

Radio follows country to New York

Ed Benson, executive director of the Country Music Association, took a lot of grief about moving Tuesday's awards show to New York City, but the move appears to be getting some of the desired results.

For more than three years, New York City has had no country music presence on the radio, making it and San Francisco the only major markets in the United States not to have a country music radio station. But in honor of next week's show, WNYE-91.5 FM has been playing country music for New Yorkers and will continue until the awards show is over.

"We are excited to be the station bringing country music back to the New York airwaves," said Arick Wierson, the general manager of NYC Media Group, which oversees WNYE. "The numbers speak for themselves.

Country is too big to not have a presence in the world's largest media market."

There are more than 2,000 country music stations in the country, making it far and away the leading format.

Another benefit of the New York move is that tickets were available for the first time to the general public because the seating capacity for the show being broadcast on CBS at 8 p.m. from Madison Square Garden is more than 10,000. The traditional home of the CMAs is the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. That venue can only seat 3,000, and those tickets are snapped up by association members.

Benson assures country music traditionalists that the show will return to Nashville next year for its 40th birthday.