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TEN OKLAHOMA MUSICIANS TO KNOW IN 2025

Meet the next generation of artists forging the Oklahoma sound in the twenty-first century.

BY PRESTON JONES

KAITLIN BUTTS, THOMAS CRABTREE, WYATT FLORES, MATT PASKERT, JOHN MORELAND, DEVAN FKWIC, KEN POMEROY, KALI SPITZER, J. CREWS, JACKSON ADAIR

The beauty of Oklahoma music, certainly in the twenty-first century, is that there is no one definable sound. Our red dirt truly is fertile for all manner of musical expression. To listen closely to what’s emanating from all corners of the state is to understand that what sounds like Oklahoma these days isn’t strictly country or rock: It can be anything from soulful R&B to moody alt-rock to left-of-center folk music. To help fill out your playlists with the sweet sounds of home, here are ten Oklahoma artists and bands you need to hear now. Treat your ears with the work of these phenomenal talents, and your ear buds will thank us later.

Wyatt Flores

ARGUABLY ONE OF the state’s fastest rising Red Dirt-adjacent singer-songwriters—and one of its youngest, at twenty-four—Wyatt Flores has made an enormous impression in a very brief time. The Stillwater native has released a trio of EPs, even going so far as to make an appearance on *Billboard’s* Hot Country Songs chart in 2023 with “Please Don’t Go” from his debut 2022 EP *The Hutson Sessions*. Flores dropped his debut full-length studio album, *Welcome to the Plains*, in fall 2024, and has found himself in heady company: This summer, he’s opened for superstar Post Malone on the latter’s country-themed stadium tour with Jelly Roll. Although he frequently sounds wise beyond his years—the whip-smart humor of “When I Die” is matched by the raw emotional beauty of “Oh Susannah”—Flores has only just begun, something truly thrilling to consider. wyattfloresmusic.com and [@officialwyattflores](https://www.instagram.com/officialwyattflores) on Instagram



Wyatt Flores' *Welcome Back to the Plains* tour will take him across North America, Europe, and Australia through 2026.

NATALIE RHEA



J Crews

ORIGINALLY HAILING FROM Turley, a suburb of Tulsa on its north side, J Crews calls Dallas home these days—he’s part of a fertile scene that counts BigXthaPlug and Yella Beezy among its ranks—but he still carries that Oklahoma swagger with him. Rap generally gets somewhat short shrift in the state, as power centers like Tulsa—anchored by artists like Steph Simon and Dialtone—only have seemed to come online with a force in the last decade or so. Still, it’s worth paying attention to acts like J Crews, who serves as a reminder, especially on his projects like this year’s *Rich off Budd 3*, of the potency of Oklahoma’s homegrown hip-hop. [@jcrewsmusic](https://www.instagram.com/jcrewsmusic) on Instagram and [@nine18tv](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC918tv) on YouTube

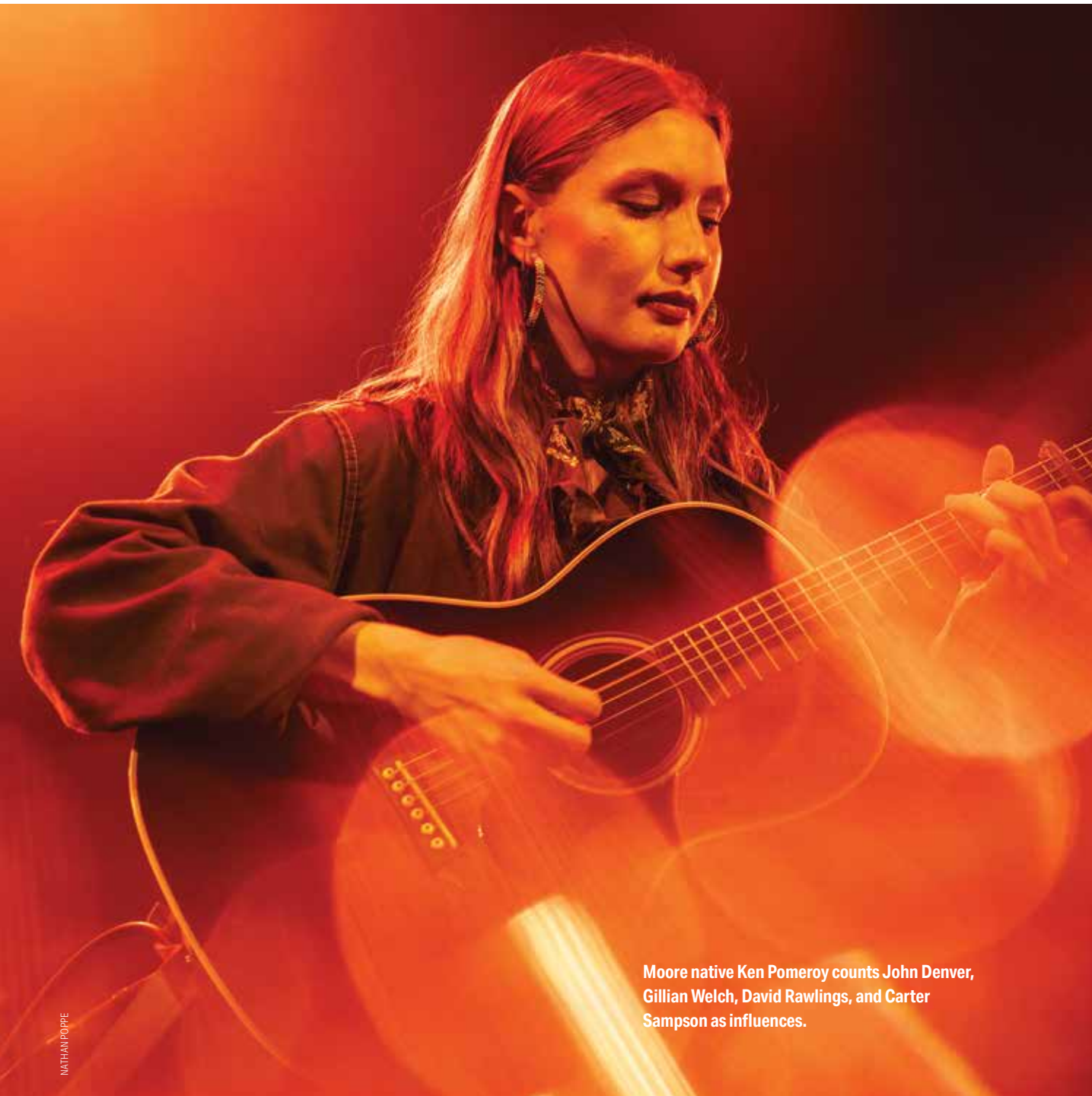
Arnold’s Old Fashioned Hamburgers is among J Crews’ favorite Tulsa spots to grab a burger, so that is where *Oklahoma Today* contributor Jackson Adair photographed him this spring.

JACKSON ADAIR

KEN POMEROY

BORN JUST OUTSIDE Oklahoma City and now based in Tulsa, singer-songwriter Ken Pomeroy has become very visible very quickly. The Cherokee musician, gifted with a delicate, powerful soprano, was featured on the soundtrack to the 2024 blockbuster film *Twisters*, and in May, she dropped her sophomore album *Cruel Joke*, which features some utterly stunning work. “Stranger” opens with the profoundly beautiful and deeply

ugly line, “The wind keeps on hitting me like my mother used to / Unlike her, I feel like it doesn’t want to,” marking the twenty-two-year-old artist as a fearless truth teller in the spirit of her fellow Okie sisters in song like Karen Dalton and Carter Sampson. She’ll open for folk-rock luminary Iron & Wine during a July run of dates across the East Coast. kenpomeroymusic.com, [@kenpomeroymusic](#) on Instagram and YouTube



NATHAN POPPE

Moore native Ken Pomeroy counts John Denver, Gillian Welch, David Rawlings, and Carter Sampson as influences.

John Moreland

JOHN MORELAND DECIDED he’d had enough and stepped back from everything. He spent a year at his Bixby home unplugged from the world, going so far as to stop using a smartphone for six months. By removing himself from the hurly-burly of everyday life, Moreland was able to decompress, regroup, and return with one of his strongest albums to date, 2024’s *Visitor*, written and recorded at his home in a fleet ten days’ time. Moreland enlisted only his wife, Pearl Rachinsky, to sing on one tune, and longtime collaborator John Calvin Abney to play guitar on another, but otherwise, *Visitor* is a gorgeous collection from one of the state’s most essential voices. johnmoreland.net, [@johnmoreland](#) on Instagram, and [@johnmorelandok](#) on YouTube



John Moreland began playing shows in his early teens and was a member of metalcore band Thirty Called Arson.

DEVAN FIXICO



“We are scrapping the Read Southall Band, and we’re going with *Southall* as a whole in order to be more collaborative and inclusive and follow a whole band approach,” Read Southall told *People* in 2023 about the band’s name change.

SOUTHALL

HAILING FROM STILLWATER, the Read Southall Band—or now simply Southall—is a ferociously talented six-piece proficient in the sort of country rock that is, thanks to a renewed interest beyond the state’s borders, having an ascendant moment. Read Southall, John Tyler Perry, Reid Barber, Jeremee Knipp, Braxton Curliss, and Ryan Wellman released the debut Southall LP, *Six String Sorrow*, a decade ago. For its fourth and latest album, 2023’s *Southall*, the band worked with producer Eddie Spear and cut the songs at Tulsa’s iconic Church Studio. Southall routinely racks up more than a million monthly listeners across all music streaming platforms. officialsouthall.com, [@officialsouthall](#) on Instagram and [@southallofficial](#) on YouTube

RUSSELL STITT

Jason Scott & the High Heat

CALL IT SOUTHERN rock by way of the pulpit: The Oklahoma City-based quintet Jason Scott & the High Heat have roots in the church. Scott was raised in the Pentecostal faith and served as a youth and worship pastor before pursuing a musician's life. The band's new sophomore album, *American Grin*, follows its well-received 2022 debut, *Castle Rock*. Jason Scott & the High Heat remain as pleasantly unpredictable here as on their debut—there's funk, country, pop, and soul pulsing through these songs. "High Country" smashes together a sexy backbeat, a mariachi-tinged trumpet, and Scott's alluring vocals to create something unbound by genre, while, in a just world, "Golden" would be a monster hit. jsandthehighheat.com, [@jasonscotthighheat](#) on Instagram and [@jsandthehighheat](#) on YouTube



Jason Scott & the High Heat will play the Oklahoma City Zoo Amphitheatre with Flatland Cavalry and Kaitlin Butts on July 12.

JESSI CHAPMAN

Tulsa singer Branjae is scheduled to perform July 11 at the Woody Guthrie Folk Festival in Okemah.



JILL DAWSON

BRANJAE

NO LESS AN Oklahoma music eminence than Taylor Hanson has said of Tulsa singer-songwriter Branjae, "Somebody who is really setting the bar high . . . incredible talent and an incredible performer." She bills herself in her press materials as "the personification of Black American music," and listening to projects like her 2024 EP *Intravibronic*, it's hard to argue with that descrip-

tion. A vivid blend of soul, R&B, and lightly psychedelic flourishes tethers her to Tulsa's grand tradition of funky visionaries, even as she occupies a galaxy all her own. New music in the form of the seven-track *Master of Ceremonies* is on the way, and it will be preceded by a twenty-minute short film directed by Branjae herself. branjaemusic.com and [@branjaemusic](#) on Instagram

Butts was named 2024 Honky Tonk Female of the Year at the Ameripolitan Music Awards in Austin.



KAITLIN BUTTS

IMAGINE THE SHEER chutzpah it takes for an artist—one hailing from Oklahoma, no less—to look at Rodgers and Hammerstein’s immortal musical *Oklahoma!* and decide that it needs a brazen, alt-country overhaul for the twenty-first century. That would be Tulsa native Kaitlin Butts, who swung for the fences with her third studio album, the audaciously entertaining *Roadrunner!* While there are allusions to the source material (“People Will Say

We’re in Love” is a sweet duet with her husband, Flatland Cavalry’s Cleto Cordero), much of *Roadrunner!* is a gleeful synthesis of Butts’ influences—it’s not much of a stretch to discern flashes of Garth Brooks in the sprightly title track, for example. Now based in Nashville, Butts won’t be home much in the next few months: She’s touring across the United States and Canada well into October. [kaitlinbutts.com](https://www.kaitlinbutts.com) and [@kaitlinbutts](https://www.instagram.com/kaitlinbutts) on Instagram



Rapper Shaquees, who has lived in Ardmore and Hobart and now is based in Texas.

SHAQUEES

BORN SHAMAR CONTREZ

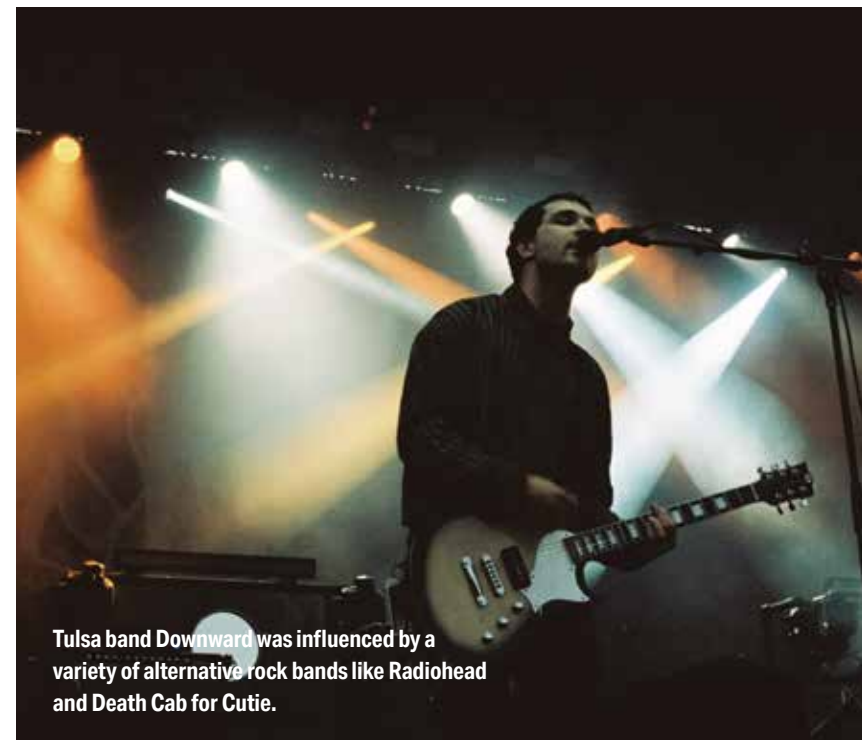
Buchanan in Ardmore, this rapper is better known by his stage name *Shaquees*, which he began using in 2013. The twenty-four-year-old, now based in Texas, has kept up a steady stream of releases over that span of time, including his most recent project, *Jasmine*, his thirteenth studio album in six years. Gifted with a flow that feels both laid-back and alert, Shaquees pulls listeners into his world, blending gorgeous samples with his incisive rhymes—“Come Home” is a genuinely beautiful work full of aching vulnerability. Some of his records stretch to as much as thirty tracks, suggesting an ambitious scope that could prove to be the key ingredient in catapulting him to the next level of success.

@Shaquees on YouTube

MAURIZIO DI PIETRO

DOWNWARD

OVER THE COURSE of the past decade, Tulsa-formed quartet Downward—with vocalist-guitarist Drew Richardson, drummer Tollie Pugh, guitarist Hunter Senft, and bassist Severin Olsen—has built a healthy, passionate following thanks to its deft fusion of alt-rock and post-hardcore sounds. Despite its affinity for heavy, almost brain-flattening songs (the band’s 2022 EP *The Brass Tax* often feels like a carefully deployed sledgehammer), Downward also is unafraid to wade into less familiar waters. A shared 2023 EP, *split*, with rising Texas talent trauma ray captures the band’s ability to incorporate a darkly beautiful melodicism—Richardson’s voice hovers lightly just above churning, majestic guitars and drums on “Siren”—while Downward’s just-released self-titled sophomore LP suggests the horizon is limitless. [@downwardgram](https://www.instagram.com/downwardgram) on Instagram



Tulsa band Downward was influenced by a variety of alternative rock bands like Radiohead and Death Cab for Cutie.

MADDEN CRAWSHAW