

Qualified Records Ends 2025 with Strong Roots Music Report Charting, Artist Recognition, and Sync Library Expansion

2025 was a year of steady, artist-driven momentum marked by national #1 position radio charting, thoughtful critical response, and continued roster growth.

BRENTWOOD, TN, UNITED STATES, January 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Throughout the year, [Qualified Records](#) supported releases from [Grammy® Award](#)-winning artists Yates McKendree and the late Mike Henderson, alongside The Big Shoes Band and Lisa Stewart, reinforcing the label's commitment to roots-based, songwriter-forward music. Several Qualified Records releases were submitted for consideration and appeared on the first-round ballot for the 2026 Grammy Awards, signaling growing recognition within the professional recording community.

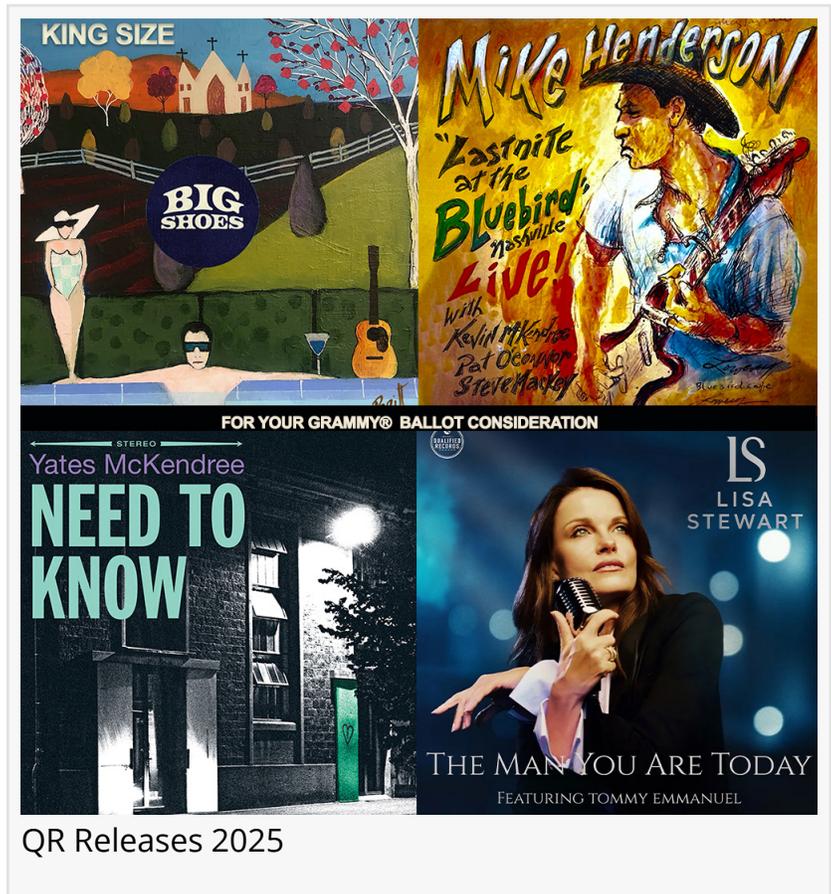


A major highlight came with Grammy® Award winner Yates McKendree's latest album, *Need To Know*, which earned sustained national airplay and strong performance on the Roots Music Report charts. The album appeared multiple times on the RMR Top 50 Blues Album Charts, peaking #1 leading the Top 10, and finished #2 on the 2025 Roots Music Report Classic Blues Year-End Chart. *Blues Blast Magazine* praised the album for showcasing McKendree's songwriting and musicianship, while *La Hora del Blues* highlighted his "skill, technique, and bright accomplishment."

Lisa Stewart expanded her artistic reach during the year through collaborations with veteran artists Tommy Emmanuel and Rodney Crowell on a single "The Man You Are Today", further underscoring her standing within the Americana community.

The Big Shoes Band also made a strong Top Ten (Contemporary Blues) showing on indie and college radio, with King Size landing #32 on the Roots Music Report Top 50 Contemporary Blues Album Chart, reflecting continued programmer support for the band's seasoned musicianship. "What matters to us is that the music reaches people who really listen," said Tom Szell, bassist and bandleader of The Big Shoes Band.

The label also honors the legacy of Grammy® and CMA Award winner Mike Henderson, whose final release *Last Nite Live at the Bluebird* charted Top 20 on the Roots Music Report Blues Album Chart. A revered bandleader, vocalist, songwriter and guitarist, Henderson's influence on American country, roots and blues music continues to resonate.



Looking ahead, the label has new projects in development, including upcoming releases from

“

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John Heithaus and Kevin McKendree

Seth James, whose work draws from Texas blues with a contemporary large band approach, and Mike Guldin, a veteran blues performer with five previous albums who is signed to Blue Sky Tunes, the label's sister imprint. Beyond traditional releases, Qualified Records is developing a curated sync library, scheduled for full rollout in 2026. The library will feature short-form, distinctive recordings created for film, television, and licensing use.

“We're grateful for the way this year unfolded,” said John L.

Heithaus and Kevin McKendree, co-founders of Qualified Records. “The artists did the work, our artists' many fans around the globe supported us and we're very thankful the music found listeners who care and support keeping the blues and roots music alive.”

John Heithaus
Qualified Records

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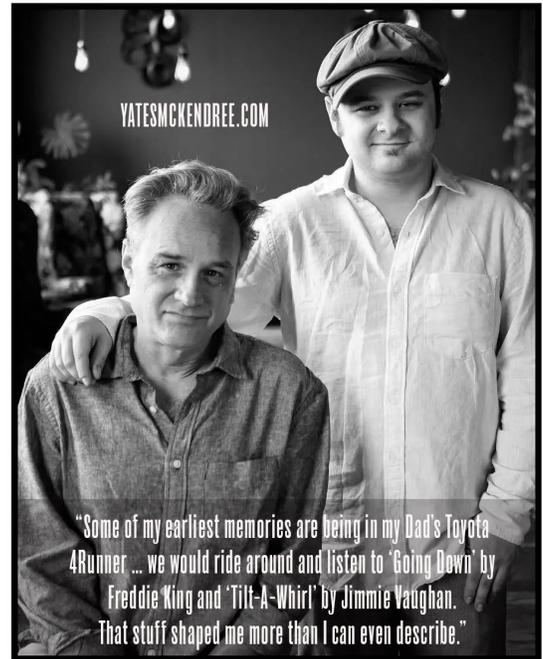
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Yates and Kevin McKendree

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