



ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR & NEW ARTIST CATEGORIES FOR 2010

Ballot Timeline for 45th Annual Academy of Country Music Awards Announced

Encino, CA (December 16, 2009) – The Academy of Country Music announced today the addition of three nominees to the final slate for its coveted Entertainer of the Year category, upping the total number of final nominees from five to eight, beginning with the **45th Annual Academy of Country Music Awards**, to be held in 2010 on an as-yet-unannounced date.

The Academy is also announcing a change in the new artist categories, combining Top New Female Vocalist and Top New Male Vocalist into a single Top New Solo Vocalist category in 2010. In addition, the Top New Vocal Duo or Group category will become two separate categories, Top New Vocal Duo and Top New Vocal Group.

“The Academy has always been responsive to the industry and our Board felt these changes reflect what is happening in country music,” said Bob Romeo, Executive Director of the Academy of Country Music. “The proliferation of duos and groups over the past several years is impossible to deny. With these changes, we look forward to bringing even more super star artists and new talent to the forefront in 2010.”

As in 2009, the Entertainer of the Year and all three newcomer categories —Top New Solo Vocalist, Top New Vocal Duo and Top New Vocal Group— will be open to fan voting, and the newcomer category winners will also once again compete for the Top New Artist award, given during the live Awards telecast. Details and timeline for fan voting will be announced at a later date.

The Academy also is announcing the ballot timeline for professional members, as follows:

- 1st Ballot Opens** – Monday, January 4, 2010 at 9:00 AM Central
- 1st Ballot Closes** – Friday, January 15, 2010 at 5:00 PM Central
- 2nd Ballot Opens** – Monday, February 1, at 9:00 AM Central
- 2nd Ballot Closes** – Friday, February 12, 2010 at 5:00 PM Central
- 3rd Ballot Opens** – Monday, March 22, 2010 at 9:00 AM Central
- 3rd Ballot Closes** – Friday, April 2, 2010 at 5:00pm Central

Nominees for the Academy of Country Music Awards will be announced in February 2010 in Nashville, at a date to be announced. For more information on ACM Awards criteria, please visit

<http://www.acmcountry.com/awards/votingcriteria.php>.

About the Academy of Country Music

Founded in 1964, the **ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC** is an artist and industry-driven organization, providing the financial resources to ensure the on-going philanthropic work of **ACM LIFTING LIVES**, the charitable arm of the Academy which works to improve lives through music. The Academy is comprised of more than 3,800 professional members and is headquartered in Encino, Calif. For more information, log onto www.acmcountry.com or www.acmliftinglives.org.

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