Rolling Stone COUNTRY

22 Best Things We Saw at Americana Music Fest 2015

From a hushed showcase by Jewel to raucous rave-ups by Los Lobos and JD McPherson, Rolling Stone Country singles out the most mesmerizing performances of the annual festival

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Best Newcomer: Christian Lopez

Christian Lopez didn't have much to work with — just a short slot on midday Friday at the United Artists showcase — but this 19-year-old West Virginian who sings like a pop-coated Cory Branan and looks like a spruced-up character from *The Outsiders* packed so much kinetic energy into his set, and sliced so many strings, that he had to finish on a borrowed guitar. While his debut LP, *Onward*, is a plucky and occasionally subdued showcase of his Appalachian roots, Lopez brings way more youthful twang to his live performances. There may be some serious influences in there (mountain bluegrass, old gospel) and a serious producer (Dave Cobb) but, at his best, he's a maker of smart and slick country that holds a whole lot of promise and age-appropriate fun without pandering to any radio trends. *M.M.*