Neither wind nor rain nor heavy rubber boots could keep **Margo Carey** of Bethany Beach, Delaware, and **Joe Robert** of Baton Rouge from dancing to **Rockin' Dopsie Jr** and his Zydeco Twisters.

Earlier, thousands of umbrellas bobbed as their owners listened or danced in the mud to a 70-minute tribute to the late **Allen Toussaint**.



Luke Bryan performs during the American Country Countdown Awards at The Forum on May 1, in Inglewood, California. (Inset): Singer Thomas Rhett winner of the award for 'Song of the Year', poses in the press room. (AP/AFP)



McBride

Theater

Play rings true with actors

'Shelter' recreates risky journey to US

LOS ANGELES, May 2, (Agencies): For Julian Sandoval, the play "Shelter" is more than just a story of children flooding into the US by the tens of thousands from Latin America in search of safe sanctuary. It's personal.

The young actor's mother immigrated to the US illegally years ago, fleeing the violence of her native El Salvador after seeing a cousin hacked to death by soldiers with machetes during the country's civil war. She would become a legal resident under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and eventually a US citizen.

"It's something that impacts me directly every time I do it," the 26-year-old drama student said following a recent performance of "Shelter" at the Central American Resource Center in downtown Los Angeles.

For two hours he'd been joined by six actors on a sparse stage filled with large boxes and blocks, illuminated by flashing strobe lights and filled with rattling sounds, all created to mimic the perilous 2,000-mile journey across Mexico's midsection that thousands of unaccompanied children make each year when they climb aboard La Bestia (Spanish for The Beast), the freight train that will carry them north to the United States and, maybe, to new lives.

"I see myself doing the things I'm not allowed to do back home — like be an architect," one shouts from the darkness as the train rattles on. "I'm going to build buildings that don't fall down in an earthquake."

Others dream more modest — saving up to buy a motorcycle or not being threatened with death because

you're gay.

But first the group must dodge robbers, rapists, extortionists and others who prey upon the train's riders. They must not fall under its wheels and die as one does during the journey. Farther down the line they must avoid Mexican authorities waiting to turn them back and, finally, find a way across the border to an immigration center where they can ask for asylum.

More than 30,000 children, including many younger than 12, did just that last year, according to the federal government's Office of Refugee Resettlement.

It's a number that is particularly personal to playwright Marissa Chibas, who teaches theater at California Institute of the Arts and who recruited the young actors from the university's bilingual Duende CalArts program that seeks to produce innovative Latino-oriented theater.

Stories

"I think there's been a lot of focus on percentages and numbers but not on the actual human stories. Like why these kids are leaving or what kind of violence they are facing or what kind of risks they are taking," says Chibas, who interviewed several children who rode the train and now attend high school in Southern California. And who, when soliciting actors, looked among her students for those with their own connections to people with similar stories.

"When I was 14 my aunt and her two daughters, my cousins, came to New York and applied for political asylum," said recent CalArts drama graduate

Cynthia Callejas of Colombia. After 10 years their applications were denied and they recently returned.

Deported

CalArts senior Emilio Garcia-Sanchez, recounts family stories of relatives crossing over and being deported before his grandmother eventually obtained a visa and his family settled in the United States. "Not only is this story of these children important, but it's personal to me too," he said.

Chibas, whose previous works include the one-woman show "Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary," is herself the child of Raul Chibas, who co-wrote the Sierra Manifesto with Fidel Castro that called for replacing Cuba's dictatorship with a constitutional democracy.

After Castro seized power instead, Chibas boarded his own La Bestia, a 17-foot catamaran he commandeered and sailed to Florida.

"He realized early on that if he stayed in Cuba he was going to be killed or imprisoned," said his daughter, adding it was that background that attracted her to reports she kept seeing the past couple of years of tens of thousands of children fleeing violence in countries like Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.

"Shelter," which recently concluded a run in East Los Angeles' Lincoln Park (where a shipping container was used to replicate the train) now goes on the road. A June 22 performance is scheduled at the Theater Communications Group's national conference in Washington, D.C., with other performances being scheduled around the

young actors' schedules.

Callejas hopes it will inspire policymakers and political leaders to address the issue of child immigration and perhaps find a solution that benefits both the children and the country they want to be part of.

"I think theater has a unique capacity to create empathy because you are not only communicating thoughts, you are communicating emotions as well," she said. "Influential people might see this and be inspired to come up with solutions. Because that's what we do as actors, right? We're not lawyers or doctors, we're theater artists. This is how we help the world."

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Rajiv Joseph's play "Guards at the Taj," seen at the Atlantic Theater Company last year, and the Roundabout Theater Company's revival of "The Robber Bridegroom" led the 2016 Lucille Lortel Awards, with "Guards at the Taj" taking four awards and "Robber Bridegroom" snagging three.

"Grounded," the solo show starring **Anne Hathaway**, and "Eclipsed" director **Liesl Tommy** also were among those singled out for honors at the awards, which recognize Off Broadway work during the past season. Although "The Humans," the Off Broadway title that transferred to Broadway earlier this year, led the nominations list, the production didn't take home any Lortels.

The trophies were handed out in a May 1 ceremony hosted by **Zachary Levi**, currently starring on Broadway in "She Loves Me."



In this March 18, 2016 photo, the cast of the play 'Shelter' performs at CalArts Center for New Performance in Los Angeles. (AP)



Prince



MacFarlane

Variety

MINNEAPOLIS: Lawyers charged with untangling the multi-million dollar estate of music superstar **Prince**, who died with no known will, head to court on Monday for the start of what could be a years-long dispute over his fortune.

Six siblings or half-siblings of Prince, found dead at age 57 at his home in suburban Minneapolis on April 21, were listed as heirs in court documents filed in Carver County District Court in **Chaska, Minnesota**, where the hearing gets under way before Judge **Kevin Eide**.

The exact value of Prince's estate has not yet been disclosed, but his music catalog alone has been estimated at over \$500 million.

Bremer Trust, National Association, a bank where Prince conducted business for years, could play a key role as a special administrator to safeguard his fortune. The bank was appointed at the request of Prince's sister, **Tyka Nelson**, and Judge Eide will hear any objections on Monday, Minnesota courts spokesman **Kyle Christopherson** said.

On stage, Prince was still captivating audiences at recent performances in **Australia** and **California**. He hosted a pop-up party at his Paisley Park studio, and there were few outward signs in his final months that anything was wrong.

But off stage, something was different. Prince began wanting meals that were easier to digest and was fighting off waves of sore throats and frequent upset stomachs, the musician's personal chef told The Associated Press.

A law enforcement official has told the AP that investigators are looking into whether Prince, who was found dead at his home on April 21, died from an overdose and whether a doctor was prescribing him drugs in the weeks beforehand. The official has been briefed on the investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Ray Roberts, who cooked for Prince nearly every day for almost three years, said in an interview that wasn't the man he saw nearly every night, "not even a hint. Not at all." But Roberts did start noticing changes in Prince's diet — he was eating less and drinking less water, and looked like he was losing weight.

"It felt like he wasn't himself probably

the last month or two," Roberts said. "I think he was just struggling with being sick a lot."

Prince, who didn't eat meat, normally loved foods like roasted beets and minestrone soup with a harissa chermoula, an herb sauce from North Africa. In recent months, Roberts said, as Prince would have sore throats or seem like he wasn't feeling well for "weeks at a time", he would prefer smoothies and fresh juices to soothe his throat or stomach.

Stomach and throat ailments aren't

unusual in a stubbornly cold Minnesota winter, and to the public, there was little to suggest something was amiss.

Since Prince's death, fans who saw him recently have talked about his energy and his mesmerizing performances with just a microphone and a piano. Many who saw his final public appearance at Paisley Park only days before he died said he may have seemed more tired — one person who was at one of his last shows in Atlanta said his speaking voice was weak at times — but overall he was not changed.



Singer Reba McEntire (center), poses with singers Ronnie Dunn (left), and Kix Brooks (right), of Brooks & Dunn at the 2016 American Country Countdown Awards at The Forum on May 1, in Inglewood, California. (AFP)

U2's Edge 'rocks' chapel for cancer

VATICAN CITY, May 2, (RTS): The Edge, lead guitarist with the Irish band U2, has become the first rock star to play in the Sistine Chapel, a venue he described as "the most beautiful parish hall in the world."

The performer, whose real name is David Evans, sang four songs on Saturday night for about 200 doctors, researchers and philanthropists who attended a conference at the Vatican on regenerative medicine called Cellular Horizons.

Backed by a choir of seven Irish teenagers, and wearing his trademark black beanie cap, he played acoustic guitar and sang a cover of Leonard Cohen's "If it be your will", and versions of U2 songs "Yahweh", "Ordinary love" and "Walk on".

according to the ensemble.

The New England native is no stranger to the orchestra: He also appeared with them over the summer.

MacFarlane was born in **Kent, Connecticut**, and graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design in **Providence, Rhode Island**.

Founded in 1885, the Boston Pops consists of musicians from the Boston Symphony Orchestra and generally plays popular music.

The following week, composer **John Williams** is slated to lead the orchestra in selections from "Star Wars", "Jaws", "Indiana Jones" and other movies he's scored. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: LevelK and Mondrian Entertainment have joined forces to handle international sales on 3D animation series "Klump", which is made by Studio Soi and based on the **Rasmus Klump** book series.

One of Denmark's top literary exports, the Rasmus Klump books have sold more than 32 million copies and have been described as the Indiana Jones for kids.

Directed by **Johannes Weiland**, **Paul Cichon**, **Michael Bohnenstingl**, the teen series turns on the adventures of Klump and his friends as they travel the world and come across creatures, fascinating locations and challenges.

"Klump", produced by Carsten Bunte from Studio and **Lars Sylvest** from Mondrian Entertainment, was commissioned by ZDF and Egmont. Season three and four are now in development. The series has just won the best animated series award at ITFS (International Trick Film Festival) in Stuttgart.

Studio Soi is the Danish outfit behind Oscar-nominated "The Gruffalo" and BAFTA-winning "Gumball". (RTS)