



TOT3: A WEEKEND TO REMEMBER

The songs. The stories. The people who made it happen.



THE TOT3 FAMILY / HISTORIC DEADWOOD, SOUTH DAKOTA

Photo: Jen Logston

70+

SINGER-SONGWRITERS

18

STATES

6

VENUES

THIRD ANNUAL FESTIVAL RECAP

The third annual Trails of Tales Songwriter Festival - better known to our growing family as TOT3 - is officially in the books, and what a week it was. More than 70 singer-songwriters from 18 states gathered in historic Deadwood, South Dakota, for a celebration of original music and the stories behind the songs.

The festivities began October 14 with a kickoff party at The Nugget, followed by the official festival October 15-17. Across six venues, fans discovered new favorites and reconnected with familiar faces as artists shared their songs with listeners and fellow songwriters from across the country.

Music started at noon each day and carried on well into the night - or, as we like to measure it, until fan favorite Todd Kieffer turned into a pumpkin. To every artist, fan, venue, sponsor, and helping hand: thank you for making TOT3 a huge success.

VOICES FROM THE TRAIL

“Had a blast at Trails of Tales Songwriter Festival in Deadwood this past weekend!”

- Savanna Chestnut

“a perfect weekend in Deadwood”

- Lizzy Hofer

Reflecting on TOT & Wild West



TRAILS OF TALES

STORIES FROM THE TRAIL

OCTOBER 2026 / ISSUE 01

BEHIND THE TALES

Stories Beneath the Surface

Barstools & Backroads catches up with the songwriters of TOT3



THE BARSTOOLS & BACKROADS TEAM
Photo: Jen Logston

“Thank you for sharing your stories with us. This has started a whole new journey for us as well.”

- Barstools & Backroads

Some of the stories shared at TOT3 unfolded away from the stage. Barstools & Backroads joined this year's festival, sitting down with artists for private interviews downstairs at the Wild Bill Bar, just feet from the historic site where Wild Bill Hickok was shot.

The podcast explores the people, history, and stories behind America's hometown bars and roadside watering holes. That approach made Deadwood a fitting stop - and TOT3 an opportunity to get to know the people behind the music.

Afterward, the team shared its appreciation for the festival and the artists who opened up to them. They promised followers introductions to a new world of musicians who write the songs as well as sing them. Their parting thought summed it up: “Music that is worth the Backroad!”

[Listen & follow Barstools & Backroads](#)

TOT3 HONORS

A Little Hardware, a Lot of Heart

TOT3's first festival awards celebrated everything from late nights to lifting others up.

New this year, Trails of Tales added a few awards with a personality all their own. Director of Media and Creative Alex Kucera earned the Forrest Gump Award for being constantly on the run throughout the festival. Grand Island, Nebraska's Anthony Segovia took home the Todd Kieffer Pumpkin Award for staying out well past his bedtime.

Alongside the laughs were two honors selected before the festival. Savanna Chestnut received the Rising Tide Award for founding the Heartland Music Awards, celebrating independent talent and the community supporting it. With nominees and winners chosen by fellow artists, the inaugural ceremony takes place November 8, 2026, at the Granada Theater in Emporia, Kansas. Her work reflects the award's spirit: helping others rise alongside her.

Red Cloud, Nebraska's Agustus Schriener received the Trailblazer Award, recognizing his career growth over the past year and the work behind that progress.

Young guns Nolan Leonard and Shane Parde earned Surprise Duo of the Week for their “Off the Trails” performances. Leonard, a country singer-songwriter from southwest Iowa, teamed up with nine-year-old Parde of Adams, Nebraska, who wowed listeners with John Denver's “Take Me Home, Country Roads” and selections from Waylon Jennings.



Nolan Leonard & Shane Parde
Surprise Duo of the Week
Photo: Jen Logston

[Heartland Music Awards](#)
November 8, 2026 / Emporia, KS



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ARTIST MILESTONES

From the Trail to the National Anthem

Olivia Faith celebrates a hometown honor in North Platte.



Olivia Faith at the October 22 event in North Platte, Nebraska.

Three festivals. One Trails family.
Congratulations, Olivia!

Just days after sharing her music at TOT3, North Platte native Olivia Faith stepped up to the microphone for another memorable performance. The three-time Trails of Tales performer was invited to sing the national anthem Thursday, October 22, as Vice President JD Vance visited her hometown.

The midterm campaign rally at North Platte's D&N Events Center brought a national political figure to western Nebraska - and gave the Trails family another reason to celebrate one of our own.

Olivia has been building her career as a country singer-songwriter. In December 2023, she appeared on North Platte's Z93.5 Country to discuss her debut country single, "Settle Down." Her brother, Drew Phillips, is also a musician and a familiar face to Trails fans.

From songwriter rounds in Deadwood to this special hometown honor, Olivia continues to add meaningful moments to her musical journey. We're proud to have had her on the trail for all three festivals.

NEW MUSIC FROM THE TRAIL

The Festival Ends. The Music Keeps Going.

New releases are becoming a Trails tradition, giving fans fresh music to take home.



Todd Kieffer
Black Dog



Sam Tomes
Ember's Drive (You're On My Mind)

ALSO OUT NOW

I Want You to Know

BRANDON LOGSTON

Released October 2, 2026

For Todd Kieffer, the release of "Black Dog" brought the story full circle. The single arrived during festival week, exactly one year after he wrote it at last year's Trails of Tales - a song born on the trail, now ready for listeners everywhere.

Sam Tomes added to the pre-festival excitement with "Ember's Drive (You're On My Mind)." Fellow three-time TOT performer Brandon Logston also brought new music into the season, releasing "I Want You to Know" on October 2.

These releases give fans a way to keep discovering the artists long after the final songwriter round. Find their music on your favorite streaming service, save a song, and follow the artists whose stories stay with you.

TAKE THE TRAIL WITH YOU

Listen to the Trails of Tales Spotify playlist and follow your favorites.



TRAILS OF TALES

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FEATURED / THE TRAILS OF TALES APP

Put the Festival in Your Pocket

Connecting the people, performances, and places along the trail.



Featured, left to right: Caleb Kenner, Director of Partnerships; DJ Bridwell, Co-Founder and Artist Relations/Event Coordinator; Alex Kucera, Director of Media and Creative; Dean Shaffer, Co-Founder and Director of Production and Branding. Photo: Jen Logston.

Over several months, Dean Shaffer, Co-Founder and Director of Production and Branding, created the official Trails of Tales app, helping connect the people, performances, and places that make the festival possible.

Behind the scenes, the app helps keep the festival moving, supporting artist communications and schedule building. For fans, it puts performance times, venue details, and festival updates together in one convenient place - making it easier to find their favorite performers along the trail.

Wondering who's playing next? Browse artist profiles, check times and locations, and connect with performers' social pages and streaming platforms. Event maps, sponsor information, and notifications help keep the festival community connected as the weekend unfolds.

It's also a way to take those discoveries home. When a songwriter catches your attention, their profile gives you a starting point to explore more of their music and keep following their journey beyond Deadwood.



LESS PAPER TO CARRY. MORE MUSIC TO DISCOVER.

Download Trails of Tales before your next adventure.
Google Play | Apple App Store



SPONSORSHIP SPOTLIGHT

HEROSTOCK

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR A
STRONGER TOMORROW

Supporting the Music. Strengthening the Community.

For the second year, HEROSTOCK stepped up as a sponsor of the Deadwood Trails of Tales Songwriter Festival, continuing a generous partnership that has helped support our artists and the experience we bring to fans.

This year, HEROSTOCK Founder and President Jason Steiner also picked up the microphone, serving as emcee for several songwriter rounds at Deadwood's VFW. His involvement brought another familiar face from the HEROSTOCK community into the heart of TOT3.

Founded in Nebraska in 2022 as VetStock, HEROSTOCK brings veterans, active-duty military, first responders, and Gold Star families together through music, camaraderie, and connections to organizations offering support. What began with two local bands and approximately 100 veterans and first responders has grown into events reaching well beyond that first Nebraska gathering.

Music is central to that mission. HEROSTOCK creates opportunities for people to connect, share experiences, and discover resources alongside live performances. That belief in the power of music and community makes its partnership with Trails of Tales a natural fit.

A special thank-you to Jason Steiner and the entire HEROSTOCK team for two years of generous support, for showing up for our songwriters, and for the work you do to honor those who serve. We're proud to have you as part of the Trails of Tales family.

[Learn more and get involved at herostock.org](https://herostock.org)

THE NEXT CHAPTER



Stay Tuned for TOT4

TOT3 may be in the books, but there's more happening on the trail. Watch for TOT4 details, artist news, upcoming events, and more from the Trails of Tales family.

Keep following. Keep listening. We'll see you on the trail.