

I'm crazy  
in love with  
country!

I'm the  
GOAT,  
y'all

Morgan Wallen:  
badass

Lainey Wilson knows  
the genre is cool

Shania Twain  
rocks Glasto

Taylor Swift's  
a country girl  
at heart

Genre-bending  
Post Malone

# Yee-haw! HOW COUNTRY BECAME COOL

From Nashville to Blighty, we're all going crazy for it

Releasing her single *Country's Cool Again* earlier this year, Grammy-winning artist Lainey Wilson sang, "Doggone, dagum it, didn't see that coming/country's cool again" – and she's not wrong. While we once only whispered about our penchant for banjos and heartbreak lyrics, everyone's now proud to scream, "Yee-haw, I'm a country fan" – especially with fave celebs hitching up to the bandwagon.

**LEGENDS BEGET LEGENDS**  
Beyoncé dipped her toes into the genre with her

mega-successful *Cowboy Carter* last year and she seems to have kick-started a stampede, with the likes of Lily Allen, Post Malone and One Direction's Zayn Malik all spotted working in Nashville.

Meanwhile, indie darling Lana Del Rey has confirmed her own country album *Lasso* is en route.

We also witnessed Shania Twain take on the Legends set at this year's Glastonbury festival, before headlining her own Hyde Park show. Also making a popular appearance at the BST

Festival was Tennessee-born Morgan Wallen – with the *Last Night* singer announcing to a sea of cowboy hats, "They told me there's about 50,000 people in here tonight and I'm the first country music

joining forces with Billy Ray Cyrus on *Old Town Road*. But

artist to play the Hyde Park stage. Like, this is a badass thing." Of course, country hasn't just galloped in on horseback. The genre has been quietly simmering in the background for as long as there's been laments

about pick-up trucks and whisky shots. In 2019, Justin Bieber teamed up with country stars Dan and Shay for the song *10,000 Hours*, while Lil Nas X made it to number one that same year after

not every rhinestone proves to be a diamond, with the likes of Justin Timberlake and Atomic Kitten's Liz McClarnon giving the genre a try. Cool or cringe? We'll leave it up to you.

However, it's hard to

deny that the past 12 months have seen country music take over the world.

**CUCKOO FOR COUNTRY**  
Baylen Leonard, a presenter on Absolute Country, the UK's number one country music radio station, confirms, "It's been a cowgirl/cowboy summer for sure," telling us, "Country music is the fastest-growing genre in the UK right now."

"TikTok is awash with dances to Dasha and Beyoncé, the songs are booming from radios in cabs and DJs in clubs, and Absolute Radio Country has more than doubled in

the past three years. Country is back in the mainstream and everyone wants to be a part of it."

Also noting the shift is Derry-born Abbie Mac, who performed at Morgan Wallen's Hyde Park concert on the Volvic-sponsored Birdcage stage, supporting emerging artists.

"I grew up in Ireland, so I've always been around Irish country music. When I first started out, it was obvious there was a massive divide between traditional and more American country. Now, it's more blended – people don't seem as snooty about it any more," she tells us.

"I can't believe how much it's been accepted into the mainstream in recent years. It's music that people fall in love with. It's honest and raw, and full of everyday stories." And it might just be these stories that's sent the UK cuckoo for country. While many had written the genre off as being filled with beer-crushing, truck-driving bros, the country world in 2024 looks very different to 20 years ago.

*Cowboy Carter* raised an important conversation about black country artists, and the queer country scene is at an all-time high, with Orville

Peck lamenting over hunky Nevada Bikers, while the music video for Tyler Childers' *In Your Love* caused a buzz online for showing a same-sex love story. There's truly something for everyone – from rock-inspired electric guitar to lilting folk snippets. While many of our friends across the pond grew up with country ingrained in their DNA, Western-inspired music is finally appealing to people who have never listened before. So, grab your cowboy hat and pull on your boots – because country music is here to stay. ■

**'It's honest and full of everyday stories'**