

THE LOCAL VOICE 2025 NORTH MISSISSIPPI HILL COUNTRY PICNIC GUIDE - FREE - WATERFORD, MISSISSIPPI - READ AT MAXIMUM VOLUME

nmshillcountrypicnic.com

TH MISSISSIPPI HILL COUNTRY PICNIC

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27-28 202

*NORTH MISSISSIPPI * **HILL COUNTRY PICNIC JUNE 27-28, 2025 • WATERFORD, MS**

North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic · Festival Guide · June 27-28, 2025 · NMSHillCountryPicnic.com

The Picnic is Ready for YOU!

Keepin' the down home alive and well, well, well ...

The goal of the North **Mississippi Hill Country Picnic** is to enhance appreciation and educate the general public about the native art form of North Mississippi Hill **Country Blues music through** performance, preservation, and interpretation.

WHAT TO BRING

- **Bug Spray**
- Blanket or chair for sitting
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Hat for shade
- Rain gear
- Shade tent
- More water!

WHAT NOT TO BRING

- No weapons
- No glass containers will be allowed ANYWHERE on the festival site
- For safety reasons NO motorized vehicles inside the festival (No golf carts or 4 wheelers except by event staff).
- For safety seasons NO pets
- No professional photography equipment, please restrict photos to the first 2 songs of each artist set and NO video or audio recording.

THE PICNIC HAS

- Portable toilets
- Showers
- Water faucets for drinking water
- Vendors will be selling various food, snacks, and beverages
- Campsites
- The largest collection of authentic Hill Country Blues musicians you can find on one stage in 2025.

TICKETS & GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Tickets are available online at NMSHillCountryPicnic. com and Eventbrite.
- Online ticket sales end Wednesday, June 23 at 11:30
- All ticket sales at the gate are CASH ONLY. There is no ATM available at the festival site.
- VIP tickets must be purchased online.
- Gates open Thursday, June 26 at 5 pm. No one will be admitted early. Music goes from 1 pm till midnight on Friday and 9 am till midnight on Saturday. All Picnic attendees must be off site by Sunday, June 29 by noon—no late departures.
- Friday Only: \$25
- Saturday Only: \$25
- Camping: \$15 (Flat rate of \$15/person to spend 1–3 nights. If you spend the night you pay \$15, no cars in camp ground.) No open fires on the festival site.
- RV Fee: \$100
- Ice Chest inside festival: \$10 (NO GLASS allowed on festival site.)
- CASH ONLY NO ATM AVAILABLE AT FES-
- If you go out the ticket gate, you must have your wristband on to re-enter the festival site.
- Parking is FREE!
- Children 12 and under are admitted for FREE
- Really Cool Art Vendors and Picnic Merch are available for sale on site, Picnic Merch is CASH ONLY!

SHADE TENTS

Shade tents are only allowed in designated area and only as room allows. When that area is full no other shade tents will be allowed. Size limit 10×20 , 10×10 is preferred.

WHAT DO VIP TICKETS INCLUDE?

The VIP ticket includes access to a covered, concrete floor pavilion with tables, chairs, and fans. One meal a day on Friday & Saturday and four non-alcoholic drinks each day. You are welcome to bring your own cooler for \$10 (no glass please), and the very best view of the stage!







The Local Voice media company in Oxford, Mississippi is proud to partner with the Picnic to bring you this official festival guide. There are free souvenir printed copies around the picnic grounds and a digital download is available. Just scan the QR code on the big ass banner near the stage for more information, videos, and artists' links. See you at the Picnic!

-Newt Rayburn (Publisher)

-Nature Humphries (Editor)

The stage miniature on the front cover was created artist Lee Harper. Cover design by Newt Rayburn.



THE HILL COUNTRY PICNIC CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY

It's time to ring in the summer with the hottest music festival in the region

by Davis Coen

On June 27 and 28, the area's finest performers of traditional, roots, blues, and rock will gather in Waterford, Mississippi, for what might be the biggest lineup yet.

The annual weekend family picnic and festival, which draws folks from throughout the Mid-South and beyond to enjoy live music, workshops, food,

and camping, has only missed two years since it began in 2006.

In addition to the Main Stage, the Campground Stage returns for the milestone year, to help accommodate over 25 acts. Many artists have been on board from the get go, while others are just becoming mainstays.

Not only is it a landmark year for founders Sara and Kenny Brown, but the many hardworking volunteers who hustle behind the scenes doing various tasks are now getting much deserved attention. At last year's Picnic

there were 49 volunteers—some travelling from has influenced the region." as far as New Mexico and Minnesota to offer their services—logging in an impressive 952 total volunteer hours.

This year there will even be some coming all the way from the Czech Republic to contribute their time to the event.

As a non-profit organization, the Picnic has always embraced their volunteers, sponsors, and supporters who help pursue its basic mission, which is "to enhance appreciation and educate the public about the native art form of North Mississippi Hill Country blues music, through performance, preservation, and interpretation."

Robb Roaten from Memphis, Tennessee, who first attended the Picnic in 2015 and was "immediately hooked" before getting on board to help, understands the important role he and his

"The music is of course the main event, but the community, connection to history, and celebra-

> tion of local creative culture makes for something far greater than the sum of its parts," said Roaten. "We couldn't do it without our volunteers and our sponsors who make putting this event on each year possible."

> Also, Roaten said, "approximately 35% have been volunteers for over 10 years," which says a lot about the overall dedication. Volunteers help with a range

of tasks such as site prep, artist hospitality, medical staff, parking, photography, raffle and merchandise tents, promotion, poster distribution across the Southeast, graphic design, and transportation of rental items.

Roaten has always been a fan of the "distinctive energy in the music coming from North Mississippi and how it

Other volunteers have been on board from the beginning, like Aby Koleski, who has been in charge of catering since the early years when the two-day festival took place at a 1,100-acres site in Potts Camp, Mississippi.

Aby and her late husband Don began cooking backstage and taking care of musicians around the third year, along with couple Ray and Nina Gandy.

Aby and her husband eventually enlisted their daughter Brandi and all three of their grandsons to become involved.

Two grandsons, Casey and Cody, worked for a short time before joining the Air Force and Navy, but William has been with Aby backstage taking care of folks for about twelve years—along with "adopted" son, Jason.

"We are a three generation Picnic family,"

From Aby's point of view, "Improvements have been made every year," especially compared to the old days in Potts Camp."

She called it a "Well oiled machine," much due to the loyalty of the volunteers. "You basically have the same people working back there every year, and they know what needs to be done and how."

Aby feels that the Waterford site has an advantage because the facilities are "built and designated" specifically to accommodate the event.

> For most attendees the Picnic is a weekend event, but Aby calls it a "fourday affair," because it requires her and the crew to arrive on Thursday to set up and make full use of every provision.

Aby and company will get their much loved hamburgers and hot dogs going on Friday, then usually do barbecue on Saturday.

And, even though she may not remember every musicians's name, there are some she's seen almost every year, and will always greet her with "hugs and 'Good-to-see-yous!""



She said, "It's really, really awesome. I feel like we were blessed to be able to do this to help Kenny and Sara. I have always let my grandkids know how special it was that they even had the privilege of being there, because it's just a life experience that they would never get anywhere else."

Dwight Bradshaw, a friend of Kenny's since before the Picnic began, recalls the old days in Potts Camp, where he helped with everything from setting up, to doing wiring and construction work, to sitting in when a medical team member wasn't able to make it.

"It's unique to me about the best way to describe it," said Bradshaw. "It's just like the music's coming out of the ground."

Another longtime volunteer is **Archie Storey**, who has also helped the Browns since the Potts Camp days.

He remembered selling t-shirts in the early days when the only vendors were **R.P. Funderburk**—who turned making bird houses into an artform—and the Boy Scouts selling merchandise.

Archie and his wife **Kristie** created a vendor village where they sell everything from handmade cigar box guitars to paintings to tie dyes.

He recalled a memorable vending experience once when a man approached asking questions about cigar box guitars several times throughout the day, but mostly just to escape the hot sun.

Archie explained to the man that cigar boxes are more about encouraging the craft and history and that different ones were prices, but the would-be customer was still standoffish.

"My theory is if you're interested in mine, that you can go and build your own," he said. "It's just a box and a stick."

The man eventually purchased a cigar box, and told him, "It's just because you're so honest."

Sharing this beloved craft with others is the important part. The "premise behind building cigar box guitars is to help," Archie said.

He also recalled that what got him started decades earlier was watching a video of Luther Dickinson of the North Mississippi Allstars playing one.

What it comes down to is a "big happy family," and that it will be a good time to sit back and reminisce on the 20 years, and appreciate what the Browns have accomplished.

"It's an actual family picnic," he emphasized. "I think when they named it back in the day, they named it perfect—because that's what it is. To see what Sara has done over the past 20 years to help preserve a genre of the blues that almost was undiscovered by the masses up until the late 90s—it's an amazing thing."

RAFFLE!



Don't forget to get your raffle tickets at the Picnic for the chance to win plenty of incredible items, including this guitar signed by all of the 2024 artists. The guitar is a custom build, made by Chuck Lirette (pictured above with Duwayne Burnside and Robert Finley). You must be present to win, so make your plans to attend the 2025 Picnic and you could be the owner of some really cool stuff!











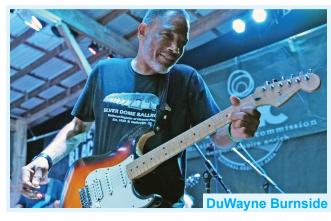
BLACK KEYS



MAIN STAGE FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 2025 LINEUP

11 pm **DUWAYNE BURNSIDE**

DuWayne Burnside, son of the legendary bluesman **R.L. Burnside**, carries on his father's musical legacy while carving out his own distinctive path in the blues world. DuWayne grew up immersed in the sounds of Hill Country blues, learning from his father and other local musicians. He inherited R.L.'s raw, hypnotic style but has evolved it with his own modern sensibilities, infusing elements of funk, soul, and rock into his music. DuWayne has collaborated with artists like **North Mississippi Allstars** and **Cedric Burnside** to keep the Hill Country blues tradition alive and thriving. With albums like *Under Pressure* and *Bout 2 Get Wild*, DuWayne continues to captivate listeners with his electrifying performances and soul-stirring songs, ensuring that the Burnside family's musical legacy remains a vital force in the blues landscape.





NORTH MISSISSIPPI ALLSTARS

Luther and Cody Dickinson started the North Mississippi Allstars in 1996. They were inspired by their father, the legendary producer and musician Jim Dickinson, as well as their neighbors and elders, such as R.L. Burnside, Junior Kimbrough, Otha Turner, and Fred McDowell. Luther's first national tour was playing guitar for Burnside in 1997, when he was touring A Ass Pocket of Whiskey and selling out shows throughout North America. Luther says, "That experience blew my mind. RL, Kenny Brown, and Cedric Burnside taught me how to tour. Cody and I have been on the road ever since." Their latest release Still Shakin' (June 2025) celebrates the 25th anniversary of their Grammy-nominated debut album Shake Hands With Shorty. Luther says, "Still Shakin' is a celebration of our life-changing first album, which we released 25 years ago, and a love letter of appreciation to everyone who supported us and kept us inthe game all these years.

9 pm **BLUE MOUNTAIN**

With their first Picnic appearance since 2013, Blue Mountain, formerly **The Hilltops**, emerged in Oxford, Miss. in the early '90s, and has featured numerous drummers—most infamously **Frank Coutch**, and is led by hard-working guitarist, singer-songwriter **Cary Hudson**, with the talented **Laurie Stirratt** on bass and vocals. Hudson has also released several solo albums on the record label, **Black Dog Records**, and performs sometimes with daughter **Anna**.



7 pm KUDZU KINGS

The Kudzu Kings, hailing from Oxford, Mississippi, are renowned for their eclectic blend of rock, country, and Southern roots music. Formed in the

Kent Burnside, grandson of the iconic bluesman R.L. Burnside, carries on his family's musical tradition with passion and authenticity. Hailing from Holly Springs, Mississippi, Kent learned the blues from his grandfather and other local musicians, soaking in the raw energy and emotional depth of the Hill Country blues style. With his gritty vocals, soulful guitar playing, and driving rhythms, Kent channels the spirit of his forebears while infusing his own modern twist into the genre. Embracing the raw and unfiltered essence of the blues, Kent Burnside mesmerizes audiences with his electrifying performances, keeping the flame of Mississippi blues burning bright for new generations to discover and cherish.

sippi, are renowned for their eclectic blend of rock, country, and Southern roots music. Formed in the mid-1990s, the band quickly gained a loyal following with their infectious melodies, tight harmonies, and high-energy performances. Drawing inspiration from their Southern surroundings, the Kudzu Kings infuse their music with a distinctive sense of place, capturing the essence of small-town life in the Deep South. With a knack for storytelling and a laid-back charm, the band's songs often celebrate the quirks and idiosyncrasies of Southern Culture while exploring universal themes of love, longing, and the passage of time. Over the years, the Kudzu Kings have become beloved fixtures of Oxford's music scene, embodying the spirit of community and camaraderie that defines the vibrant landscape





6 pm

ROBERT KIMBROUGH SR. BLUES CONNECTION

Robert Kimbrough Sr. continues the Cotton Patch Soul Blues style created by his father, the legendary Junior Kimbrough. From an early age, Robert was steeped in the sounds and life of North Mississippi and its distinctive style of blues. Growing up, Robert listened, first-hand, to Mississippi blues royalty that played with his father at home, at Junior's Juke Joint Club, and the ever frequent weekend house party and porch jam session. The blues was simply part of everyday life as a Kimbrough.

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of Mississippi.

STUD FORD RETURNS TO THE PICNIC AS CAMPGROUND STAGE HEADLINER FRIDAY 3 PM

by Davis Coen

One of many awaited returns to the North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic this year is **Stud Ford**, who will close out Friday's live music at the Campground Stage, starting at 3 pm along with **Will Coppage**.

Even though Stud has been on the Main Stage in the past, mostly as a drummer with grandfather **T-Model Ford** and others, he will have a different role in 2025 as the Campground headliner for Friday, since relocating to **Colorado** and shifting focus to guitar.

"I'm looking forward to it," he said. "I'm going to tear it down."

Stud Ford shares a unique journey through his music and is deep rooted in the Delta and Hill Country traditions. Growing up in **Greenville**, **Mississippi**, he was introduced to a life of music at an early age by his grandfather and quickly found comfort and identity on stage through percussion.

Stud is deeply influenced by T-Model and artists like **R.L. Burnside**, **Junior Kimbrough**, and **Cedric Burnside**—who also played drums with his legendary grandfather.

He cut his teeth playing with blues notables such as Robert Belfour, Jimmy Duck Holmes, Kenny Brown, Lightnin' Malcolm, and Duwayne Burnside.

He recalled his first time on the Picnic stage at the original site in **Potts Camp**, Mississippi, as a child hitting a stick against a ride cymbal along with the great **Paul Wine Jones**, who told him to hit a tom, but young Stud was confused about exactly what piece to hit.

As a teenager he got inspired by watching some of the successful new generation of musicians in action, like **Luther** and **Cody Dickinson** of the



Above: Stud with T-Model Ford in 2006. Below: 2009. Photos courtesy of North MS Hill Country Picnic.
Right: Photo courtesty of Stud Ford.



North Mississippi Allstars, and was also able to go on a tour with them.

"Last time I saw those guys, I was about 15 years old. I remember just asking them questions about everything," he said with a laugh.

But I've grown as an artist, and I'm eager to show my peers and colleagues," said Stud. "And of course, now I have way more stories to tell."

It will also be the first time for Coppage on the Picnic lineup, as the duo continues their **Mississippi Shake Tour**, promoting their debut EP *Ain't*



No Love. Stud's experience with the Allstars along with his deep blues heritage have made his collaboration with Coppage a fresh, energetic sound.

Also from Greenville, Coppage knows Stud from the past but they weren't reintroduced until recently by a mutual friend; they then began blending their diverse backgrounds into one unique sound.

He describes their style as a mix of traditional blues, hip hop, rock, jam band, and singer-songwriter influences, although he's reluctant to use the word blues and stresses that music should transcend labels.

"Blues is just life," he said.

Besides the title track, "Ain't No Love," Stud called the track "Shake" another highlight of the EP, and also of the duo's live set.

"It's going to be very interesting, being back," he said. "I'm just ready to show them what I got. I hope they're proud of me."

Although it's been a while, Stud is ready to embrace the spirit of the Picnic. "It's just a sacred place. You can feel the blues and the soul."



5 pm ROCKET 88

Rocket 88 was formed in the summer of 2005 and continues to bring its Mississippi-soaked sound to audiences. Sometimes referred to as "Oxford's House Band," Rosamond Posey (vocals, rhythm guitar), Jamie Posey (vocals, lead guitar, harmonica), and Nathan Robbins (bass, vocals) make up



C A T H E A D D I S T I L L E R Y

VISIT MISSISSIPPI



MAIN STAGE SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 2025 LINEUP

10:30 pm GARRY BURNSIDE

Garry Burnside is an accomplished blues musician hailing from the storied Burnside family, a lineage renowned in the world of Mississippi blues. The son of the legendary R.L. Burnside, Garry has carved out his own niche while honoring his father's legacy. His guitar playing is distinguished by a raw, powerful style that evokes the rugged spirit of the Delta, and his performances are a testament to his deep-rooted connection to the genre. Throughout

WORDS

Garry Burnside

his career, he has collaborated with a variety of artists and bands, including the Burnside Exploration and the North Mississippi Allstars, showcasing his versatility and deep understanding of the blues.

In addition to his work as a performer, Garry Burnside is also committed to preserving and promoting the blues. He has participated in numerous educational initiatives and

workshops, aiming to inspire a new generation of musicians to appreciate and continue the traditions of the Mississippi blues. Through his dedication to both his craft and his heritage, Garry Burnside not only upholds the legacy of his famous father but also ensures that the soulful sounds of the Mississippi blues will continue to resonate with audiences for years to come.

9 pm ALVIN YOUNGBLOOD HART'S MUSCLE THEORY

Alvin Youngblood Hart is a virtuoso guitarist and

multi-instrumentalist deeply rooted in the blues tradition. Hailing from California but steeped in the rich musical heritage of Mississippi, Hart's style effortlessly blends Delta blues, country, rock, and folk influences into a captivating tapestry

of sound.



Throughout his career, Alvin Youngblood Hart has garnered critical acclaim and earned numerous accolades, including a Grammy Award for Best Traditional Blues Album. He is known for his technical prowess on the guitar, seamlessly shifting between slide and fingerstyle playing with precision and flair.

With a discography spanning over two decades and collaborations with luminaries like **Taj Mahal** and **Ben Harper**, Alvin Youngblood Hart continues to inspire and influence generations of musicians with his unparalleled talent and unwavering dedication to the craft.

7:45 pm **KENNY BROWN**

Kenny Brown is a highly respected blues musician renowned for his mastery of Mississippi Hill Country blues. Born and raised in Nesbit, Mississippi, Brown honed his skills playing alongside legends like Mississippi Fred McDowell and R.L. Burnside. His unique blend of traditional blues with elements of rock and punk has earned him a dedicated following and critical acclaim. Brown's distinctive style, characterized by raw, hypnotic rhythms and blistering slide guitar work, pays homage to the rich musical heritage of the Mississippi Delta while pushing the boundaries of the genre.



6:30 pm CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE & ELVIN BISHOP

Elvin Bishop & Charlie Musselwhite are Blues Hall of Famers and longtime friends from Chicago's 1960s blues scene. They reconnected for a duo album 100 Years Of Blues, which is a raw, soulful collection blending originals and classics. Known for their deep roots, playful chemistry, and masterful musicianship, Bishop (of Paul Butterfield Blues Band fame) and Musselwhite (a Grammy-winning harmonica virtuoso) deliver timeless blues steeped in authenticity and heart.



5:30 pm RISING STARS FIFE & DRUM BAND

Traditional fife and drum music is a vanishing American folk music tradition derived from country blues, martial music tradition, and African rhythms. The late **Otha Turner** founded the **Rising Star Fife** & **Drum Band**, which is now led by his grand-daughter **Shardé Thomas**.

4:30 pm ERIC DEATON

Eric Deaton is a torch-bearer of the North Mississippi Hill Country blues tradition, having received an apprenticeship first-hand from the masters of this particularly hypnotic, backwoods strain of blues. Eric has recorded albums with The Black Keys and Hank Williams, Jr. Eric's band includes Junior Kimbrough's son Kenny.



3:30 pm **JIMBO MATHUS**

Jimbo Mathus is a multifaceted musician whose career spans genres from blues and Americana to rock and country. Born in Oxford, he grew up in Mississippi, deeply influenced by the rich musical heritage of the region. Mathus gained prominence as a founding member of the swing revival band Squirrel Nut Zippers in the 1990s.

2:50 pm **DUWAYNE BURNSIDE & KENNY BROWN DUO**

R.L. Burnside's son teams up with R.L.'s adopted son for this electric duo that is sure to get you off your seat and on your feet.



2:10 pm **AFRISSIPPI**

Afrissippi is an afro-beat/blues/experimental band based out of Oxford, Mississippi, with Guelel Kumba (voice and guitar), Eric Deaton (guitar and voice), Kinney Kimbrough (drums) Justin Showah (bass), and Papa Assane M'baye (handdrum). Guelel Kumba comes from the Futa Tooro fregion of West Africa, and is a member of the Fulani people. "The blues is close to my music. The lyrics are different, but the emotions are the same," he says. "I loved the melodies but I was too young to understand the anguish yet."

1:30 pm **CAM KIMBROUGH** HILL COUNTRY REUNION

Cam Kimbrough is a Hill Country artist, producer, drummer, guitar player, songwriter, rapper, and vocalist. Grandson of the legendary Junior Kimbrough, he is continuing the Hill Country music tradition with a very original and modern approach. Kimbrough recently spent several years performing regularly throughout the Southwestern U.S.

2–2:45 pm

WOLFEAGLE FT. TRENTON AYERS

Trenton Ayers has been playing guitar since age four. The son of Earl "Little Joe" Ayers, he has played with The Electric Mudd, Cedric Burnside Project, and more. He was nominated for a GRAMMY in 2015 for his album Descendants of Hill Country.

noon

BILL STEBER & LIBBY RAE WATSON

Libby Rae Watson is an authentic blues woman who has been playing since the early 1970s, when she discovered the blues in her hometown of Pascagoula. She helped organize the talent for the very first Delta Blues Festival in Greenville, Mississippi, in 1978. Libby Rae has played many festivals and music venues all over the world.

CAMPGROUND STAGE LINEUP

FRIDAY, JUNE 27

1 pm OLI & ADAM

Oli & Adam are a blues duo steeped in the North Mississippi traditions, consisting of New York-based Oliver Kostrinky (vocals & guitar), Adam Sikora (harmonica), who hails from Berlin, Germany.

3 pm

STUD FORD & WILL COPPAGE

Power duo Stud Ford & Will Coppage are old friends from Greenville, Miss., who have recently collaborated on a number of live performances and witnessed growing audiences. Coppage and blues legacy Ford released their debut EP Ain't No Love in April 2025.

SATURDAY, JUNE 28

9 am

JOHN MCDOWELL & CHRISTINE CONLEY

While their love of music began long before their love for each other, Christine Conley & John McDowell have combined the two to create fun and inspiring songs that will leave you smiling.

9:40 am

LITTLE JOE AYERS

Earl "Little Joe" Ayers is a guitarist and singer from Lamar, Mississippi, who plays Hill Country blues. He was the bass player for legendary Cotton Patch Soul blues musician Junior Kimbrough, and the two played house parties together as teenagers. Ayers is known for his elegant guitar playing and soulful voice, and often performs covers in the style of R.L. Burnside or T-Model Ford.

10:15 am

JUST GROOVIN' EXPERIENCE w/ DAVIS COEN

Memphis R&B and funk/blues band Just Groovin' Experience returns, with favorites from the vinyl years, blended with contemporary Mid-South blues. Recently they accompanied local guitarist Davis Coen on his *Live at Proud Larry's* album.

11 am

THE NONCONNAH OUTLAWS w/ MARLOW DURROUGH

Marlow Dorrough is a drummer and guitarist from Ruleville, Mississippi. He is the son of legendary Mississippi guitarist Duff Dorrough. He has played with Duff Dorrough & The Revelators, Solar Porch, Brad Moneymaker Band, Lawdogs, and more. With the Outlaws, Marlow regularly tours a variety of venues and festivals, and much like his father is a regional favorite.





HILL COUNTRY

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