

THE
BIG
FOUR

BEST NEW ARTIST

These up-and-comers share little more than a tendency to upset the prevailing order



BRANDY CLARK

After years as a songwriting force in Nashville, Clark may be the most promising best new artist nominee of the nine country acts to make the category since 2004. After co-writing Miranda Lambert's "Mama's Broken Heart" with Shane McAnally and Kacey Musgraves (who in 2013 was nominated for best new artist) in 2011 and earning a writing credit on The Band Perry's 2012 hit "Better Dig Two," Clark released her darkly comic debut album, *12 Stories*, in October 2013. In 2014, she toured with Sugarland's Jennifer Nettles, performing songs from the album, and won song of the year at the Country Music Association Awards for "Follow Your Arrow," the pro-tolerance anthem on Musgraves' debut LP, *Same Trailer Different Park*. (Clark is openly gay.) *12 Stories* is also nominated for best country album at this year's Grammys.

COUNTRY

Looking back and leaping forward, Nashville artists made great creative strides this year

12 STORIES

Brandy Clark

PRODUCER Dave Brainard

ENGINEERS Dave Brainard,
Scott Kolb

LABEL Slate Creek

Brandy Clark is quite the underdog. She self-financed *12 Stories*, then spent two years trying to get a record deal with Nashville major labels, which fawned over the contents but struggled with its commercial potential. It ultimately took a Dallas-based indie to bring it to market, where it sold 37,000 units, according to Nielsen Music. She netted a new artist of the year nomination from the Country Music Association, in addition to her Grammy best new artist nod.