

# CMA I S A U P

DECEMBER 2008 | JANUARY 2009

## SUGARLAND

THE ART OF TAKING RISKS

"THE 42nd ANNUAL  
CMA AWARDS"  
Highlights from "Country  
Music's Biggest Night"

NASHVILLE  
CELEBRATES COUNTRY

CMA BROADCAST  
AWARDS WINNERS

NEW CMA BOARD

Meet Board President  
STEVE MOORE

CRAIG MORGAN  
Returns to Major  
Label Roots

KITTY WELLS  
Long Lives the Queen

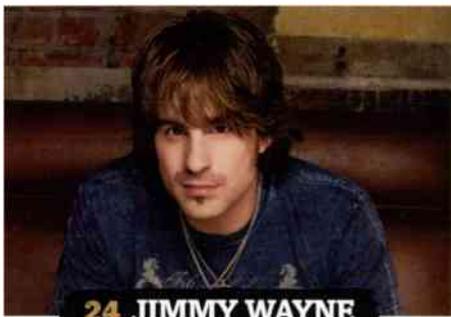
JIMMY WAYNE  
Believe Him Now



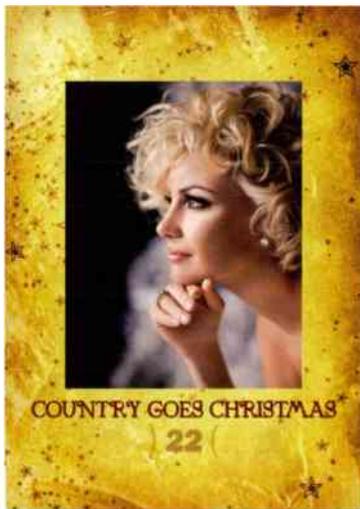
# cma close up

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photo: Kristin Barlowe

**It can take an enormous amount of work to create an appearance of effortlessness.**

That's certainly true of the CMA Awards. For months prior to the live broadcast, challenging goals are set and meticulous plans are made for how to once again celebrate "Country Music's Biggest Night."

From the many gifted members of the CMA staff to our colleagues at the ABC Television Network and among our valued Board members, partners, and friends in business, government, the artistic community and beyond, the level of dedication seems to grow each year, along with our ambitions to further the cause of this great American music.

In many ways, all of this preparation leads directly to the people who anchor Country Music's most high-profile event before the eyes of the world: those who have been chosen to serve as its hosts.

Through the years, we have benefited from the talents of many who are gifted with the ability to entertain millions of viewers, as well as the stars and fans assembled for the occasion at the Awards venue. It's not easy to look relaxed yet keep things running smoothly, to deliver a joke and then a serious reflection, and to do it all within the strict time limits of television programming.

The ideal hosts, like those who lay the groundwork for each CMA Awards, succeed because they make the difficult look easy. Certainly that was true of Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood, who debuted this year in this high-profile position. The grace and good humor of Brad and Carrie make them naturals for the CMA Awards. They both exemplify a combination of glamour and down-home charm that is Country Music at its best.

But don't take my word for it. Take it from Vince Gill, who set the standard during his 12-year run as host. I was very happy when, the day after we announced this year's hosts, he let me know that he was especially pleased with our choice. Whether recording on studio time or emceeing before the eyes of the world on the CMA Awards, there's no one whose endorsement means more. Vince, Brad and Carrie, as well as my friends Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn, who hosted the CMA Awards for three consecutive years — and all the past CMA Awards hosts — thanks for all that you've given.

Tammy Genovese



CMA Chief Executive Officer

CMA Close Up® welcomes your letters and feedback.

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Martina McBride "Ride"



Lady Antebellum "Love Don't Live Here"



Carrie Underwood "Just a Dream"



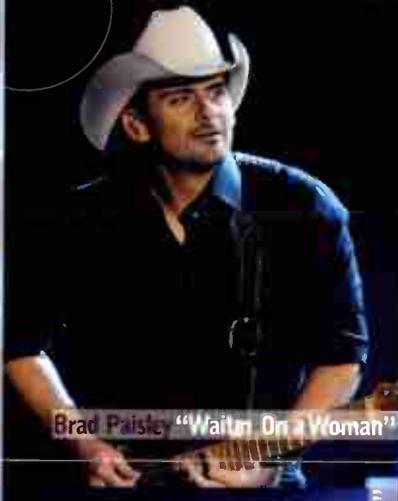
Eagles "Busy Being Fabulous"



Sugarland "Love"



Trace Adkins "You're Gonna Miss This"



Brad Paisley "Waiting on a Woman"



Darius Rucker "Don't Think I Don't Think About It"



James Otto "Just Got Started Loving You"



Keith Urban "Sweet Thing"

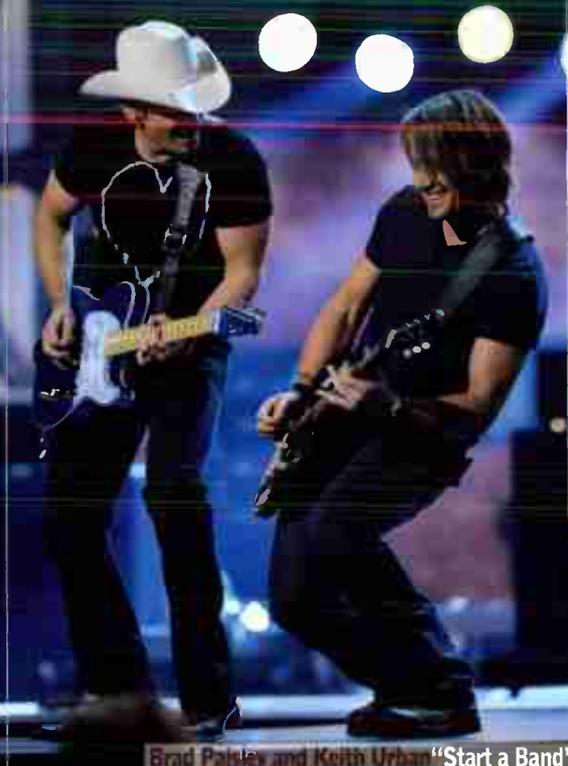


Kellie Pickler "Best Days of Your Life"

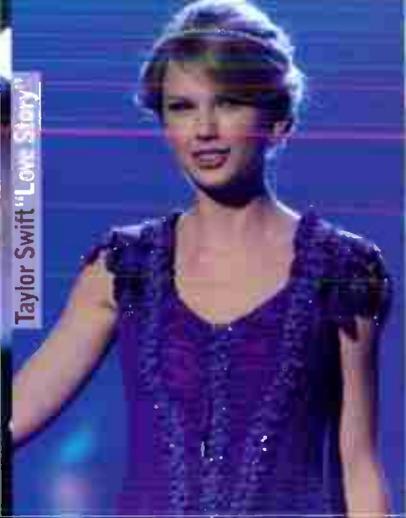




Alan Jackson "Good Time"



Brad Paisley and Keith Urban "Start a Band"



Taylor Swift "Love Story"

Rodney Atkins "It's America"



Jason Aldean "She's Country"



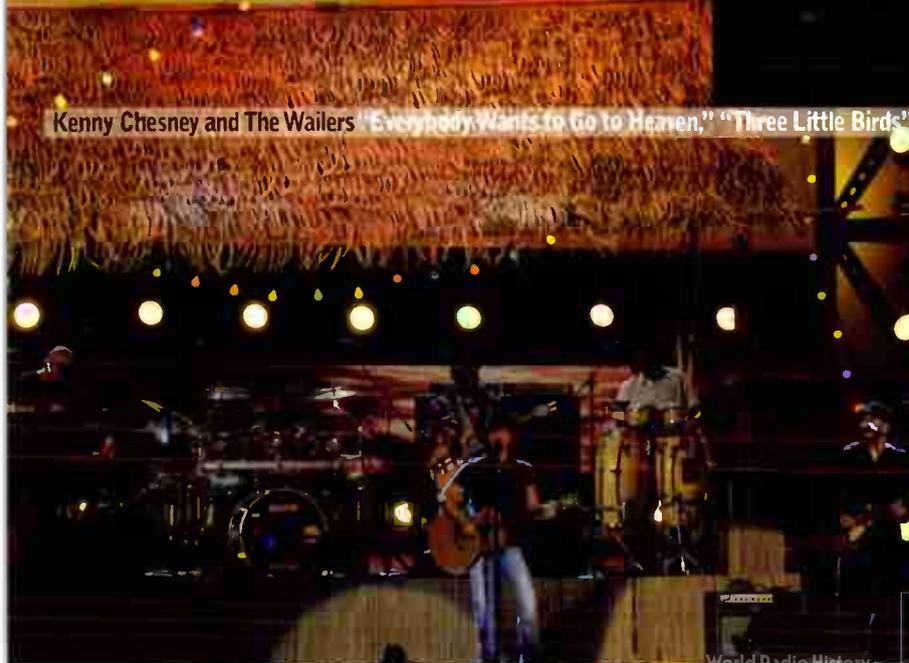
George Strait "River of Love"



Miranda Lambert "More Like Her"



Kid Rock "All Summer Long"



Kenny Chesney and The Wailers "Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven," "Three Little Birds"



Brooks & Dunn and Reba McEntire "Cowgirls Don't Cry"

the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual cma awards

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR **KENNY CHESNEY**



ALBUM AND SINGLE OF THE YEAR **TROUBADOUR AND "I SAW GOD TODAY"** GEORGE STRAIT PRODUCED BY TONY BROWN AND GEORGE STRAIT MCA NASHVILLE



MUSIC VIDEO OF THE YEAR **"WAITIN' ON A WOMAN"** BRAD PAISLEY FEATURING ANDY GRIFFITH (not present) DIRECTED BY JIM SHEA AND PETER TILDEN



VOCAL GROUP OF THE YEAR **RASCAL FLATTS**



MALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR **BRAD PAISLEY**



SONG OF THE YEAR **"STAY"** JENNIFER NETTLES



JENNIFER NETTLES PUBLISHING

MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

**MAC McANALLY**



MUSICAL EVENT OF THE YEAR **ROBERT PLANT AND ALISON KRAUSS (not present) "GONE GONE (DONE MOVED ON)"** Rounder Records

FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR **CARRIE UNDERWOOD**



VOCAL DUO OF THE YEAR **SUGARLAND**



NEW ARTIST OF THE YEAR **LADY ANTEBELLUM**



# Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood Debut as CMA Awards Hosts

by MAURICE MINER

He's the reigning Male Vocalist; she's the reigning Female Vocalist. They both won their first CMA Awards trophies as new artists honored with the Horizon Award. In the course of his decade-long chart career, he's become one of the most frequently nominated artists in the history of the CMA Awards and has taken home 11 trophies; she's won five CMA Awards and stands alongside Martina McBride, Reba McEntire and Tammy Wynette as the only women to have been named Female Vocalist three consecutive times.

But 2008 was a new milestone for both Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood, as they were paired for the first time to host "The 42nd Annual CMA Awards."

Both have long been faithful viewers of the Awards broadcasts; Paisley can recall watching the CMA Awards as an 8-year-old and he hasn't missed one since. "It's sort of our Oscars," he said of "Country Music's Biggest Night." "Any actor wants to win an Oscar; I grew up wanting to win this."

The last time a male-female combo hosted the CMA Awards, it was another pair of label mates and real-life friends. Like Paisley and Underwood, Vince Gill and Reba McEntire, who shared the stage in 1992, were both CMA Awards winners who were topping the charts with some of the biggest hits and best-selling albums of their careers. McEntire was already a veteran, having hosted three CMA Awards; for Gill, their joint appearance began his 12-year run as host.

"It seems like one of those things that would be out of reach," Underwood said. "I mean, Reba hosted. It's almost like little girls that are like me when I was young watched me being Reba [this year]."

"It's a big deal to me too," Paisley said. "I didn't ever think about it. When Vince said that he was stepping down, it crossed my mind a little bit that I would like a shot at that. But I thought, 'No. He was so good at this.' And now here we are. I can't believe we've done this."

The timing was perfect, as both hosts came into this year's Awards at the top of their game. Paisley's year began with word that his career album sales had surpassed 10 million, an accomplishment that coincided with his 10th No. 1 hit. Since then, two more songs have soared to the top, the latest being "Waitin' on a Woman," which won this year's Music Video of the Year Award, an honor he shares with TV icon Andy Griffith. Paisley also won his second consecutive Award in the Male Vocalist category and earned nominations for Entertainer and, with his self-penned "Letter to Me," Song of the Year.

"It's a big deal," he said. "It's a very prestigious thing in a Country musician's career to have a CMA Award."

Then, flashing his celebrated sly humor, he added with a smile, "Early in my career, I used to say it was the difference between going out and using a credit card to buy something the next day and being asked for ID or not."

Paisley has come down the home stretch of 2008 with the Nov. 4 release of *Play*, a guitar-based album filled with instrumentals and duets with Griffith, B. B. King, Buck Owens, Steve Wariner and Keith Urban, who joins Paisley on the lead single, "Start a Band." This exciting display of double-guitar virtuosity and rousing vocals was recreated live to open the Awards.

Underwood had her first CMA Awards experience in 2005, when she performed her inaugural hit "Jesus, Take the Wheel" on the show the same day her debut album, *Some Hearts*, was released. It went on to sell more than 7 million copies and spawn five No. 1 singles, including the 2007 CMA Single of the Year "Before He Cheats." In 2006, Underwood



took home the Horizon Award (now New Artist of the Year Award) and her first of three consecutive Female Vocalist of the Year Awards.

"It's definitely hard work recognized," she said. "When I was growing up, I didn't think about being on tour. You just think it's all glamour and glitz, but there is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes. Whenever you're nominated and whenever you win, every single person around you that helps you can take a little bit of that with them too."

This year, in addition to winning the Female Vocalist Award, Underwood garnered a nomination for Album of the Year with *Carnival Ride*, which has yielded four No. 1 hit singles, including her latest, "Just a Dream."

"This is such a watched and respected show," Paisley observed. "Nothing really boosts your career like this."

"Performing, winning or being a nominee," Underwood added.

"It's an amazing thing to think about who has done this before," he concluded. "Carrie and I went out there with these expectations for ourselves that were very high. We wanted to do a good enough job that people were happy we did this. In a nutshell, that's what you always want. And more than that, I care about this show and I wanted to do a good job."

As experienced as both are with recording and performing, they showed comparable skills in their debuts as Awards hosts. Paisley, who is known for his wit and penchant for practical jokes, pointed out that Underwood brought many of the same qualities to the table, observing that "she has a really dry sense of humor."

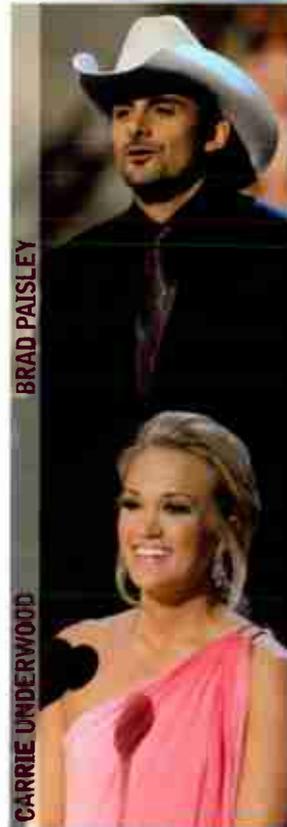
This served them both well right at the top of the show, when Paisley exited the stage after his opening with Urban and had all of 45 seconds to change from his performer to host clothes for their welcoming remarks. Underwood, who was standing nearby as he made the change, commented with a smile, "I've never seen so much of Brad Paisley."

"I was still getting dressed, walking out," he confirmed. "That's why we wrote that bit about me having to dress. And when that first joke landed, that's the thing I'll always remember. That's the moment where it was like, 'OK, good, maybe the rest of them will work.'"

Along with humor, the experiences already shared by these hosts helped cement their on-camera teamwork: They've toured together, recorded together (that's Underwood's searing vocal over the end of Paisley's "Online" and they duet on "Oh Love") and developed a strong mutual respect.

And if all that wasn't enough to pull it off, there was always "Star Trek." "We're both Trekkies!" Underwood exclaimed. "We should have, at some point, incorporated that into the show."

Paisley couldn't have agreed more: "Nothing would have sent the ratings through the roof like that!"



BRAD PAISLEY

CARRIE UNDERWOOD

photos: center: Bob D'Amico / ABC TV; right: Donn Jones and John Russell

the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual

# cma awards

COUNTRY MUSIC'S BIGGEST NIGHT

## george strait

**SURPASSES RECORD FOR MOST TROPHIES IN CMA AWARDS HISTORY WITH 22**

## kenny chesney

**WINS FOURTH ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

by AMANDA ECKARD

**T**he 42nd Annual CMA Awards spread the love around as Country Music's consistent hitmakers racked up Awards along with first-time winners.

George Strait's mantle got a little more crowded as he became the artist with the most CMA Awards in history, adding Single of the Year for "I Saw God Today" and Album of the Year for *Troubadour*, both produced by Strait and Tony Brown, to his tally. With these two trophies and two additional for producing, Strait's 22 CMA Awards trophies eclipse Brooks & Dunn's previous record of 19.

"I love this album and I really appreciate everyone who bought it," the humble Strait said after accepting his second Award of the night. "Everyone says they've got the greatest fans. Well, I really got the greatest fans."

And the fans continued to show their appreciation during Strait's performance of "River of Love."

One of Country's best showmen Kenny Chesney picked up his fourth Entertainer of the Year Award, tying Garth Brooks' record for the most wins in the category.

"As much as tonight is about Awards I really believe that being able to stand up here is more about great songs; it's more about the fans," Chesney said. "This is my fourth time standing up here and I am really humbled."

Earlier in the broadcast, Chesney brought out The Wailers to perform an island-flavored medley that combined Chesney's "Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven" and Bob Marley's classic "Three Little Birds."

Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood hosted the gala event live on the ABC Television Network from the Sommet Center in Downtown Nashville. Paisley remarked that he and Underwood "both grew up watching the CMAs each and every year," while Underwood joked, "We're new at this job so they can kick us out at any minute."

But it turns out that "Country Music's Biggest Night" was very good to its hosts.

Paisley picked up his second Male Vocalist and fourth Music Video of the Year Awards for "Waitin' on a Woman," featuring legendary actor Andy Griffith and directed by Jim Shea and Peter Tilden. "I won't take long," Paisley said with his signature sense of humor. "I've talked enough."

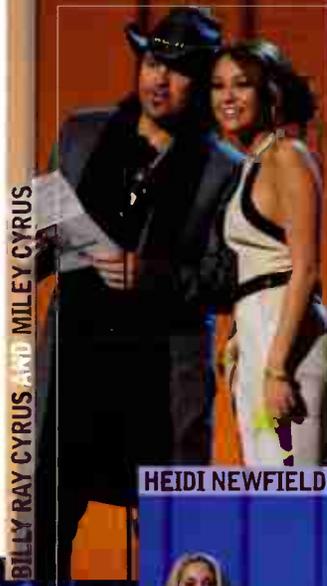
Backstage, Paisley expressed excitement about Griffith's first CMA Awards win. "I can't wait to talk to him about it. I'm sure he is thrilled."



VINCE GILL



TAYLOR SWIFT



BILLY RAY CYRUS AND MILEY CYRUS



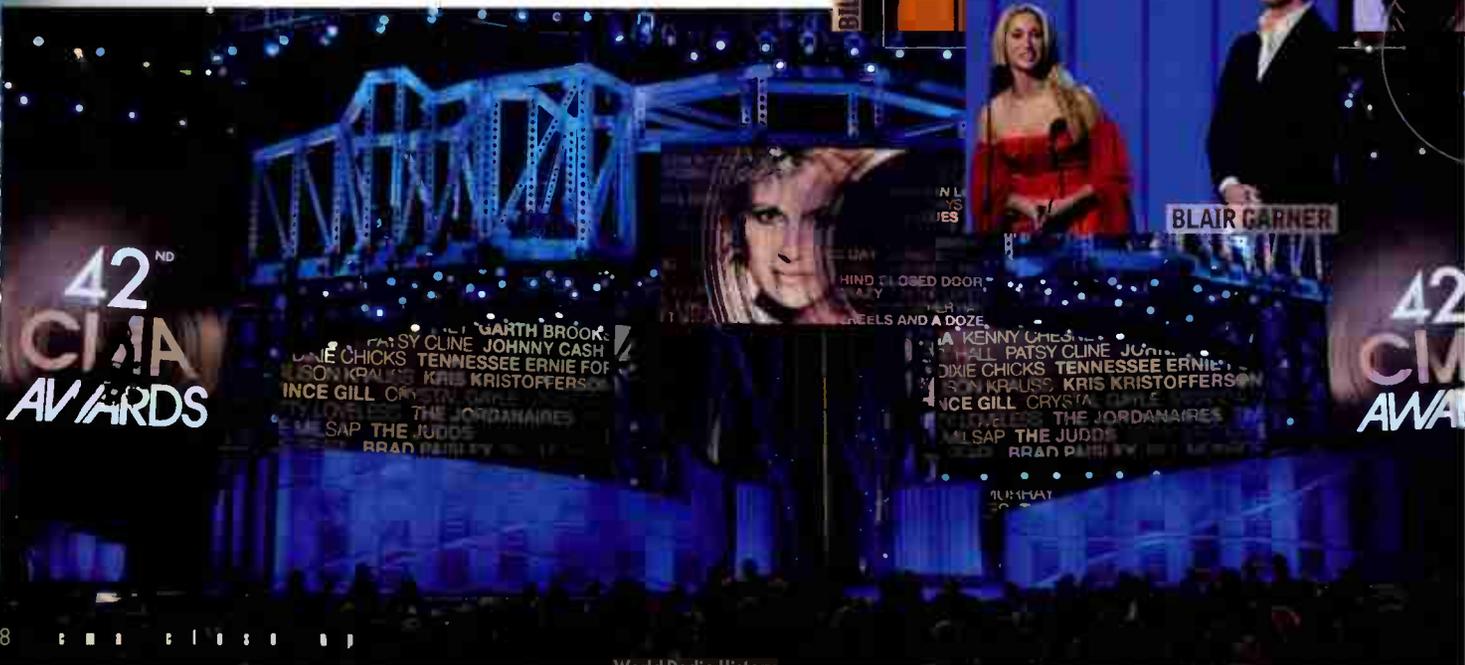
HUGH JACKMAN AND NICOLE KIDMAN

HEIDI NEWFIELD



BLAIR GARNER

the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual cma awards



# 42<sup>ND</sup> CMA AWARDS

GARTH BROOKS  
PATSY CLINE JOHNNY CASH  
DOLLY PARTON  
SON KRAUSE KRIS KRISTOFFERS  
VINCE GILL CRYSTAL BURNETT  
THE JORDANAIRE  
EMILY SAP THE JUDD  
BRAD PAISLEY

KENNY CHESNEY  
PATTY CLINE JENNIFER  
DIXIE CHICKS TENNESSEE ERNIE  
SON KRAUSE KRIS KRISTOFFERS  
VINCE GILL CRYSTAL BURNETT  
THE JORDANAIRE  
EMILY SAP THE JUDD  
BRAD PAISLEY

Underwood nabbed her third consecutive Female Vocalist of the Year Award. Upon accepting her Award, Underwood thanked those in the music industry who voted for her. "I got here in an unconventional way and you guys didn't have to accept me," she said.

One of the most touching moments of the night was when Leslie Ponder, wife of Master Sgt. James "Tre" Ponder who was killed in combat in Afghanistan, introduced Underwood's performance of "Just a Dream."

First-time Entertainer nominees Sugarland picked up their second consecutive Vocal Duo of the Year Award and lead singer Jennifer Nettles snagged her first Song of the Year Award for writing the duo's heart-wrenching single "Stay."

"You never know when you come up here if you are ever going to get to come up here again," Nettles said about their Vocal Duo win. "So we are very thankful."

Nettles and duo partner Kristian Bush later brought the house down with the powerful performance of "Love" from their third consecutive Platinum album *Love on the Inside*.

With their win for Vocal Group of the Year, Rascal Flatts tied The Statler Brothers for most consecutive wins in the category with six. The Statlers hold the record for most total wins for Vocal Group with nine. Group members Gary LeVox, Jay DeMarcus and Joe Don Rooney lavished praise repeatedly on the people that got them where they are today. "We thank all of our fans," LeVox said. "Again all of our fans, again all of our fans, again all of our fans."

Lady Antebellum picked up the coveted New Artist of the Year Award (formerly Horizon Award) after performing their breakout hit "Love Don't Live Here."

"It's very humbling," said Lady Antebellum member Hillary Scott backstage with bandmates Dave Haywood and Charles Kelley. "We do not take this lightly at all. We have so much to prove."

The other performers nominated for New Artist included Kellie Pickler with the sassy "Best Days of Your Life," James Otto with the sultry "Just Got Started Loving You," Jason Aldean with the rocking "She's Country" and Rodney Atkins offering a little slice of his backyard in "It's America."

In the pre-teletcast ceremony hosted by Heidi Newfield and Blair Garner of Premiere Radio Networks' "After MidNite," CMA Awards were given to two first-time winners — Mac McAnally for Musician of the Year and Robert Plant, who won the Musical Event of the Year Award with Alison Krauss for "Gone Gone Gone (Done Moved On)."

Paisley and fellow Entertainer and Male Vocalist of the Year nominee Keith Urban opened the show with their new vocal/guitar duet "Start a Band" from Paisley's *Play* album and then broke up later in the broadcast to each go solo. Urban performed "Sweet Thing" while Paisley offered CMA Award-winning song "Waitin' On a Woman." Fellow Male Vocalist nominee Alan Jackson brought along a few dozen friends to line dance to his party anthem "Good Time."

The Female Vocalist of the Year nominees showed why women in Country Music are a force to be reckoned with. Taylor Swift acted out a fairytale complete with Prince Charming in her performance of "Love Story," Martina McBride belted "Ride" and Miranda Lambert offered the poignant "More Like Her."

Vocal Duo of the Year nominees Brooks & Dunn got a little help from Musical Event of the Year nominee Reba McEntire to perform "Cowgirls Don't Cry."

Vocal Group of the Year nominees the Eagles made a return trip to the CMA Awards, performing "Busy Being Fabulous" from their wildly successful album *Long Road Out of Eden*. Two-time (Single and Music Video) Awards nominee Trace Adkins performed his hit "You're Gonna Miss This."

Country Music was infused with a little rock — Kid Rock. The Detroit native performed his mega hit "All Summer Long." Former Hootie and the Blowfish lead singer Darius Rucker showed his Country side performing his No. 1 hit "Don't Think I Don't Think About It."

A little bit of Hollywood came to Nashville in the form of Awards presenters, including the stars of the epic film "Australia" Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman, "Hannah Montana" stars Billy Ray Cyrus and Miley Cyrus and Reese Witherspoon, who appears in the holiday comedy "Four Christmases," with Tim McGraw and Dwight Yoakam.

Shania Twain made a special appearance, her first on the CMA Awards since 2005, to present the Entertainer of the Year Award and received a standing ovation from the audience.

Other presenters on "Country Music's Biggest Night" included Vince Gill, Julianne Hough, Heidi Newfield, Jake Owen, John Rich of Big & Rich, Taylor Swift, Josh Turner, Jimmy Wayne and Lee Ann Womack.



JOHN RICH OF BIG & RICH AND HEIDI NEWFIELD

REESE WITHERSPOON

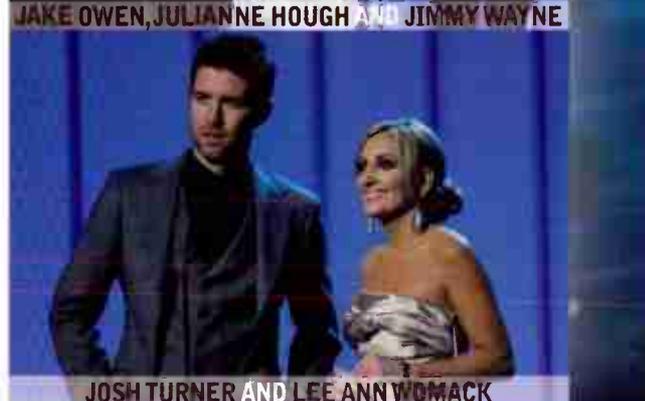


SHANIA TWAIN

LESLIE PONDER



JAKE OWEN, JULIANNE HOUGH AND JIMMY WAYNE



JOSH TURNER AND LEE ANN WOMACK

## Bob Dickinson Lights the Stars at CMA Awards



Lighting Director Ted Wells (l) and Lighting Designer Bob Dickinson at CMA Awards rehearsal.

Since the silent movie era, the "start" commands of filmmaking have been barked in this order: "Lights! Camera! Action!" Good thing too, or else viewers would have only murky shadows to squint at on their screens.

What's not so clear is how much work goes into the lighting part of the equation. For instance, Bob Dickinson, CMA Awards Lighting Designer for more than a dozen

years, begins his work on the event in May — six months before the live broadcast.

A 15-time Emmy Award winner, Dickinson has done lighting design and direction for the Academy Awards, American Music Awards, Grammy Awards, Tony Awards, Olympic ceremonies, concert specials and ongoing series that range from "Solid Gold" in the 1980s to "Ellen: The Ellen DeGeneres Show."

Yet within this stellar prospectus, Dickinson maintains a unique affection for the CMA Awards, in part because of his role in helping to evolve its look. When he got involved with the show, he recalled, "it skewed old-fashioned, with a traditional look. This was at a time when Country Music itself was undergoing a transition, a generational shift, and the CMA Board wanted to reflect that by making the show look more aggressive and more like popular touring music."

These changes were implemented in every aspect of production, which included dividing the stage into two areas, with one being cleared and reset as an artist performed in the other. "That made the job infinitely more complex because we had to almost double the instrumentation, so I brought in technology that was more powerful and computer-controlled than anything the CMAs had used in the past," Dickinson said.

As the pace quickened, rehearsals had to become more efficient. "Fortunately, Country Music performers tend to be disciplined," said Dickinson. "They arrive when they're supposed to arrive. If there's a new arrangement of their song, they've rehearsed it.

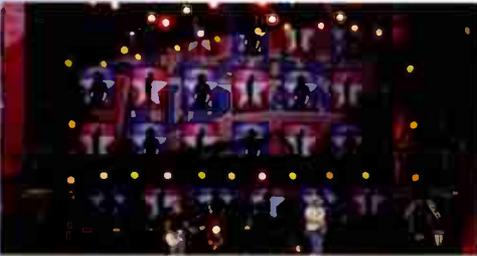
Of course, by this time we've become familiar with each song, broken it down and assigned looks to each part. We might want a teal look with some white shafts of light coming through it for one verse. Then, during the chorus, it'll go to a no-color look with accents of yellow or amber. A lot of programming goes into every cue, since we have hundreds and hundreds of moving lights in the system, and each has the ability to pan, tilt, change color, change size, change intensity — all of these parameters. And you probably have between 24 and 50 cues in one song.

"But we still get only about an hour with each act," he added. "We usually get to rehearse the song just three times. The first one, I'll be out in the audience or near the band, examining how they're moving. Then I go to the truck with the producer and director for two more rehearsals. And that's it. It's a really ferocious pace."

Add to that the technical upgrades that Dickinson incorporates into every Awards show. For this year's Awards, for example, he added 48 high-powered xenon lights, each one capable of emitting the kind of powerful spot you might see guards aim toward escapees during a prison break. The sheer magnitude seems to ramp up as well from one year to the next: Where Dickinson had 24 intelligent, automated lights to work with on his first CMA Awards in the '90s, that number has exploded to approximately 450.

"It's as much equipment as we install for the Grammy Awards," he summed up. "The CMA Awards has grown up to become one of the biggest events on television. It's great to still be a part of an event that's so entertaining and successful!"

Miranda Lambert



Jason Aldean

### CMA AWARDS REBROADCASTS ON CMT

Relive "Country Music's Biggest Night" again and again. Watch rebroadcasts of "The 42nd Annual CMA Awards" on CMT.

Saturday	Nov. 29	9 PM
Sunday	Nov. 30	3 PM
Monday	Dec. 1	9 PM
Tuesday	Dec. 2	1 PM
Wednesday	Dec. 10	9 PM
Thursday	Dec. 11	2 PM

(all times Eastern)

### ARTISTS AND MUSIC INDUSTRY LEADERS ATTEND PRE-TEL RECEPTION

CMA Board of Directors and American Airlines host the CMA Awards pre-telecast reception at the Sommet Center Suite Level Club where guests mingle before the start of the Awards.

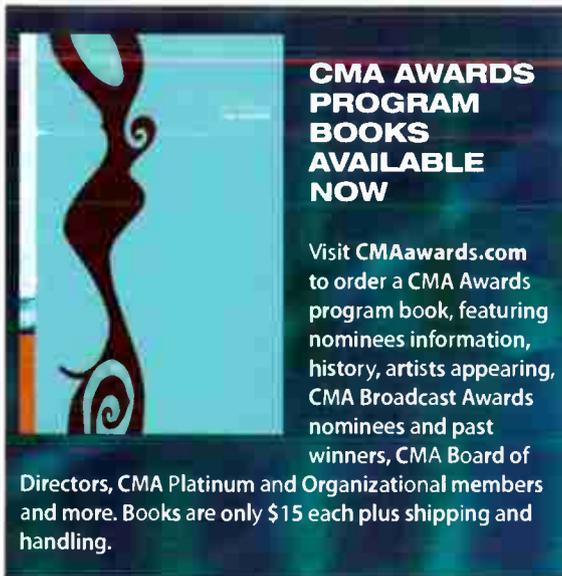


Jeff Walker, President, AristoMedia/Marco Promotions; Sue Peterson, Senior Buyer, Music, Target Stores; and David Ross, Publisher, Music Row Publications.



Becky Brenner, PD, KMPS/Seattle; [unclear] [unclear] and Victor Sansone.

Jim Free, President/CEO, Smith-Free Group; Kim Frank; and Horton Frank, Attorney, Stewart, Estes and [unclear].



**CMA AWARDS PROGRAM BOOKS AVAILABLE NOW**

Visit [CMAawards.com](http://CMAawards.com) to order a CMA Awards program book, featuring nominees information, history, artists appearing, CMA Broadcast Awards nominees and past winners, CMA Board of Directors, CMA Platinum and Organizational members and more. Books are only \$15 each plus shipping and handling.



Benjamin Kann receives the *CMA Close Up Award of Merit* in the media room backstage at the CMA Awards. Bob Doerschuk, Editor, *CMA Close Up*; Benjamin Kann; and Wendy Pear, CMA VP of Communications. photo Jim Hagans

**BENJAMIN KANN RECEIVES CMA CLOSE UP AWARD OF MERIT**

In a surprise presentation backstage at the CMA Awards, Belmont University senior Benjamin Kann received the second annual *CMA Close Up Award of Merit*.

A group of students is recruited each year, based on recommendations from department heads in journalism or equivalent programs at universities and colleges in Tennessee, to cover the CMA Music Festival under direction from *CMA Close Up* Editor Bob Doerschuk. Following a review by the *CMA Close Up* editorial staff of each member's creativity, dedication and promise, one is singled out to receive the Award.

Visit [CMAfest.com/2008](http://CMAfest.com/2008) to view work by this year's students, under the heading "CMA Music Festival News."

"Since I was 12, I've loved Country Music," said Kann. "It was a dream of mine to come to Nashville for a career in the music industry. Now that I am at Belmont, I'm living my dream. I'm so thankful that God has placed me in this position."

Born in New Delhi, India, adopted as a newborn and raised in Wisconsin, Kann is a music industry major. He has interned at Big Machine Records and Lyric Street Records and appeared as a dance extra in Alan Jackson's "Good Time" music video.

"Working at the CMA Music Festival was one of the most phenomenal opportunities I've ever had and I'm so grateful for it," continued Kann. "It provided me with the experience of writing under pressure and being a part of a fast-paced environment with many professionals who I look up to. It allowed me to question myself, 'Is this what I want to do when I get out of college?' And the answer is 'Yes.'"

**Swinging and Spinning at Post CMA Awards Party**



DJ Rick Sykes motivates guests on the dance floor.



The Time Jumpers perform.



Guests enjoy the dessert table.

Overhead view of the Laura Turner Concert Hall.

Seen from the outside, the Schermerhorn Symphony Center in Downtown Nashville is a Neoclassical masterpiece, located just one block east of the Sommet Center. But in the hours that immediately followed the CMA Awards, the celebration inside took on a distinctly American air. With the Western swing of The Time Jumpers (Dennis Crouch, Paul Franklin, "Ranger Doug" Green, Aubrey Haynie, Carolyn Martin, Andy Reiss, Dawn Sears, Kenny Sears, Joe Spivey, Jeff Taylor, Rick Vanaugh) and the contemporary dance grooves of DJ Rick Sykes from PartyTime Nashville, the music drew a large crowd onto the dance floor laid out in the Laura Turner Concert Hall and fueled its energy with delectable cuisine and libations provided by the Symphony Center's Executive Chef, Roger Keenan.

"Each year, we strive to give our guests a beautiful and unique atmosphere in which to celebrate the evening," observed CMA CEO Tammy Genovese. "This year was no exception."

The Post CMA Awards Party is a private event exclusive to nominees, performers and presenters, as well as Diamond and Platinum level Awards ticket holders. Coordinated by CMA Senior Manager of Meetings and Events Diane Bearden, the planning team included Big Events; Production Manager Chuck Young; Music City Tents and Events; Bandit Lites; and Spectrum Sound, who worked with the Symphony Center's Director of Event Services Ellen Hollis and her staff.

"It's a tribute to our energetic team at CMA that even after the monumental effort that goes into making Country Music's Biggest Night a success, they keep right on going with a magical Post CMA Awards Party that is a glamorous and entertaining finale for the week of activities," said Bobette Dudley, CMA Senior VP of Operations. "The leadership of Diane Bearden and her incredible team amazes me."



Fletcher Foster, Senior VP/GM, Universal Records South; CMA CEO Tammy Genovese; Kevin Costner; Julie Talbott, Executive VP of Affiliate Marketing, Premiere Radio Networks; and Steve Buchanan, Senior VP, Media and Entertainment, Gaylord Entertainment attend the Premiere Radio Networks reception sponsored by Chevy, Roloids and Sudafed, Nov. 9, at the Hilton Nashville Downtown.



Jack Ingram and Larry Morgan interview Miranda Lambert.



Darius Rucker participates in the Premiere Radio Networks remote broadcasts at the Hilton Nashville Downtown.

## COUNTRY MUSIC SPEAKS TO AMERICA THROUGH PREMIERE RADIO NETWORKS

Anyone seeking proof of the enduring popularity of Country Music need only visit the Premiere Radio Networks remote broadcasts in the mornings leading up to the CMA Awards. Since 2004, Premiere has provided the technical knowhow and equipment, as well as an amazing degree of organizational discipline, required to connect artists directly to listeners in 50 top markets throughout the United States including KFRG/Los Angeles, WMZQ/Washington, D.C., WXTU/Philadelphia, KSCS/Dallas, KMPS/Seattle, KILT/Houston, WPOC/Baltimore, KBWF/San Francisco and WUBL/Atlanta. They do this by setting up tabletop studios in one large ballroom at the Hilton Nashville Downtown, each staffed by on-air personalities speaking directly to their stations, and marshaling volunteers to usher artists from one interview to the next for five-minute chats aired live back home.

Premiere's presence at the Awards branched beyond this bustling room to include live interviews for ABC-TV affiliates throughout the country; Red Carpet Reports and a Post Awards Show, both hosted by Jack Ingram and Premiere Radio Networks' Larry Morgan; and "CMA Awards Preview," a four-hour preview special hosted by Taylor Swift, with music and interviews with Brooks & Dunn, Kenny Chesney, Brad Paisley, George Strait, Sugarland, Keith Urban and more, released to radio Nov. 7.

But nothing captures the intensity of Premiere's work as graphically as the live radio feeds. Just as logistics require limiting the number of participating stations to 50, it's also important to cap the number of artists who show up on all three mornings, Nov. 10-12, for the remotes. "Each station does one drive time broadcast," explained Ilycia Deitch Chiaromonte, Senior Director Events, Premiere Radio Networks. "You have 25 stations on the air in the morning and 25 in the afternoon in their markets. If you have 25 slots, then you have 25 artists. That's your cap, because it's not good for anybody to have artists waiting."

No one seemed to be idling on the sidelines at 8 AM Nov. 10. Darryl Worley looked into the camera at the WQYK/Tampa Bay booth and fielded questions for a video to be posted exclusively on the radio station's Web site. (The same camera and setup would be used later to record interviews for Premiere's syndicated program "After MidNite with Blair Garner.") Immediately to the right, Tommy Johnson, hosting for KUBL/Salt Lake City, whooped and rose to greet his next guest, Chuck Wicks. Nearby, Carolina Rain, Randy Houser and Miranda Lambert spoke live to their fans. And in the aisles, black-shirted escorts led other artists to their next interviews.

On his way to greet the WDXB/Birmingham team, keyboardist Dale Wallace of Emerson Drive paused to reflect on what Premiere has to offer artists, stations and fans. "You know, I normally go to bed at 2 or 2:30 AM, and I got up at 5 AM today, so I'm in rough shape," he confided, laughing. "But this is awesome. It's definitely a great thing for all of us to be here."

## CMA AWARDS TRIGGERS ALBUM SALES SPIKE

The record shows that an appearance on the CMA Awards increases the likelihood of a significant boost in an artist's album sales.

So it was for a number of winners, performers and presenters on "The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual CMA Awards." Beneficiaries of significant album sales bumps included Jason Aldean, Kenny Chesney, Alan Jackson, Miranda Lambert, James Otto, Kellie Pickler, Darius Rucker, Sugarland, Taylor Swift and Keith Urban, as measured by Nielsen SoundScan for the week ending Nov. 16.

### THE GREATEST GAINERS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

PERCENT INCREASE	ARTIST	ALBUM TITLE
203	George Strait	<i>Troubadour</i>
137	Julianne Hough	<i>Sounds of the Season</i>
122	Lady Antebellum	<i>Lady Antebellum</i>
100	Brooks & Dunn	<i>Cowboy Town</i>
92	Eagles	<i>Long Road Out of Eden</i>
84	Trace Adkins	<i>American Man: Greatest Hits Vol. II</i>
80	Carrie Underwood	<i>Carnival Ride</i>
76	Brad Paisley	<i>5th Gear</i>



## CMA COLORS FLY THROUGHOUT MUSIC CITY

A bus bench, adorned with an image of Lady Antebellum from the 2009 Chevy Country Music Calendar, banners heralding the CMA Awards outside of Sommet Center and a wall wrap at Nashville International Airport were among the many images displayed throughout Nashville to celebrate and raise awareness of "Country Music's Biggest Night."

photos: Cory Chapman and Amanda Eckard



## “Everybody Wins” at Premiere Radio Networks TV Remotes

**A**t 8 AM Nov. 10 in a secluded room a few steps away from Premiere Radio Networks' headquarters at the Hilton Nashville Downtown, the Premiere staff prepared for the first broadcast of the day to originate from its TV studio.

One camera pointed toward two tall chairs and a backdrop adorned with logos for the CMA Awards, Premiere and sponsors Roloids and Sudafed. Technicians whispered into headset mics or adjusted lighting. And John Weber, Premiere VP, Network Programs and Services, consulted the schedule on his clipboard.

“We’ve got 14 or 15 radio stations signed up now,” he said, indicating the number that had reserved one or more 15-minute blocks to conduct interviews over the next two days, each one to air live or via later broadcast on the ABC affiliate back in the home market. “We have hardly any unused time left. That’s a great response. We’ve offered this service for a couple of years at the CMA Awards and at the CMA Music Festival. And we’re getting more interest each year.”

First in line this morning is Tony Thomas, Music Director and Afternoon Personality at KMPS/Seattle. “These TV remotes enable us to spread the message about Country Music and the Awards past our radio station audience and out to the broader public,” he said. “It’s a win for the radio station and also for the TV station and their audience, who get to be a part of the excitement here and the anticipation of ‘the weekend’s over, it’s Monday, the show’s only two days away, it’s heating up — and what’s going on right now in Nashville?’”

Everything was running smoothly as Thomas took his seat. A minute later, the guest for today’s TV remotes, Country Music Hall of Fame member Randy Owen, with Alabama, walked onto the set. He and Thomas shook hands and briefly reviewed what they want to discuss.

Right after that, Weber announced, “Please put your cell phones on silent.” The room fell quiet. Weber counted down: “Three, two, one.”

Thomas waited a beat and then announced, “Nashville is excited. I’m excited. The 42nd Annual CMA Awards’ is coming up on Wednesday night. You’ll be able to see the whole thing right here on KOMO-4. And the guy who was the lead singer in arguably the most important band ever in Country Music is with me: the great Randy Owen.”

Owen smiled into the camera, said “Good morning” — and in households throughout and beyond Seattle, word about “Country Music’s Biggest Night” began to spread.



Tony Thomas, MD, KMPS/Seattle prepares to interview John Michael Montgomery at Premiere Radio Networks TV studio.



Taylor Swift (top) with Blair Garner, Premiere Radio Networks, and Rodney Atkins (below) with Lori Grande, WKLB/Boston at the Premiere Radio Networks remotes.



## CMA Awards Dominates Nightly TV Ratings

As in previous years, ABC’s live broadcast in 2008 of “The 42nd Annual CMA Awards” dominated the national ratings.

According to figures from Nielsen Media Research, an estimated 34.6 million viewers watched all or part of the CMA Awards. The program rated No. 1 in five of its six half-hour slots and held at No. 2 from 9:30 to 10 PM Nov. 12. This strong performance helped draw 15.9 million viewers — 4.8 million more viewers than CBS, which finished second among networks that evening — and deliver ABC’s highest Wednesday night totals in one year, in both overall viewership and among Adults 18-49.

In that latter category, ABC swamped CBS and FOX, its closest competitors for the evening, by an enormous 72 percent in Adults 18-49.

This impressive performance is assessed through two measurements: “ratings,” which measures the percentage of viewers among the total number of people who own TVs, and “share,” which indicates the percentage of viewers among the total number of people actually watching TV during the particular time slot.

With the first number indicating ratings and the second denoting share, ABC boosted its performance by 3 percent among Men 18-49 (3.7/10 in 2008, as compared with 3.6/10 for the 2007 CMA Awards), 7 percent among Men 25-54 (4.8/12 vs. 4.5/12) and by a whopping 20 percent among Kids 2-11 (1.8/8 vs. 1.5/7). In total, ABC dominated the evening with a 9.7/15 performance, handily beating second-place CBS at 7.1/11.



LITTLE BIG TOWN



NICOLE KIDMAN AND KEITH URBAN

REESE WITHERSPOON



CARRIE UNDERWOOD

KID ROCK



JEWEL

MILEY CYRUS

REBA MCENTIRE



Fans at Red Carpet John Overton High School marching band kicks off Red Carpet festivities. photos Donn Jones Marines greet artists as they arrive on the Red Carpet in Chevy vehicles. photos Karen Heib

## Media Coverage Skyrockets for CMA Awards

The buzz over the CMA Awards began well before its Nov. 12 broadcast, as some of the nominees were booked on national network TV shows. A few examples included Kenny Chesney on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" (Oct. 15), "Ellen" (Oct. 17) and "The Early Show" (Oct. 24); James Otto on "The Early Show Saturday Edition" (Oct. 4); Brad Paisley on "Good Morning America" and "The View" (Nov. 4), "The Late Show with David Letterman" (Nov. 7) and "Dancing with the Stars" (Nov. 11); and Taylor Swift on "Good Morning America" and "Late Show with David Letterman" (Nov. 10) and "Ellen" (Nov. 11).

Immediately before the Awards, 65 media outlets covered Red Carpet arrivals. These included Gray Communications, who sent a one-hour live special to all ABC stations in their family, plus 10 ABC affiliates (KBMT/Beaumont, KMBH/Denver, KNXV/Phoenix, KOMO/Seattle, WAAY/Huntsville, WBMA/Birmingham, WFTS/Tampa, WKBW/Buffalo, WKRN/Nashville and WRTV/Indianapolis) and three Nashville non-ABC affiliates (WSMV/NBC, WTVF/CBS and WZTV/FOX).

A number of celebrity hosts spearheaded Red Carpet coverage. These included Katie Armiger for **People.com**, Sara Buxton and Chuck Wicks with anchor Brad Schmitt for WKRN/Nashville, sports writer and comedian Kenny Mayne for ESPN and actress Maureen McCormick for "Access Hollywood."

Additionally, Jack Ingram and Premiere Radio Networks' personality Larry Morgan hosted Red Carpet Reports and Awards Post Show coverage for Premiere Radio Networks. Premiere also recruited Taylor Swift to host a four-hour preview of the Awards, which was supplied beginning Nov. 7 to stations participating in the remote broadcasts from Nashville.

Also represented on the TV side were ABC News One, AP TV, CMT Canada, "CMT Insider," CNN, "Dancing with the Stars," "Ellen," "Entertainment Tonight," "Entertainment Tonight Canada," "Extra," FOX News, GAC's "Country Music Across America," "Inside Edition" and TV Guide Network. Credentialed print media included The Associated Press, *Country Weekly*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *First*, *OK!*, *People*, *The Tennessean*, *USA Weekend* and *Us Weekly*.

Among the photo agencies and outlets covering the Awards were ABC, AdMedia, The Associated Press, CMT, FilmMag, Getty Images, Globe Photos, BEI Images, Mavrix Photos, Music Row, *Nashville City Paper*, *People*, Retna, Reuters News Photos, Rex USA, Shooting Star International, *The Tennessean*, UPI, *USA Today*, *Us Weekly*, WireImage and Zuma Press.

Coverage to audiences abroad was provided by *American Journal* (Germany), CMT Canada, "Country Music USA" (France), *CountryHome* (Germany), "Entertainment Tonight Canada," *Evening Echo* (Ireland), *La Voix du Nord* (France), Love Radio (Greece), *Personalities* (Ireland), Radio Ostfriesland (Germany), RTE (Ireland), RTL (France) and more. Outlets from the United Kingdom included CMR Nashville, *Country Music & More*, Mavrix Photo/London Express News, Stage Leisure KCFM 99.8 FHM Hull, Voice of Country and more.



"Access Hollywood" correspondent Maureen McCormick with Emerson Drive. photo: Winessa Parker/DMV

## CMA PROVIDES RED CARPET COVERAGE FOR ABC AFFILIATES

In a dramatic upgrade in coverage of Red Carpet events, CMA created its own live, 30-minute television special, hosted by Julianne Hough and Craig Morgan, at the CMA Awards.

"CMA Awards Red Carpet Live! Presented by Chevy" and broadcast on ABC affiliates, featured multi-camera coverage of Red Carpet arrivals, with Hough and Morgan conducting interviews and offering viewers unique glimpses of activities immediately prior to broadcast of the Awards on the ABC Television Network.

"Country Music's Biggest Night was even bigger and brighter with the addition of this exciting new program," said CMA CEO Tammy Genovese. "And we are delighted that our valued partners at Chevy made it possible for us to bring all the sparkle and glamour to fans across the country."

"As The Official Ride of Country Music, Chevy has always been proud to be associated with the CMA Awards, and this year we were delighted to present the inaugural Red Carpet Live! special," said Kim Kosak, Chevrolet General Director of Advertising and Sales Promotions.

## Bucky Covington Spreads Glad Tidings to CMA Broadcast Awards Winners

**B**ucky Covington made radio's elite very happy on the morning of Oct. 10 when he called the CMA Broadcast Awards winners on the stations' studio lines to inform them of their victory. "I see the hard work these radio stations do day in and day out," said Covington. "I'm grateful for all they do — and so it's really awesome to get to call them with the good news."

"We're thrilled to have Bucky share the good news with this year's winners," said CMA CEO Tammy Genovese. "There are many familiar names among these winners, and this is a testament to the continued quality and excellence of Country radio."

Lon Helton, host of Westwood One's "CMT Country Countdown USA with Lon Helton," received his fourth National Broadcast Personality of the Year Award. Helton has won the most of these Awards since the category's inception in 2001.

CMA Broadcast Awards finalists were announced during a September press conference in Nashville by Covington and Chuck Wicks. CMA members who are full-time, on-air personalities and CMA member radio stations in the United States and Canada were eligible to enter.

Three finalists are selected for National Broadcast Personality. Five finalists were selected for Broadcast Personality and Radio Station of the Year in four categories (major, large, medium, small) established by market size based on population as ranked by Arbitron. This year there were six finalists for major market Broadcast Personality due to a tie.

Entries were judged by a panel of distinguished broadcast professionals, representing all market sizes and regions. An aggregate score of the first round of judging and the second round, which is done by a different panel of judges, determined the winners. The accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche LLP tabulated scoring by the judges. CMA Broadcast Awards winners are not eligible to enter in consecutive years; therefore, those who received trophies in 2007 were not eligible in 2008.

Complimentary lifetime CMA memberships were awarded to the Broadcast Personality winners. CMA Broadcast Awards winners were recognized during the "The 42nd Annual CMA Awards." View the winning entries at [CMAawards.com](http://CMAawards.com).

### CMA BROADCAST AWARDS WINNERS

#### CMA BROADCAST PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR WINNERS

##### NATIONAL

**LON HELTON**  
"CMT COUNTRY COUNTDOWN USA with LON HELTON"  
Westwood One

##### MAJOR MARKET

"RANDY and DAVE"  
(Randy Price, Dave McKay)  
WQYK/Tampa-St. Petersburg, Fla.

##### LARGE MARKET

"GERRY HOUSE and the HOUSE FOUNDATION"  
(Gerry House, Mike Bohan, Duncan Stewart, Al Voecks, Richard Falklen)  
WSIX/Nashville, Tenn.

##### MEDIUM MARKET

"ANDY & ALISON and the MORNING CREW"  
(Andy Ritchie, Alison West, Jimmy Holt)  
WIVK/Knoxville, Tenn.

##### SMALL MARKET

"THE GOOD MORNING GUYS"  
(Brian Gary, Todd Harding)  
KUAD/Fort Collins-Greeley, Colo.

#### CMA RADIO STATION OF THE YEAR WINNERS

##### MAJOR MARKET

WQYK/Tampa-St. Petersburg, Fla.

##### LARGE MARKET

WFMS/Indianapolis, Ind.

##### MEDIUM MARKET

WIVK/Knoxville, Tenn.

##### SMALL MARKET

WGSQ/Cookeville, Tenn.



Sugarland stands by for interview with Julianne Hough on "CMA Awards Red Carpet Live! Presented by Chevy."



CMA Broadcast Awards winners. (top row) Mike Culotta, OM, WQYK; Mike Hammond, PD, WIVK; Bob Richards, PD, WFMS; Jimmy Holt, WTVK; Lon Helton, Westwood One; Al Voecks and Richard Falklen, WSIX; (middle row) Beecher Martin, PD, WQYK; Dave McKay and Randy Price, WQYK; Alison West and Andy Ritchie, WIVK; and Mike Bohan, WSIX; (bottom row) Todd Harding and Brian Gary, KUAD; Gator Harrison, PD, WGSQ; Phillip Gibbons, Assistant PD, WGSQ; and Duncan Stewart, WSIX. (not pictured Gerry House, WSIX) photo: John Russell

## CMA Awards Coverage Expands Online

As Country Music continues to widen its listener base, CMA and ABC led the way with more aggressive and comprehensive online coverage in advance of the CMA Awards.

**CMAawards.com** unveiled a "My Picks" activity, allowing fans to share their predictions for who would win Awards in six of the 12 categories. Fans posted their results to their Facebook and MySpace pages, personal blogs and Web sites, and invited friends to post their choices. "My Picks" also featured links to each nominated artist's Web site and iLike profile page.

Additionally, CMA launched its "CMA Awards All Access Pass" Webisodes series. These clips, designed to provide unique glimpses at the multiple processes behind staging the Awards, began with a visit to Green Enterprises, the Nashville shop assigned to construct the general and specialty sets at the Awards.

**CMAawards.com** features complete and comprehensive information on past and



Jake Owen, former Miss Tennessee Ashley Eicher and Chuck Wicks host "The Countdown to Country Music's Biggest Night," on **CMA.ABC.com**.  
photo: courtesy of ABC.com

present Awards nominees, winners and highlights as well as photo flip books packed with images from this year's event, including Red Carpet and behind-the-scenes. Awards merchandise is available to purchase online: CMA Individual Sterling and Organizational members receive a 25 percent discount.

**ABC.com** kindled enthusiasm last year by posting daily five-minute shows leading up to the Awards on **CMA.ABC.com**. These Webisodes, which included breaking news, interviews with artists as well as key people working behind the scenes at the Awards and more, were updated and viewers were brought even deeper into the experience this year, particularly on Awards night.

"For the first time at the CMA Awards, we had a 'thank-you cam' backstage," said David Beebe, Director, Video Productions, ABC Digital Media. "So as soon as the winners came offstage with their Awards, we captured that rush of energy and excitement. It's not an interview, but it's their opportunity to give all the additional thanks and any other messages they didn't have time to mention during their acceptance speeches."

These comments and Webisodes were also posted on **Facebook.com**, **MySpace.com**, **Twitter.com** and **Youtube.com**.

"With the help of our wonderful partners at ABC, we've developed new tools to keep our Web-savvy friends informed and engaged in the days leading up to the CMA Awards," said CMA CEO Tammy Genovese.

The **CMA.ABC.com** campaign began about two weeks before the Awards, as Beebe and his five-person crew arrived in Nashville. Their first three days were devoted to building an edit bay in their hotel room, after which they hit the streets in search of content. "It's pretty much around the clock," Beebe said. "We put stories together, shoot footage, write the scripts, come back to the hotel, edit it all, get it approved — and then we start work on the next show."

These installments were posted daily, beginning Nov. 5, as "The Countdown to Country Music's Biggest Night," hosted by Jake Owen, Chuck Wicks and former Miss Tennessee Ashley Eicher.

It's a demanding routine, but over three years Beebe knows that it's well worth the effort. "We measure our success on how many people watch what we create," he explained. "And as we've seen that number increase from year to year, we figure we must be doing something right."

### MONICA ESCOBEDO RECEIVES CMA MEDIA ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

As Arts and Entertainment Producer for ABC's "Good Morning America," Monica Escobedo has seen her share of surprises that can come from working on live television. Even so, she was caught off guard on the morning of the CMA Awards when Billy Ray Cyrus finished his performance on "GMA" and then presented her with this year's CMA Media Achievement Award, in recognition of her accomplishments in the media as they relate to Country Music.

"I am truly honored to receive the CMA Media Achievement Award," Escobedo said. "It is such a thrill to be recognized by the dedicated and talented Country Music community, a group that has always welcomed me with open arms. Being able to share Country Music with our viewers on a regular basis is a privilege that makes my job all the more fulfilling."

Since ABC began broadcasting the CMA Awards in 2006, Escobedo has been heavily involved in the Awards nominees



Billy Ray Cyrus presents Monica Escobedo with the CMA Media Achievement Award after his performance on "Good Morning America," live from Nashville on CMA Awards day.  
photo: Theresa Montgomery

announcements shown live on "GMA" as well as the program's live broadcasts from Nashville during the CMA Music Festival as well as the CMA Awards.

"Monica is very deserving of this honor," said CMA CEO Tammy Genovese. "She routinely goes above and beyond to book Country Music artists and support our core events on 'Good Morning America.' From new talent to the well-established stars, Monica has built meaningful relationships based on respect and mutual admiration with the artists and publicist members of our industry."

CMA member publicists nominate media candidates for consideration. The Top 5 nominees are collected and sent to the publicist panel for a second round of voting. The winner is presented to the CMA Executive Committee for approval.

"The 42nd Annual CMA Awards" – Country Music's Biggest Night

CMA Awards nominees and winners are determined by the 6,000 music industry professional members of CMA, the first trade organization formed to promote a type of music in 1958.

The first "CMA Awards Banquet and Show" was held in 1967. The CMA Awards was broadcast on NBC in 1968, making it the longest running annual music awards program on network TV. The show aired on NBC through 1971, on CBS from 1971 through 2005 and on ABC since 2006.

"The 42nd Annual CMA Awards" is a production of the Country Music Association. Robert Deaton is the Executive Producer. Paul Miller is the Director. David Wild is the writer. The special was shot in high definition and broadcast in 720 Progressive (720P), ABC's selected HDTV format, with 5.1 channel surround sound.

Premiere Radio Networks is the official radio packager of the CMA Awards, including a stereo-radio simulcast of the gala event. American Airlines is the official airline of the 2008 CMA Awards. Chevy: The Official Ride of Country Music. Mary Kay is the Official Beauty Sponsor of the 2008 CMA Awards. Additional promotional partners include Borders, Carl Black Chevrolet, Durango Boot, Tetley Iced Tea and VAULT Citrus Soda.

CMA Awards wrap up content by Bob Doerschuk unless otherwise noted. Photo edit by Amanda Eckard. CMA photographers: Amanda Eckard, Jim Hagans, Karen Hicks, Donn Jones, Drew Maynard, Theresa Montgomery and John Russell.

# Marketing Leaders Sample the Country Music Brand at CMA Marketing Summit

**F**rom a welcoming dinner Nov. 10 through the Post CMA Awards Party late on the night of Nov. 12, 18 representatives of the marketing industry were treated to a comprehensive introduction to Country Music as a marketing brand, courtesy of CMA.

Their Nov. 11 itinerary included a tour of the GAC: Great American Country headquarters and TV studios on Music Row, where they observed host Suzanne Alexander taping an episode of "GAC Nights" with Blake Shelton — who provided an impromptu solo concert for the visitors. From there, they continued to Warner Bros. Records for a presentation that documented the appeal of Country Music in general as well as in terms specific to the attendees' clients. For example, Marissa DiMascio and Glenn Sciacchitano, representing the Cotton Inc. trade organization, were told that 72.9 percent of survey respondents who identified themselves as Country Music fans had recently purchased new cotton towels.

For Sciacchitano, Director of Advertising, Cotton Inc., this confirmed what he already sensed about the tie-in between his consumer base and Country Music. "But the biggest thing I've learned here is that there are a million ways to partner with Country artists, from going directly to their record labels to talking with people at the Grand Ole Opry," he added. "It's challenging for marketers to assess the best way to promote their brand in the most cost-effective way, but the Country artists we've come across so far really seem to get what we're looking for."

Whitney Duncan, with guitarist Chris Always, delivered an intimate acoustic performance after this presentation, and then a "Sponsorship Case Study" panel shared insights on how to find the best artist for a product sponsorship. "Go to the manager if you know the artist you want. Go to the agency if you're not sure," advised Tracy McGlocklin, Manager, Mission Management. And Jim Rink, President, Rink Entertainment, confirmed the importance of finding an "organic brand ambassador — but make sure their team gets it. Having that infrastructure is the difference between life and death."

After a backstage tour of the Sommet Center and dinner at the Opry Museum, the marketers' day ended at CMA Songwriters Series at Hard Rock Cafe where they heard stories behind some of the biggest hits told by and performed by the writers.

Awards Day started early with a Billy Ray Cyrus and Miley Cyrus concert on the Chevy Stage at Sommet Center's outside plaza and a trip to the W. O. Smith Nashville Community Music School, where Chuck Wicks entertained and fielded questions over breakfast, after which a "Brandweek Webinar" convened. Discussion began with the idea of music being a universal "passion point," in the words of panelist Greg Downey, Group Director of Entertainment Marketing, The Coca-Cola Company, who developed the premise into an intriguing account of how Troy Gentry and Eddie Montgomery of Montgomery Gentry were recruited as spokespersons for VAULT. And Jennifer Spence, Assistant Commissioner of Marketing, Tennessee Department of Tourist Development, brought the point back home by observing that "Country Music is about your life. Consumers will relate to that."

From hearing Jamie O'Neal cut the song, "You've Got the Goods," created exclusively for them and their clients at Ocean Way Nashville Recording Studios to watching the CMA Awards live at Sommet Center, participants left the CMA Marketing Summit with an appreciation for possibilities yet to be explored. "I've never really listened to Country Music," admitted Dana Lawnzak, Senior Brand Manager, Reckitt Benckiser. "But now I see how accessible and genuine these artists are, how loyal their fans are and how that can connect with some of our brands. It's been an eye-opening experience."



Chuck Wicks entertains at W. O. Smith Nashville Community Music School.

Whitney Duncan performs at Warner Bros. Records.



Attendees with Jamie O'Neal (r) at Ocean Way Nashville Recording Studios.



Jack Ingram performs at Grand Ole Opry Museum dinner.

"GAC Nights" host Suzanne Alexander with Blake Shelton at GAC studios.



Participants at Warner Bros. Records.



Brandweek Webinar panelists Greg Downey, Group Director of Entertainment Marketing, The Coca-Cola Company; Julie Talbot, EVP of Affiliate Marketing, Premiere Radio Networks; Jennifer Spence, Assistant Commissioner of Marketing, Tennessee Department of Tourist Development; and panel moderator Tom Woerner, Publisher, Brandweek, at W. O. Smith Nashville Community Music School.

## NASHVILLE CELEBRATES COUNTRY

The City of Nashville rolled out the red carpet for "The 42nd Annual CMA Awards" with events that started in October and culminated in November during CMA Awards week, dubbed "Nashville Celebrates Country." Music City was filled with black tie affairs, intimate gatherings, raucous concerts and more. Highlights of some of the events are featured on the following pages.

### JO-WALKER MEADOR RECEIVES STAR ON WALK OF FAME

On the brisk Nov. 9 afternoon, former CMA Executive Director Jo Walker-Meador was honored with a star on the Music City Walk of Fame. In a ceremony hosted by GAC personality Bill Cody, presented by Gibson Guitars and sponsored by GAC, fellow Walk of Fame honoree Barbara Mandrell recounted Walker-Meador's role in furthering the success of the Country Music industry and told the fans gathered for the occasion in Hall of Fame Park that "she cares, from the bottom of her heart, about our marvelous art of Country Music and the people that support and love it, the fans. She holds you all so dear to her heart."



Jo Walker-Meador, with commemorative plaque and star on Nashville's Music Mile at Music City Walk of Fame, and CMA CEO Tammy Genovese, Barbara Mandrell and former CMA Executive Director and CMA CSO Ed Benson.



After thanking Mandrell for "that lovely introduction — it's far more than I deserve," Walker-Meador expressed her gratitude for "this fabulous, unbelievable and never-to-be-expected reward." Other inductees included Trace Adkins, Little Richard, Martina McBride, Michael McDonald, Elvis Presley and Randy Travis.

## CMA Songwriters Series Unveils Stories Behind Songs

The success attained by the CMA Songwriters Series at Joe's Pub in New York was replicated on home turf at the Nashville Hard Rock Cafe. Presented by American Airlines, the event drew a sold-out house Nov. 11. As the doors opened at 9 PM, listeners quickly filled the chairs arranged in rows before the intimate stage; the rest of the audience gathered in the bar area to watch on mounted screens.

Befitting the informality of these shows, the featured songwriters were already on or near their seats as spectators filed in. Even before the first note was sung, the crowd had a good look at how the pros behind the hits interact, whether showing each other chords to some work in progress, sharing a few jokes just out of range of the microphones or stepping down from the stage to greet a friend, sign an autograph or pose for a picture.

Once everyone had settled into place, the music — or, in a way, the music lesson — began. Most of the songs presented by the writers were familiar, though often in different arrangements than on the hit versions the public had come to know. These variations, along with occasional stories about how a particular song was inspired or conceived, balanced entertainment and education equally.

The featured writers were Dave Berg, Deanna Bryant, Ashley Gorley and Kelley Lovelace. Bryant opened with a power-ballad arrangement of "Don't Make Me," by Blake Shelton. Berg followed with "These Are My People," an anthem for Rodney Atkins. Lovelace then performed "Online," but as he strummed an instrumental verse, which Brad Paisley had filled on his single with typical brio on guitar, Berg prompted a laugh by leaning into the microphone to ask, "Umm, isn't this the solo part?" Berg provided another punch line after Gorley sang the Carrie Underwood smash "All-American Girl," which he had written with Lovelace and Underwood.

"So," Berg inquired, after the applause died down, "how did that song work out for you guys?"



(above) Kelley Lovelace, Ashley Gorley, Dave Berg and Deanna Bryant, (below) Deanna Bryant, Dave Berg, Kelley Lovelace and Ashley Gorley perform at CMA Songwriters Series at Hard Rock Cafe.



## Chevy Music Tour Rocks Downtown Nashville

World-class Country Music fills the clubs along Nashville's Lower Broadway every day, but Nov. 11, the night before the CMA Awards, it spilled into the streets as well.

Chevrolet, The Official Ride of Country Music and sponsor of "The 42nd Annual CMA Awards," drew several hundred spectators to the Sommet Center Plaza with a selection of 2009-model Chevy vehicles. Visitors posed for pictures by life-sized cutouts of artists featured in the 2009 Chevy Country Music Calendar and stopped at booths for free calendars, coolers and T-shirts. Others signed up for the XM Ultimate Listening Tour, with a chance to win a SKYFi 3 receiver with car kit in the "Turn It On, Take It Home" sweepstakes.

But it was the music at the Chevy CMA Awards Kickoff Concert that kept fans in place. Emceed by XM Satellite Radio personality Jon Anthony and broadcast live on XM 16's "The Highway," it blasted from a high stage erected on the south side of the Plaza, as Rodney Atkins, the Eli Young Band, Kevin Costner and Modern West and Heidi Newfield each dished out their own brand of modern, high-energy music.

The heavy mist and occasional cold sprinkle failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the crowd. The Eli Young Band took advantage of the inclement weather, announcing "It sounds good when it rains," as they launched into "When It Rains," the first single from their album *Jet Black & Jealous*, as volunteers handed out free plastic ponchos emblazoned with the band's logo.

For Marla Zirkle of Kansas City, Mo., one of the highlights of the show was Atkins. As he strode into the spotlight in jeans, white T-shirt, blue pullover and trademark baseball cap and broke into "These Are My People," she and her friends Shelly Buccero and Julie Passantino whooped, waved, held up their mobile phones and snapped photos.

"Of all the things we've done so far in Nashville, this is what we wanted to come to the most," Zirkle insisted. "It's very personal. We get to sing, dance and enjoy the music on a one-on-one level. You take these songs and apply them to your life. That's what Country Music is and why we're here."



Rodney Atkins Kevin Costner and Modern West Heidi Newfield



Eli Young Band



Chevy CMA Awards Kickoff Concert stage at Sommet Center Plaza photos: Dawn Jones



**“GOOD MORNING AMERICA” OPENS CMA AWARDS DAY IN NASHVILLE**

Billy Ray Cyrus and Miley Cyrus, shown with host and ABC News

weather anchor Sam Champion, kicked off CMA Awards Day with a performance on The Chevy Stage outside Sommet Center during “Good Morning America,” aired live via the ABC Television Network. The enormously popular father/daughter team is celebrated as singers, performers and stars of Disney’s “Hannah Montana” television series. photos: Theresa Montgomery



Jeffrey Steele and LoCash Cowboys perform during the CMA Awards After Party at the Wildhorse Saloon. photos: Doug Renzelman

Holly Williams welcomes trip winners to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

**TRIP WINNERS THRILL TO CMA AWARDS EXPERIENCE**

For the winners of package trips organized by CMA’s travel partner What a Trip!, the CMA Awards was like the *coup de grâce* in a banquet of unforgettable experiences. The 130 three-night trip winners in local radio and TV promotions and their guests were treated Nov. 10 to “Our Night at the Museum.” Held at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, the event featured performances by Justin Moore, Sunny Sweeney, Jimmy Wayne and Holly Williams, who then escorted the group through the exhibition “Family Tradition: The Williams Family Legacy.”

They were joined Nov. 11 by 410 winners of two-night trips and their guests on an itinerary that included “Arrington Affair,” an evening of music, desserts, dancing and wine tasting at Arrington Vineyards. They began Nov. 12 with “It All Starts with a Song,” a brunch with entertainment by Bluefield and Shannon Durig, along with songwriters Bob DiPiero and Tim Nichols. And two visits to the Wildhorse Saloon, for a pre-Awards dinner and post-Awards party to music from The LoCash Cowboys and Jeffrey Steele, crowned their memorable agenda.



Displays of Chevy vehicles with cardboard images of artists featured in the 2009 Chevy Country Music calendar adorn Downtown Nashville. (above) Heidi Newfield display at Hilton Nashville Downtown. photo: Amanda Eckard



Ed Benson, former CMA Executive Director and CMA CSO; Jeff Walker, President, AristoMedia/Marco Promotions; Mark Moffatt; and Hank Adam Locklin, CMA Senior Manager of Membership and Industry Relations. photo: Amanda Eckard

**MARK MOFFATT RECEIVES JO WALKER-MEADOR INTERNATIONAL AWARD**

Producer Mark Moffatt was surprised during the CMA International Media Reception Nov. 10 when he was presented with CMA’s Jo Walker-Meador International Award.

Moffatt has been Musical Director of CMA’s Global Artist Party and Global Showcase annual events since 2004. His production credits include Deana Carter, Jasmine Rae, Tony Joe White and the Ranch, which featured a young Keith Urban, whose career he subsequently promoted as Director, A&R at Ten Ten Music. As a songwriter, he has penned two No. 1 Australian Country singles, two Top 10 pop singles, two Top 10 hits on the United Kingdom and European singles charts and scores for Australian films and television series.

“I am passionate about building overseas perception of Nashville beyond the usual stereotypes,” said Moffatt. “And I’m seeing real progress as more and more mainstream music fans and industry folks around the world begin to truly embrace Country artists. I’m thrilled to receive this award and I thank CMA for its support.”



**INTERNATIONAL MEDIA GATHER FOR CMA AWARDS**

Media professionals visit Nashville as guests of a program sponsored by CMA, the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau and British-based Lofthouse Partnership, whose missions include encouraging tourist visits to Tennessee. In addition to sightseeing throughout Music City, they attended the CMA International Media Reception Nov. 10 and covered the CMA Awards Nov. 12.

CMA Close Up Editor Bob Doerschuk interviews Sandy Harsch, Host, “Country Time.” (Ireland); Aidan Butler, Senior Producer, RTE Radio One, (Ireland); Laurent Eveno, Host /Producer, “Country Music USA” (France); and Benjamin Cormier, Writer, *La Voix du Nord* (France). photo: Amanda Eckard



Mary Kay Brand Ambassadors distribute free samples to CMA Awards attendees. photo: Dray Williams



Kristian Bush and Jennifer Nettles of Sugarland autograph a guitar at the Mary Kay booth, backstage at the CMA Awards. photo: Theresa Montgomery



Beauty of Country Contest winner Christine Senon from Duluth, Ga., receives a Mary Kay makeover backstage at the CMA Awards. photo: Theresa Montgomery



Jewel at “Kiss Cards” display at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. photo: Mary Kay Inc./Fred Breedon

**MARY KAY’S “KISS FOR COUNTRY” CARDS AVAILABLE TO BIDDERS**

At a Nov. 11 press conference in the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Jewel stood before a wall of “Kiss Cards” to launch this year’s “A Kiss for Country” campaign against domestic violence.

Sponsored by Mary Kay Inc., the Official Beauty Sponsor of “The 42nd Annual CMA Awards,” the program is raising funds by auctioning “kiss cards” online at [ubid.com/charity](http://ubid.com/charity). Each one bears the autograph and a lip imprint from artists and other celebrities; many also include personal messages of support, even from the guys who were man enough to apply some Mary Kay Crème Lipstick in Apple Berry and leave their mark.

Participating artists include Rodney Atkins, Emerson Drive, Sara Evans, Jennifer Hanson, Naomi Judd, Miranda Lambert, Martina McBride, Reba McEntire, Kellie Pickler, John Rich, LeAnn Rimes, George Strait and Taylor Swift. The Mary Kay Ash Charitable Foundation will provide a grant in the name of each artist as part of its \$3 million commitment to preparing violence-prevention centers throughout the United States in 2009.



# SUGARLAND

## THE ART OF TAKING RISKS

by LORIE HOLLABAUGH

**S**ince debuting four years ago with their hit "Baby Girl," Kristian Bush and Jennifer Nettles of Sugarland have racked up more than 5 million album sales, won their second consecutive CMA Vocal Duo of the Year Award and collaborated with pop icons Beyoncé, Bon Jovi and Melissa Etheridge. And while much of their success can be attributed to hard work and elbow grease, it also boils down to two words: no fear.

"I would say it's pretty organic for us," explained Bush, breaking down the way he and Nettles make decisions. "If it sounds like a good idea, it's probably a good idea. And there's power in dreaming out loud with someone else. But you always have to ask yourself,

'What's the fear? Are you operating out of fear or not?' You make a better choice if you don't."

That explains why Sugarland has no problem drawing from influences as diverse as the Indigo Girls, R.E.M. and The Replacements as the duo cultivates its unique approach to modern Country. It may have something to do as well with the strategy behind the release of their latest album, *Love on the Inside*, first with a deluxe edition packed with bonus tracks, expanded liner notes, a video and a behind-the-scenes documentary, followed by a value-priced version — a reversal of the usual formula.

"We weren't sure how it was going to turn out," admitted Luke

Lewis, Chairman, Universal Music Group Nashville. "We had extra music and material and thought the fans might like it. Everybody has been in the habit of putting out deluxe editions later in the life of albums, and as a fan myself, that seemed a bit irritating to have to go buy a record again to get the extra bonus material included on it. And lots of people don't have an extra two or three dollars in their pocket, so it made basic good sense to do it that way."

For Bush, it was all about rewarding the fans. "Outlets often want some sort of exclusive content now to drive consumers to their store," said Bush. "And the package is really based on the idea that last year we rededicated ourselves to being fans. We tried to get back in touch with what a great experience it is. I took my brother and Jennifer to go see The Police with me. They were one of the first concerts I ever saw, and I'm watching them with Jennifer, who had never seen them, and Brandon, who had gone with me in 1985. And we were jumping up and down. Nobody in the place knew who we were; we were just another bunch of screaming fans. I remember how important it was when I was 13, reading liner notes, so I want to spend the extra amount of time on those. When you give people context of what they're about to listen to, it matters."

And so Sugarland and Mercury Nashville, with the band's manager Gail Gellman, came up with a promotion they called the "Platinum Ticket Instant Win Game." Platinum tickets were included with five of the deluxe CDs; those who purchased them received an expenses-paid trip for two to Nashville, tickets to the CMA Awards, a meet-and-greet performance and merchandise.

Platinum tickets or not, *Love on the Inside* has a lot to offer. Co-produced by Sugarland and Byron Gallimore, the music combines the group's intensity and excitement with a comfortable, almost homey feel, stemming from their decision to record on their home turf. "That was originally a luxury in terms of being able to sleep in our own beds," Nettles said. "Only in the process did we realize the artistic implication of having all these great musicians and our producer and his team out of their usual element of Nashville. It allowed us all to get out of our comfort zones and to focus solely on the project in front of us."

"We wanted to bring everybody out of their normal environments and set them up in Atlanta," elaborated Bush. "It was important to make sure everyone involved got to live it. By bringing in the players, we got a different product, because everyone's attention was there."

There were other reasons to record close to home, especially since they had to fit their studio time for 2006's *Enjoy the Ride* between dates on the tour and other obligations. "It was brutal," said Nettles. "My voice was not healthy because of it, which was so stressful. We said then that we would never do it like that again."

"A lot of learning came from our previous record," said Bush. "Every time we stretched ourselves, the response was real positive. So we thought, 'What is this teaching us?' And our mantra became: 'Everything on this record has to feel. Where's the emotion?' If it's not there, rewrite the lyric. If it's still not there, rewrite the music. Keep working until it's there."

"Also, we wrote *Enjoy the Ride* in such a short amount of time that we really didn't get to explore as much as writers," added Nettles. "We knew that we would never do that again. Consequently, we started writing, for what would become our third album, shortly after releasing *Enjoy the Ride*. We wanted to have the space and time to stretch artistically and to enjoy all that we were learning on the road as players and in our lives as observers."

"We weren't sure how it was going to go over because it's a simpler record than most people expected," continued Bush. "I think people expected some sort of overproduced, contrived, safely-written album. But I think you build artists by encouraging them to change — and then not penalizing them when they do."

One goal that the band set for *Love on the Inside* was that the material would play well in large venues. "It's going to sneak up on you," promised Bush. "When you walk in and hear a song like 'We Run,' you might not

think it would translate, but it does. And all of a sudden, when you get the heroic guitar solo at the end of 'What I'd Give,' you're in a Prince concert. It's 'Purple Rain!'"

"The live show *is* the music itself," insisted Nettles. "The live show *is* Sugarland. There is no distinction. Music is a living art form. It is performance art. It can happen only in the action of being performed and created. We weren't signed from someone listening to a demo. We were signed the second they saw us live. It is what we do and what we try to capture as close as we can in the studio. We want our fans to leave our shows changed, transformed, inspired. We want them to be moved by hearing and seeing these songs played in front of them. It is a full sensory experience. If we could feed them chocolate at the same time, we would!"

"I don't believe for a moment that any of the things we did to help market this album would have had the result we wound up having if the music hadn't been amazing," said Lewis. "Lots of times, historically, the best music winds up coming from people who meld genres, and that helps to make this fresh, unique, identifiable and a bit different from everything else — all those things you hope for. I don't think that was forced or contrived. And Country, thankfully, seems to cover a really wide spectrum of influences these days. Some people are disturbed by that because it doesn't sound like whatever we perceive traditional Country to be, but it certainly plays to the audience."

Sugarland's willingness to take risks has paid off, given their second consecutive win as Vocal Duo and Nettles' win for Song of the Year at the CMA Awards, plus, the ascension of the album's first single "All I Want to Do" to the top of the charts and the 314,000 sales racked up by the deluxe edition in just its first week.

"I think there's some kind of weird, cosmic thing that happens when you believe so totally in something, and I think you almost have to go at risk," mused Bush. "You know, you get to the point where you have nothing to lose. And it's a really good reference point. We try to remember that whenever we're considering something for our career: 'Hey, should we record an album of all love songs?' Well, we've got nothing to lose."

"And there's a lot of fear and confusion in the music business," he added, expanding on the point. "But I actually have great hope that what's happening right now is opportunity. It's not the end — it's actually just the beginning."

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"YOU BUILD  
ARTISTS BY  
ENCOURAGING  
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AND THEN NOT  
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THEM WHEN  
THEY DO."

— Kristian Bush of Sugarland



# Country Goes Christmas

## Old and New Approaches to Celebrating the Season in Song

by BOB DOERSCHUK

It happens around the fourth quarter every year. The weather chills. Colorful lights flicker throughout the neighborhood. And, after 10 months of songs about heartbreak, romance, partying and other facts of life, people feel the urge to hear "White Christmas" again.

The recording industry took note of this long ago and as a result conceived the Christmas album. For all the twists and tumbles of our economy, the annual return of this institution remains as sure as the shift from autumn into winter.

What has changed is the number of ways by which artists and record labels can jump onto this merry-go-round. It was simpler not so long ago, with a confluence of physical product, brick-and-mortar retail and radio playlists encouraging consumers to catch the holiday spirit. This picture has gotten more complicated — but this means that there is now more than one way to board and enjoy this ride.

In the Country realm, opportunities abound for artists to spread and collect their share of Christmas cheer. Those on major labels can follow something close to the traditional route, complete with motivated executives working the album through the media and into the marketplace. They might also benefit from budgets that allow a little extra glitter — an orchestra, say, or jazzy brass swinging on an up-tempo tune.

So it is on Faith Hill's *Joy to the World*, whose title track opens the album with strings swirling, French horns heralding, a choir singing and keys changing dramatically, all of it arranged by David Campbell to evoke the spirit of the season, exactly as Hill envisioned it.

"I did have a specific idea about how I wanted the Christmas album to sound," she insisted. "I wanted it to be a throwback to the '40s, '50s or '60s style of big band music, particularly on the classics 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town,' 'Holly Jolly Christmas' and 'Winter Wonderland.' I felt it important to get the sense that you were out shopping. I just wanted you to smell Christmas, to feel Christmas, to bring all the memories back from the Christmas of your childhood."

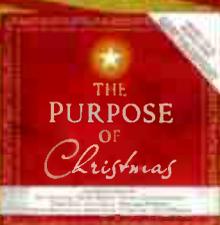
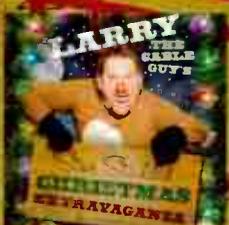
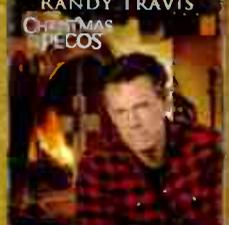
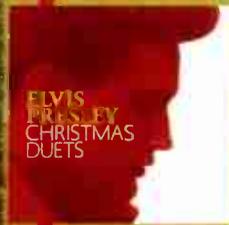
That was music to the ears of Peter Strickland, Senior VP, Sales and Marketing, Warner Bros. Records. "This album has an especially broad appeal," he explained. "If this were a strong Country-sounding album, it would go more to the outlets where you would promote a Country album. Being a more traditional-sounding Christmas album, that broadens its opportunities."

In its sophistication, taste and beautifully rendered vocals, *Joy to the World* pays homage to Nat "King" Cole, Doris Day and Johnny Mathis — artists who helped define the sound of Christmas within the broad stream of American popular music. Strickland and his colleagues responded by booking Hill to perform the entire album live, with a 31-piece orchestra and 9-voice choir, on a Thanksgiving week broadcast of the PBS-TV "Soundstage" series, which will reair throughout December. The wheels were in motion even earlier as they previewed one track, "A Baby Changes Everything," exclusively for members of her Mobile Club on July 10 — and followed with other tracks, one per week, up to the album's commercial release in September.

The key was that in addition to being the first single and the only new song on the album, "A Baby Changes Everything," written by Tim Nichols, Craig Wiseman and R. K. Wiseman, is the sole track that's not tied clearly to Christmas. "It was believed that we might get airplay on that track on other formats early," Strickland noted. "Faith has had success in the AC world, so if we could start the word of mouth as soon as possible, then we figured any format would play it as soon as we released it because of how its message would translate to listeners."

Like Hill, Mel Tillis released his first-ever Christmas album in 2008. But Tillis' *Snowflake* differed from *Joy to the World* in several respects. First, it was issued independently, on the Country Music Hall of Fame member's own Radio Records imprint. It also sticks close to the Country sound that Tillis has embraced throughout his long career.

What took him so long to make his contribution to the Country Christmas catalog? "I just got so busy doing shows for 13 years in Branson, I just didn't have the time," he said. "I did do a Christmas show each year, though. We had Santa Claus, the reindeers and my grandkids all onstage. And people kept asking me, 'Hey, why don't you do a Christmas album?' So finally I did."



The selections on *Snowflake* vary from one new song, "God's Presents," to old favorites to tunes that Country Music fans with long memories are most likely to recall, such as the title track, a hit years ago for Jim Reeves, Willie Nelson's "Pretty Paper" and "Gonna Wrap My Heart in Ribbons," co-written and recorded originally by Hank Thompson and His Brazos Valley Boys. Clearly, Tillis believes that a good tune will be a good fit on a holiday album, no matter how unfamiliar it may be.

"Of course, people are nostalgic," he said. "They remember the great songs, like 'White Christmas,' from growing up. I also have some in there that the old-timers might be familiar with, while I don't think the new kids out there on the block ever heard them. But that doesn't really worry me at all."

What mattered more was the response each song won from audiences at his shows. That, plus the camaraderie Tillis shared with his longtime brothers of the road, the Statesiders, who backed him on *Snowflake* at their studio in Ashland City, Tenn., and on his holiday tour this year with daughter, Pam Tillis, and other members of his family, invests this music with a personal quality that's appropriate to the gift-giving season.

Rascal Flatts gave a present to their fans in the form of three Christmas songs added to their *Greatest Hits Volume 1* package, released by Lyric Street Records in October and produced by Rascal Flatts and Dann Huff. According to Huff, who also produced Hill's *Joy to the World* with Byron Gallimore and Hill, their challenge was twofold: "How many unique ways are there to do a Christmas standard and how unique does it really need to be?"

"The key to Rascal Flatts is how their voices combine," Huff said. "That's why we were looking forward in particular to their a cappella performance on 'I'll Be Home for Christmas.' We didn't do any doubling to fill it out, which meant that we had to fill a lot of real estate with three voices. Jay [DeMarcus] ended up doing the bass part, even though he isn't a bass singer, so that was a stretch for him. But in the end, it was a beautiful rendition."

Today's market allows even newer artists to share the bounty. Julianne Hough did so on the latest installment of the "NBC Sounds of the Season" series, with *The Julianne Hough Holiday Collection*. Launched six years ago by NBC Universal Television in partnership with participating artists and their labels, this series has offered packages of seven or eight Christmas songs by performers in a variety of styles, from Enya, John Legend and Lionel Richie to Taylor Swift, each one sold exclusively at Target stores.

In the early planning stage, which takes place in February, "we look at who has upcoming fourth-quarter releases because these Target holiday CDs are designed to support and provide additional exposure for the artist's front-line records," said Shelli Hill, VP, Music DVD and Consumer Projects, NBC Universal Television Group. "It's complementary, not competitive. To give Julianne positioning for 10 full weeks at Target on two endcaps, one in the music department and one in the holiday department, that's a huge amount of exposure. It's sold at a special promotional price. And it's 'Only at Target.'"

The goal with most Christmas albums is to sell big during the last months of as many consecutive years as possible. Christmas albums have a shorter selling cycle, but they come back strong year after year. Because of their promotional nature, the NBC mini-albums are marketed at Target only once — but after that, ownership of the content reverts to the partner label, which can add material and release it as a full album as soon as the following year. For an artist as new as Hough, this exposure can be a win/win proposition for all parties, from her label Mercury Nashville in giving a push to her self-titled debut album to consumers whose taste for Country with a holiday twist is one of the season's many welcome hallmarks.

"How many unique ways are there to do a Christmas standard and how unique does it really need to be?"

— Dann Huff, Producer

## Top-Selling Country Christmas Albums

ALBUMS RELEASED SINCE 1971

### Multi-Platinum

- ALABAMA, *Alabama Christmas*
- GARTH BROOKS, *Beyond the Season*
- JOHN DENVER, *Rocky Mountain Christmas*
- VINCE GILL, *Let There Be Peace on Earth*
- REBA McENTIRE, *Merry Christmas to You*
- ANNE MURRAY, *Christmas Wishes*
- ELVIS PRESLEY, *It's Christmas Time*
- KENNY ROGERS, *Christmas*
- KENNY ROGERS & DOLLY PARTON, *Once Upon a Christmas*
- GEORGE STRAIT, *Merry Christmas Strait to You*

### Platinum

- GARTH BROOKS, *Garth Brooks & the Magic of Christmas*
- JIMMY BUFFETT, *Christmas Island*
- ALAN JACKSON, *Honky Tonk Christmas*
- THE JUDDS, *Christmas Time with The Judds*
- MARTINA McBRIDE, *White Christmas*
- ELVIS PRESLEY, *If Every Day Was Like Christmas*
- THE STATLER BROTHERS, *Christmas Card*

### Gold

- KENNY CHESNEY, *All I Want for Christmas Is a Real Good Tan*
- BILLY GILMAN, *Classic Christmas*
- ALAN JACKSON, *Let It Be Christmas*
- REBA McENTIRE, *Secret of Giving: A Christmas Collection*
- THE OAK RIDGE BOYS, *Christmas*
- DOLLY PARTON, *Home for Christmas*
- ELVIS PRESLEY, *Memories of Christmas*
- KENNY ROGERS, *Christmas in America*
- KENNY ROGERS, *The Gift*
- GEORGE STRAIT, *Merry Christmas Wherever You Are*
- RANDY TRAVIS, *An Old Time Christmas*
- VARIOUS ARTISTS, *A Country Christmas with the Stars of Branson*
- VARIOUS ARTISTS, *Smoky Mountain Christmas*

Source: RIAA



by **BOB DOERSCHUK**

**F**ame is elusive. Once found, it can be fleeting. And when lost, it's hard to get back to where you were before you had won the world's attention.

For Jimmy Wayne, that's only part of the story. Before signing with DreamWorks Records in 2001, survival was a more pressing concern than daydreaming about success. His childhood in North Carolina was a nightmare of poverty, violence and abandonment. Yet he rose from these dismal beginnings with music as his lifeline, and on the basis of his promise as a singer and writer, Scott Borchetta, who was then Senior Director, Radio Promotions and Marketing at DreamWorks, offered the young artist a record deal.

**"THIS ALBUM  
STANDS FOR  
BELIEVING IN  
YOURSELF  
AND NOT  
GIVING UP."**

*Jimmy Wayne*

Wayne reciprocated with a self-titled album, from which four singles were released, one of which, "Stay Gone," peaked at No. 3 on the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs chart. The media noticed, as *USA Today* heralded Wayne as

one of the "Next Big Things" in music and *People* included him on its list of "Sexiest Singers" of 2003. Yet when DreamWorks folded, these developments seemed doomed to become a few more footnotes in a litany of lost opportunities and unattained ambitions.

Luckily, things played out far better than that. Borchetta, having moved on to found Big Machine Records, welcomed Wayne onto its roster and then, with greater success, to join Jewel on the new The Valory Music Co. record label. Once again, the artist paid back Borchetta's trust and faith, this time by delivering an album whose title track, "Do You Believe Me Now," rocketed to a two-week stay at the top of the *Billboard* chart.

There are at least two big reasons why Wayne has reclaimed his place in the spotlight. The first, his talent as a writer and singer, is evident throughout *Do You Believe Me Now*, produced by Mark Bright, Joe West and Dave Pahanish. Wayne co-wrote five tracks, their subject matters varying yet each one — the painfully personal "Kerosene Kid," the romantically yearning Patty Loveless duet "No Good for Me," his rhythmically infectious and affirmative performance with John Oates of Hall and Oates on "Where You're Going" and the rest — share a quality

of emotional directness that complements the accessibility of the music.

Equally important is how the lessons Wayne learned as a child translated into a combination of determination, realism — and, he candidly admits, an element of fear — that have brought him one more time from the valley and back to the summit of Country Music.

"There was a time I thought, 'What if? I'm not giving up, but what if they have? What am I going to do?'" Wayne mused. "It's hard, man, when you're not having any action, to get people on the same page with you, because it's a business. I understand that. I've experienced the phone not ringing and having to call people seven or eight times before they call you back. Some never call back. There was a lot of disappointment. But I got it finished. So in a nutshell, this album stands for believing in yourself and not giving up."

Too often in recent years, when a label has gone out of business many of its artists have disappeared along with it. What made it possible for Wayne to avoid that fate? "It's

simple," Borchetta said. "He's a great artist. He's always been one of the best Country soul singers we've had, since he got to Nashville. But more than that, he kept digging. He would get up and go to work every day, whether it was going and listening to a song, writing a song, doing his charity. He was unflinching in his determination. And if he was going down, he was going down swinging."

"I guess the first thing is that you simply don't give up," Wayne concurred. "I didn't see the end coming when I was at DreamWorks because I was new, I was green and I didn't understand the business. We had momentum. Things were going well. We were selling records. And then one day, I remember, they said, 'The label has been sold.' I was thinking it was just kind of a lateral move; we'd keep moving forward. But that didn't happen."

Wayne had been in similar positions before, when one after another escape from the desperation of his early years slammed shut. As a result, he was more equipped to deal with this development than many others in the business might have been. But he benefitted as well from what he had accomplished through the success of that first album — not necessarily in terms of sustaining his visibility in the media but through the connections he had made with people who knew his story and had faith in his ability to keep going.

"I was getting mail from fans," he remembered. "They told me their stories. I remembered that 8-year-old boy who came up to me and told me, 'My dad's gone too.' Just that was enough for me to know that I'm supposed to be doing this."

And so, just as he had done when having to fend for himself at age 10, Wayne did what he had to do. He filled his schedule as much as possible with charity shows. And from those performances, he accepted opportunities that came his way, even if they involved the

photos: Kristin Barlowe



# JIMMY WAYNE

## { BELIEVE HIM NOW }

kinds of gigs that only beginning artists might be expected to accept.

"There was always somebody in the audience who would ask if I sang at weddings," he said, laughing. "And they'd hire me. Brian McCann, the catcher for the Atlanta Braves, called me to sing at his wedding, and I did. Debbie Parsley [Events Entertainment Manager at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum] had me come and do writers' nights. Gina Keltner [Talent Coordinator at the Grand Ole Opry] helped me out so much too. I'll never forget those people."

There's a moral here for young artists who find themselves professionally adrift. "Don't lie around," Wayne said. "Don't wait for the business to come to you. The longer you're gone, the harder it is to come back."

Having friends who can offer a hand makes a difference too. Borchetta was one such friend. And as luck would have it, Wayne came across the song "Do You Believe Me Now," written by West, Pahanish and Tim

Johnson just a month before receiving Borchetta's invitation to switch from Big Machine to The Valory Music Co. With both a single and a record label he believed in, his timing could not have been better.

It was a good match all around. At long last, Wayne has indeed "come home." But in a strange way, as he looks ahead, this good fortune poses another new challenge: With his past having fueled much of his writing and contributed to the intensity of his performance as a singer, how will he keep the inspiration burning through a more sanguine and secure future?

"I write best when there's some drama going on," he agreed. "So I don't want to ever get too comfortable. When you get too comfortable, you lose perspective. I'm a songwriter for a reason. I want to continue helping people through my music, but I'm also working for that day when I can leave the drama behind."

# CMA CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF SERVICE TO COUNTRY MUSIC

by BOB DOERSCHUK



CMA Board members toast CMA's 50th anniversary. Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn; Vicar Sabone; CMA CEO Tammy Genovese; Lifetime CMA Board Director J. William Denny, President; Denny Properties; Lifetime CMA Board Director Frances Preston; Clarence Spalding, President, Spalding Entertainment; Tim Dallas, Duane; Tim Dallas Entertainment; Charlie Anderson, President; CEO, Anderson Merchandisers; Kitty Moon Emery, CEO, Kitty Moon Enterprises; Lee Helton, Owner, Country Aircheck; Terry Combs, President/CEO, Buddy Lee Attractions; and Randy Goodman, President, Lyric Street and Carolwood Records.



Those who arrived for CMA's 50th Anniversary celebration on the evening of Sept. 24, were serenaded in the lobby of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum by a medley of sounds: the strains of a string trio, playing Country standards and other tunes with a classical air, and the bubbling of water as it flowed from the second-floor fountain along the staircase into the wishing pool near the entryway.

A touch of elegance softened by an evocation of pastoral streams, the Museum edifice testifying to the endurance of Country Music with pennies in a pool forecasting a hopeful future: These details, brought to life by an assembly of artists, industry executives and civic leaders, seemed to mirror the story of CMA — the iconography as well as the

humanity in all it has accomplished.

Highlights included Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen sharing his appreciation for CMA. After raising laughter by asking if he could receive a lifetime pass to the CMA Awards, he presented CMA CEO Tammy Genovese with a certificate that proclaimed "a day of recognition" of CMA's contributions and added, "Thank you all so much at CMA for all that you do. You're such a vital part of our state and our city."

Nashville Mayor Karl Dean followed with another proclamation, which focused on the importance of CMA in "the branding of this city as Music City USA. When you look around you, we have a new bus terminal coming in, which is the Music City Central. There is shortly to be a new convention center, the Music City Center. That is crucial to our city."

And then, after lauding the economic stimulus brought by the CMA Music Festival and CMA's donations of more than \$1 million to music education in Metro Nashville Public Schools through the "Keep the Music Playing" program, Dean concluded, "On behalf of the entire city, thank you for all that you do. We congratulate you on your 50th anniversary."

Following Dean, CMA Board President Randy Goodman, President, Lyric Street and Carolwood Records, announced Joe Galante, Chairman, Sony Music Entertainment, as recipient of this year's CMA Board President's Award. Galante, a CMA Board member for 24 years, responded by acknowledging former CMA Board President Jerry Bradley for bringing him into CMA. "It was really exciting to be around this organization because it taught me about Country Music and being involved and giving back," Galante said. "That tradition has been carried on for everybody who has joined."

And then, following Country Music Hall of Fame Member and former CMA Executive Director Jo Walker-Meador's tribute to former CMA Executive Director and CMA CSO Ed Benson on the occasion of his retirement, Genovese introduced Kix Brooks, Chairman of the CMA Board Artist Relations Committee, who presented an endowment check for \$1 million to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's "Words & Music" program, conceived to enable language arts and music teachers to instruct students on writing lyrics for songs. "It's a great outreach program for what we do as an industry," Brooks observed. Museum Director Kyle Young, accepting the check, said, "My hat is off to you guys who play the CMA Music Festival every year and are making this gift possible. And I really do want to thank CMA. This is an extremely generous gesture."

The evening ended as Genovese, who had emceed the proceedings, invited previous CMA Board Presidents and Chairmen to join her onstage for a champagne toast. As glasses rose throughout the glittering hall, she said, "For five decades, the Country Music Association and industry leaders have come together and worked in harmony for the good of the genre and to broaden the audience. Tonight, you are the stars. This toast is for you in celebration of your valuable contributions to the legacy and the future of this great organization and industry. Cheers!"



Former CMA Executive Director and CMA CSO Ed Benson, CMA CEO Tammy Genovese and former CMA Executive Director Jo Walker-Meador.



Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn; Lifetime CMA Board Director J. William Denny and Frances Preston; and Kyle Young, Executive Director, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.



Former CMA Executive Director Jo Walker-Meador; Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn; CMA CEO Tammy Genovese; Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen; Nashville Mayor Karl Dean; and former CMA Executive Director and CMA CSO Ed Benson.



Governor Phil Bredesen presents CMA CEO Tammy Genovese with plaque celebrating CMA 50th anniversary "a day of recognition here in the State of Tennessee."



Nashville Mayor Karl Dean lists contributions of CMA to "branding of our city as Music City USA."



Former CMA Executive Director Jo Walker, Member Charlie Lamb, founding member, CMA Board of Directors, and CMA CEO Tammy Genovese.



Bucky Bruner, PD, KMPQ, Nashville; Joe Galante, Chairman, Sony Music Entertainment; and CEO and CFO, Nashville, President, Young Broadcasting.

photos: John Russell



## CMA MAKES \$1 MILLION ENDOWMENT DONATION TO COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM'S "WORDS & MUSIC" SCHOOL PROGRAM

by **BOB DOERSCHUK** and **SCOTT STEM**

Conceived to help language arts and music instructors teach the basics of writing song lyrics, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's "Words & Music" program has received a \$1 million endowment from CMA. The check was presented in September during festivities at the Museum to celebrate CMA's 50th anniversary.

"CMA has been a longtime supporter of the important work of the Hall of Fame and Museum," said Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn, past President and Chairman of the CMA Board and current Chairman of CMA's Artist Relations Committee. "But what appealed to our Board about this donation was the idea that the funds would be focused on an initiative that is important to our artists and is the foundation of our industry — the art of songwriting and education about our intellectual property rights — protecting the future of our business."

"Words & Music," one of eight educational programs that the Museum currently offers to area schools, provides teachers with lesson plans, including a 10-song CD and accompanying lyric sheets licensed especially for this curriculum, and pairs students with volunteer professional songwriters who add melody to their compositions. Every aspect of the art form is explored, including the business and the impact that illegally downloading, burning and sharing songs off the Internet has on the community.

"Funding this important program is a natural extension of our support of music education in public schools through our 'Keep the Music Playing' campaign," said CMA CEO Tammy Genovese. "We are committed to music education and supporting quality programs that meet our Association's goals of engaging students, their families and teachers."

"This generous gift, which honors all the singers and songwriters who waive their concert fees to voluntarily participate in the CMA Music Festival each year, will provide stable funding in perpetuity for one of our essential and most important school programs," said Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum Director Kyle Young.

CMA will fund the "Words & Music" endowment with an annual donation of \$200,000 over a five year period (2008-2012). CMA has a long history of supporting the Hall of Fame. In 1961, the CMA Board approved the establishment of the Country Music Hall of Fame; six years later, in 1967, CMA opened the first home of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum on Music Row. Over the past 10 years, CMA has contributed \$3.7 million to the Museum. The new endowment raises that figure to \$4.7 million, making CMA one of the Museum's most generous and consistent benefactors.

Each year, CMA donates half the net proceeds from CMA Music Festival to support music education in Metro Nashville Public Schools through "Keep the Music Playing." Through a partnership with the Nashville Alliance for Public Education, CMA has donated more than \$1.1 million to purchase hundreds of instruments, lighting, sound equipment, piano labs and more on behalf of the artists who donate their time and perform at the Festival for free. The "Words & Music" donation will be earmarked from the Festival proceeds that support "Keep the Music Playing."

"Ultimately, both of these programs fulfill our mission of supporting music education," Genovese said.

above: CMA presents \$1 million endowment donation to Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's "Words & Music" School Program. Kyle Young, Executive Director, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum; CMA CEO Tammy Genovese; and Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn. photo: John Russell

# ED BENSON RETIRES FROM CMA

by BOB DOERSCHUK

Even among the many memorable moments that filled CMA's 50th Anniversary celebration at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum on Sept. 24, one in particular stood out, as Country Music Hall of Fame member Jo Walker-Meador walked up to the podium and looked out toward the distinguished guests seated and standing throughout the vast lobby.

As CMA Executive Director, Walker-Meador had hired Ed Benson 29 years earlier to work with her as Associate Executive Director. It was the beginning of a professional association that would not only invigorate the organization but also enrich the lives of Walker-Meador, CMA CEO Tammy Genovese and everyone else privileged to know and work with Benson up to his last day on staff at CMA, just 36 days before this evening's gathering.

After noting his expertise and professionalism, Walker-Meador saluted Benson with simplicity and affection, saying, "He's one of the good guys." And then Benson took the stage, embraced his longtime colleague and offered his own warm remembrance of the mentors and colleagues with whom he associated throughout his years at CMA. Those who know Benson were not surprised that he would close by imparting a bit of humorous advice: "All you guys out there, listen up. If you want to look good, hire some smart women."

"Ed and Jo set the tone for this organization," observed CMA CEO Tammy Genovese. "They've both been great mentors. Ed did so many things for me personally and gave me the opportunity to learn and grow here. Plus he was such a visionary and leader on some very crucial and important days for Country Music that helped us position ourselves."

Benson came to CMA with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Vanderbilt University, a stint in the Army, which included a tour of duty in Vietnam and eight years of music industry experience through his work with The Benson Company, the family-owned business, where he rose to Senior VP of Administration by 1978.

The young executive arrived at CMA's crowded Music Row office with mixed motives. "Quite candidly, I was planning to work for CMA for maybe two or three years, meet a lot of people and then use those connections get back to the record or publishing side in Country Music," he admitted. "But each time I thought I might get restless and move on, an interesting challenge came along. The job kept evolving. And so after a while, I just quit looking."

The timing was perfect for Benson and CMA to benefit mutually from his decision. By the time he succeeded the retiring Walker-Meador as Executive Director in 1992, CMA was both riding and stimulating an unprecedented growth surge in Country Music. During his tenure, Benson oversaw a long list of initiatives, including Fan Fair's relocation from the Tennessee State Fairgrounds to Downtown Nashville as the CMA Music Festival, the advent of the CMA Music Festival network television specials, the ascendance of the CMA Awards broadcast and its first ever visit to New York City in 2005, the explosive impact of corporate sponsorship in Country Music,



**"THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT WAS TO ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BOARD AND THE STAFF THAT, IF BALANCED CORRECTLY, WOULD MAKE THE GREATEST POSITIVE DIFFERENCE FOR COUNTRY MUSIC."**

— Ed Benson



Ed Benson regales attendees at his retirement festivities at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in September.

the construction of new CMA headquarters and much more.

All of this progress, in Benson's view, grew from two key strategic components. "One was the ability to attract the top industry leaders to service on our Board," he said. "And the other was the ability to build a growing and competent professional staff. But for me, the most important point was to establish a relationship between the Board and the staff that, if balanced correctly, would make the greatest positive difference for Country Music. Strategic planning was the platform that allowed us to establish this balanced relationship."

With talented people on the Board and CMA staff defining and achieving goals together, Benson charted a course based primarily on anticipating challenges rather than responding to them. "Ultimately, if they're successful, the initiatives of trade organizations are properly taken over by the commercial interests of the industry," he explained. "Frankly, it's hard for a trade organization to understand the life cycles of its programs and disengage from them once the industry has gotten up to speed. But you can keep applying what you've learned in new and constructive ways."

"For example," Benson continued, "for many years there was no such thing as sponsorship at Fan Fair. But when we moved CMA Music Festival Downtown, we were poised to explore that because of the experience we had gained over the previous 10 or 12 years of working with corporate America on behalf of the Country Music industry. By that time we had helped the industry in its efforts to draw sponsorship interest from corporations, so we were able to convert the knowledge we'd acquired into benefitting our own events and activities."

But perhaps CMA's greatest achievement, Benson speculated, was to foster a climate by which competitors in the industry could benefit from cooperation when it suited their common needs. "That's a key point in our history," he said. "One of our most important roles is a place where Board members can get to know one another better. So when they have competitive issues, they can solve them more easily than they might have if it weren't for CMA. When you sort it all out, it's about the music. That's why 90 percent of the people in this industry got into it — because we love the music."

This lesson, above all, Benson shared with his colleagues at CMA and plans to impart to clients as an independent consultant. "Work should be fun," he insisted. "People should enjoy one another's company when they come to work and know that the company cares about them. Certainly that's been true for me at CMA. The Board members, the people in the industry I've gotten to know, the artists and songwriters — each and every one of these people have helped me to become what I am today. Along the way, we've had much to be proud of, some important endeavors that had never been done before. But at the end of the day, it's the people you remember most. That's been the best part of my job from the start."



Ed Benson and Lifetime CMA Board Director Frances Preston.

CMA CEO Tammy Genovese, Ed Benson and former CMA Executive Director Jo Walker-Meador.



Victor Sansone and Ed Benson.



Ed Benson and Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen.



Wife Jamie Benson, daughter-in-law Jennifer Benson, son Edwin Benson and Ed Benson.

CMA honors Ed Benson during a Cumberland River cruise onboard the "Music City Queen," in August. Jo Walker-Meador, former CMA Executive Director, Ed Benson and Peggy Whitaker, former CMA Director of Strategic Planning and Administration.



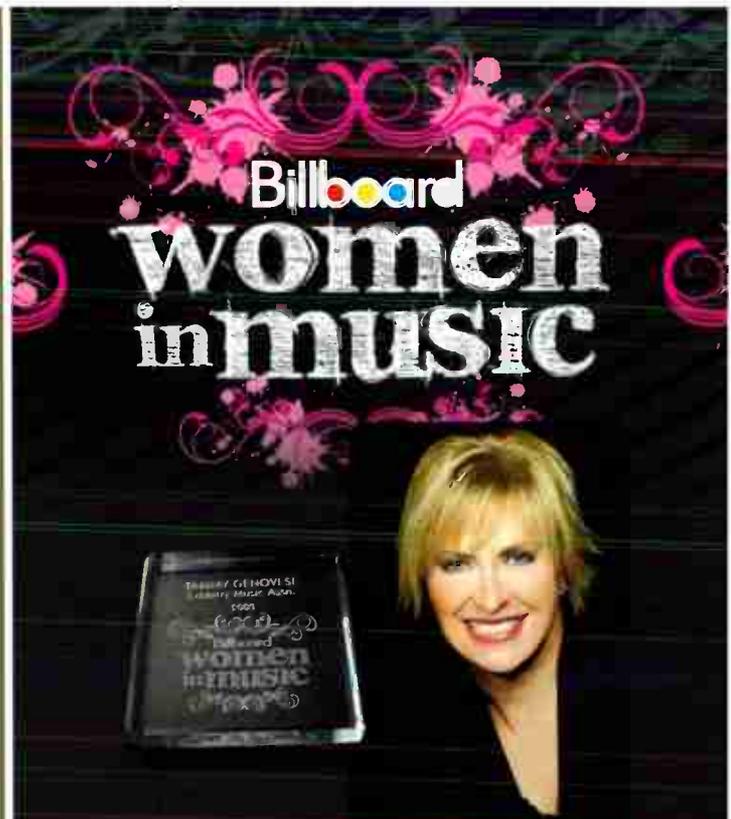
Joe Galante, Chairman, Sony Music Entertainment, Ed Benson and Jay DeMarcus of Rascal Flatts.



Ed Benson with Nashville Mayor Karl Dean.



Sam Hunt, Ed Benson, Charlie Chase and Jim Griffith.



TAMMY GENOVESE

CMA CEO Tammy Genovese has been named for the third consecutive year to *Billboard's* annual "Women in Music" list.

As selected by members of the *Billboard* editorial staff, the list honors female television executives, record label heads and other leaders whose contributions have made a major impact and inspired generations of women in the music industry. Their ability to green-light major projects, success attained over the previous 12 months and professional demeanor and leadership are among the criteria for inclusion on this list.

"Under the leadership of CEO Tammy Genovese, the Country Music Association saw a 9.4 percent increase in attendance this year at the CMA Music Festival in June from 2007 and launched a new Web site to promote the Festival special that aired on ABC in September — just two examples of CMA's proactive stance in volatile times," it was stated in the Nov. 1 issue of *Billboard*, in which the Women in Music list was announced.

*Billboard* also named CMA Board member Sue Peterson, Senior Buyer, Music, Target Stores, to this year's list. "I'm absolutely thrilled," she said. "It was a great honor to be recognized and in the company of so many women that I look up to and admire and have worked with. I have lived my dream job in the music business for the past 16 years, and I'm grateful for the recognition for my efforts not just for Target but also for my efforts at NARM [National Association of Recording Merchandisers] and CMA."

"It is flattering to be in the company of these outstanding women executives and represent the Country Music industry on the *Billboard* list," said Genovese. "I am proud of our accomplishments as an industry, and I am grateful to the incredibly gifted and talented female executives who paved the way for me in my role as CEO of CMA."



SUE PETERSON

# CRAIG

# MORGAN

by DEBORAH EVANS PRICE

**F**ew artists have experienced a more intriguing career trajectory than Craig Morgan. He's managed to find success on both major and indie record labels, and with a firmly established sense of self and clearly defined creative vision, he's consistently steered his career to the right place at the right time.

These days, the right place is BNA Records, which has released his latest album, *That's Why*. Morgan had broken into the Country scene in 2000 with a self-titled debut on Atlantic Nashville, after which he signed with Broken Bow Records. His five-year run on that imprint demonstrated that with the right artist, an indie could hold its own in the market.

With Broken Bow, Morgan issued three studio albums. He first reached the Top 10 with "Almost Home," which was followed by a string of hits that included "I Got You," "International Harvester," "Little Bit of Life," "Redneck Yacht Club," "Tough" and "That's What I Love About Sunday," which lodged for five weeks at No. 1 and earned kudos from *Billboard* as Most Played Country Song of the Year in 2005.

"The key was the music," Morgan said, looking back on his track record. "I think we had great songs that were great for the moment. And we worked hard. People do not know the work that the promotion team and I put in on those records. I literally did 280 days on the road, and every time I was in town doing a show, we would go visit radio. So there was a lot of effort put into that. For me, it was good. I enjoy working."

For all the credit he gives to the Broken Bow promotion department, he felt after a while that he needed a change to lift his career to the next level. "The promotion team over there was a great team and some of my dearest friends," he confirmed. "But in order for me to continue to excel in my career, I felt like I needed other tools."

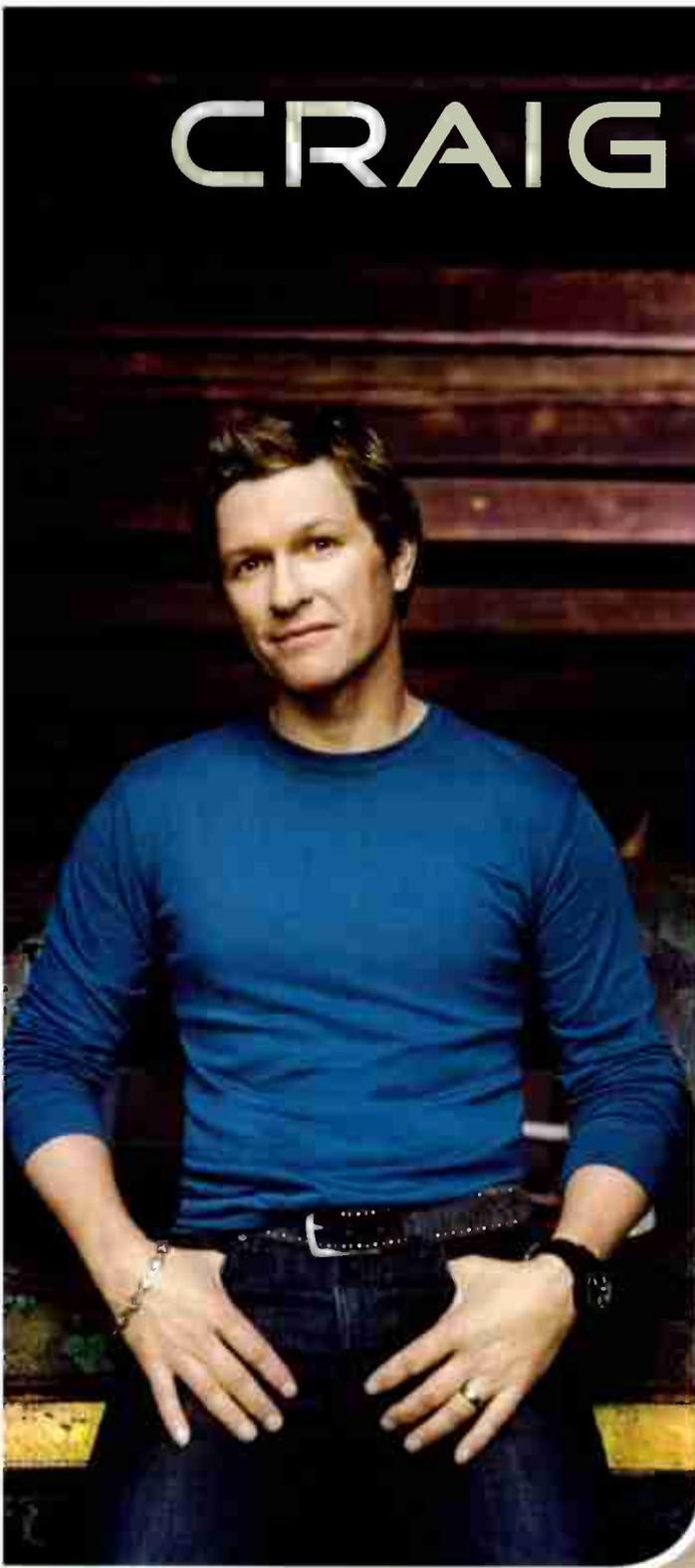
As a result, when Morgan became a free agent, a bidding war ensued, with Sony Music Entertainment emerging as the winner and signing the artist to its BNA roster. "When his deal ended with Broken Bow, Ken Levitan [President, Vector Management] called and asked if I would be interested in talking with Craig," said Joe Galante, Chairman, Sony Music Entertainment.

"I thought several of his singles had been great, so of course I wanted to meet with him. Renee Bell [Executive VP, A&R, Sony Music Entertainment], Butch Waugh [Executive VP, Sony Music Entertainment] and I were so impressed with the vision and plan that Craig brought to the table. I called Ken afterwards and told him we wanted to do a deal. He had gotten to a certain level in his career but needed help to get to the next one, and we could provide."

When asked what he felt had made Morgan successful as an indie artist, Galante didn't hesitate to reply. "He and [producer] Phil O'Donnell are great at writing and finding songs that help define him," he explained. "And they make great records. He got out there and worked his butt off. He and Faith Quesenberry [Manager at Vector Management] made sure if there was an opportunity, he was going to do it."

Morgan was equally impressed with the Sony Music Entertainment team. "They work hard and they are very relationship-driven," he said. "Joe also looks at the longevity and overall career of the artist. That is so important. It is nice to have that kind of support."

Just as important, he felt more in tune with their perception of him as an artist. "At BNA, we collectively agreed on the music. I took music that I liked to them, and they allowed Phil and me to go into the studio and make the record."



**"I LOOK BACK, SEEING ALL THE STUFF THAT I HAVE BEEN THROUGH, AND I KNOW THAT GOD MUST REALLY LOVE ME."**

— Craig Morgan



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



### JOE GALANTE RECEIVES CMA BOARD PRESIDENT'S AWARD

In September during the CMA Board of Directors meetings in Nashville, CMA Board President Randy Goodman surprised Joe Galante, Chairman of Sony Music Entertainment, by presenting him with the CMA Board President's Award, a distinction given annually at the discretion of the CMA Board President.

Goodman marked the occasion by praising the leadership, creative thinking and dedication that Galante has shown throughout the nearly 25 years he has served as a CMA Board member.

"Joe's contributions to CMA have been numerous over the years," Goodman noted. "But I wanted to honor him now for a specific initiative he has led during the past year at CMA that will be a benefit to our membership. Joe has paved the way for CMA to evolve its services, creating a market research department that can provide information and insightful analysis for our members."

"Joe is one of the most dedicated and visionary leaders in our industry and community," added CMA CEO Tammy Genovese. "His leadership, creativity and experience have been vital to CMA, and it is only natural that Randy has chosen to honor him with the CMA Board President's Award."

Galante, a CMA Board member from 1978 through 1990 and again from 1996 to the present, entered the music industry shortly after graduating from Fordham University in 1971 as a budget analyst with RCA Records in New York. Through a series of promotions, he rose in 1982 to become head of RCA Nashville and the youngest executive to lead a major Nashville record label. After a four-year stint in New York as President of RCA Records, Galante returned to Nashville in 1994 as Chairman of RLG Nashville and now serves as Chairman of Sony Music Entertainment. He served as President of the CMA Board in 1983 and Chairman in 1986.

above: CMA Board Chairman Clarence Spalding, President, Spalding Entertainment; CMA CEO Tammy Genovese; Joe Galante, Chairman of Sony Music Entertainment; and CMA Board President Randy Goodman, President, Lyric Street and Carolwood Records. photo: Amanda Eckard



CMA CEO Tammy Genovese and the CMA Board present the crystal gavel to outgoing CMA Board Chairman Clarence Spalding (r) and the crystal globe to incoming CMA Board Chairman Randy Goodman (l) during the October election of new CMA Board members in Nashville. photo: Amanda Eckard

# IEBA HONORS CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL

by BOB DOERSCHUK

The International Entertainment Buyers Association has honored CMA Music Festival with its Fair/Festival of the Year Award. The organization, which represents talent buyers, promoters, agents, managers, media, artists, producers and other entertainment-industry professionals, presented the Award at its annual Honors Dinner, held at the Hilton Nashville Downtown in October.

"IEBA is all about live entertainment, and the CMA Music Festival delivers it in spades," said Randy Wright, IEBA Conference Chairman and First VP. "The CMA Music Festival began with an emphasis on connecting fans with artists, and they've successfully continued this tradition. They are certainly very deserving of this honor."

"We are thrilled to have been acknowledged by the members of the International Entertainment Buyers Association," said Tony Conway, CMA Music Festival Executive Producer and President/Co-Owner of Buddy Lee Attractions. "This recognition is a testament to the artists who donate their time to appear at our event. They perform for free so that CMA can donate money on their behalf to support music education in Nashville's public schools. This award belongs to them."

"The Festival would not be possible without the support of the artists, the music industry and the City of Nashville," said Tammy Genovese, CMA CEO. "So, this award is something we can all be proud of. This event grows year after year and we are committed to keeping it fresh for the fans and making the experience of performing at the CMA Music Festival a top-notch experience for the artists."

The award is presented by IEBA to the festival, fair or special event utilizing artists as a major element of the event while attracting a large and diverse audience, and having displayed professional organization, management and production. CMA Music Festival won the Award in 2004 and 2006.

CMA was a proud sponsor of the Annual IEBA Honors Dinner, hosted by Joe Piscopo and featuring music from Mandy Barnett. Recipients of other IEBA awards included Kenny Chesney for Large Venue Artist, Sugarland for Small Venue Artist, the Sommet Center for Venue, Gil Cunningham of NESTE Event Marketing for Entertainment Buyer, Kevin Neal of Buddy Lee Attractions for Talent Agent, APA for Agency and AEG Live! and Red Mountain Entertainment tied for Concert Promoter. Loggins & Messina received the Lifetime Achievement Award, John Sanders accepted the President's Award and CMA Board President Steve Moore, Senior VP, AEG Live!, was given the organization's Humanitarian Award.





## AMBER RHODES

Q&A

**MUSICAL HERO** "My grandfather. He was offered recording contracts but never accepted the offers because of his commitment to his family. He played music purely for the love of it. I'm sure that's why he was so good at it." **DREAM DUET PARTNER** "Alison Krauss." **SONG YOU'D SECRETLY LOVE TO COVER** "'At Last.' It's my favorite song but I'll never do it. No one could even come close to Etta James' version." **PHRASE YOU SAY OVER AND OVER** "I'll start my diet tomorrow." **FAVORITE FOOD ON THE ROAD** "Sea salt and vinegar potato chips." [amberrhodes.com](http://amberrhodes.com)

photo: Jessica Farrell

In older times, ships at sea found their way home by triangulation. In today's music industry, artists can similarly chart their courses through the relationship of three points.

For Amber Rhodes, the first of these is Lexington, Ky., where she grew up with a love of Country Music. Point two is New York City, an unlikely port for those who follow the Country star. Still, while pursuing options as an actress and dancer, Rhodes connected with Axel Neihaus and Erik Steinert, co-owners of the Brooklyn-based production and artist development company Stray Dog Music. Their meeting led to the studio, where they produced her debut album, *Goodbye Yesterday*.

As sole writer on four songs and co-writer on the remaining six, Rhodes exhibits a particular way with hooks and words. The first single, "So Long Goodbye," which she penned with Hugh Colocott, builds momentum through a rush of deftly rhymed lyrics through the second half of each verse and into a classically crafted and catchy chorus. Her writing hand is steady on the ballads too, as on "Goodbye Yesterday," where practically the same structural formula leads to an equally rich but more poetic expression, all of which she enhances with a vocal style that moves easily from sensitive to sassy.

The third point in Rhodes' constellation? It's Nashville, of course, where her ongoing collaborations with local writing talent and imminent second album confirm that her career is on course.

## BECKY SCHLEGEL

Aside from a whisper of electric guitar on the title track and a bit of steel guitar now and then, the instrumentation is acoustic throughout Becky Schlegel's *For All the World to See*. Even on the faster bluegrass tracks, her songs are filled nearly as much with light as with sound.

That quality flows through the first single, "Bound for Tennessee," evokes Celtic folk and Appalachian harmonies in "Jenny," hangs like an evening mist on the cello-caressed "Why Maybe" and ambles to the rhythm of some very gentle drumming on "I Need Your Love." The spaciousness on these 11 tracks, each written by Schlegel, may have something to do with her upbringing in Kimball, a tiny town on the South Dakota prairie. Piano lessons began there at age 5 and pointed Schlegel toward her first gigs with her mother's band, The Country Benders.

After high school, she found summer work as singer and keyboardist on "The Mountain Music Show," staged seven nights a week at Custer in the Black Hills. This revue piqued her interest in more traditional Country; after moving to Minnesota she switched to guitar and founded True Blue, honored by the Minnesota Music Academy in 2000 as Bluegrass/Old-Time Group of the Year. Then, after winning the MMA's Artist of the Year award in 2001, Schlegel began her journey as a solo artist.

Produced by Schlegel and Brian Fesler and released on Lilly Ray / IGO Records, *For All the World to See* introduces an artist who's ready for all the world to hear.

photo: Mike Wichter



Q&A

**SONG YOU'D SECRETLY LOVE TO COVER** "'Nobody Wins,' by Kris Kristofferson." **DREAM DUET PARTNER** "Don Williams." **SONG YOU SING IN THE SHOWER** "'Slow Learner,' by the Nashville Bluegrass Band. I sing it every time I step into an elevator too. It's been in my head for about seven years." **ITEMS IN YOUR TIME CAPSULE** "Pen, paper and a Mountain Dew." **FAVORITE FOOD ON THE ROAD** "Gas station food — all of it!" [beckyschlegel.com](http://beckyschlegel.com)

LILLY RAY  
RECORDS

IGO  
RECORDS

Debut Spotlight compiled by BOB DOERSCHUK

# CMA SONGWRITERS SERIES SETS STAGE FOR CMA AWARDS



Jonathan Singleton, Rodney Clawson, Chris Wallin and Bob DiPiero

Craig Morgan, Hillary Lindsey, Bob DiPiero and Brett James



Guitarist Mike Rogers from Craig Morgan's band, Craig Morgan, Bob DiPiero, Hillary Lindsey and Brett James

Jonathan Singleton, Bob DiPiero, Chris Wallin and Rodney Clawson

photos: Denise Carberry



by **BOB DOERSCHUK** and **SCOTT STEM**

Given the size and enthusiasm of the crowds that have attended all of the CMA Songwriters Series events at Joe's Pub in New York City over these past three years, Country Music has proven, as the song says, that it can make it there. That was confirmed Oct. 29 and 30, when the two latest installments in this series played out just as anticipation was beginning to build for "The 42nd Annual CMA Awards" in November. "Without the talents of our songwriters, the CMA Awards would not be possible," observed CMA CEO Tammy Genovese. "The song is where it all begins, and fans love to hear the stories behind the songs from some of our songwriters."

It's exciting for the fans to see some of Nashville's most talented tunesmiths on the bill. So it was on the first of these two nights, when host Bob DiPiero (whose many hits include George Strait's "Blue Clear Sky," Faith Hill's "Take Me As I Am" and Vince Gill's "Worlds Apart") kicked off the show and then welcomed a panel that included Brett James (Martina McBride's "Blessed," Carrie Underwood's "Jesus, Take the Wheel" and Kenny Chesney's "When the Sun Goes Down"), Hillary Lindsey (Underwood's "Just a Dream," "Last Name" and "So Small") and BNA Records artist Craig Morgan ("Almost Home," "I Got You" and "Love Remembers.")

A duo performance by Lindsey and James of "Jesus, Take the Wheel" was one highlight from the first night's two shows, though critic Jon Caramanica, in a review of the show in *The New York Times*, also lauded Morgan for "the wit and quirkiness of songs like 'Redneck Yacht Club' and 'International Harvester'" and praised Lindsey for "writing material that seamlessly blends vulnerability and resilience."

With DiPiero again onboard as host, the lineup on Oct. 30 included Rodney Clawson (George Strait's "I Saw God Today," the 2008 CMA Single of the Year, Big & Rich's "Lost in This Moment" and Jason Aldean's "Why"), Chris Wallin (Chesney's "Don't Blink," Toby Keith's "Love Me if You Can" and Montgomery Gentry's "Something to Be Proud Of") and Jonathan Singleton (Billy Currington's "Don't" and Gary Allan's "Watching Airplanes").

Like Morgan, Singleton was making his first appearance in the CMA Songwriters Series. And with his debut album scheduled for release on Universal Records South this summer, he expressed an appreciation for what the experience offers especially for relatively new participants.

"It's so interesting to me to hear guys of that caliber," he said. "They've all had huge songs, and when you hear them played the way they were written, you get a sense for how they write. One thing is that the lyric is almost always the most important thing, especially with Country songwriters in Nashville. It's not like a rock thing: The lyric has to make sense as you read it down."

Singleton found that what goes on backstage before and between shows was almost as beneficial as what happened in the spotlight. "You get to know these guys and you start looking forward to working with them," he said. "That's why I just got through telling my publisher at breakfast today that we've got to set it up for me to write with Rodney and Chris. I'm still learning every day, but I know I can really learn from writing with guys like that."

For Morgan, the CMA Songwriters Series offers even more to listeners than to the participants onstage. "Country Music, unlike any other genre, does have that songwriter pool to pull the music from," he said. "More than anything, CMA has given fans an opportunity to see that first-hand. It's something they might not otherwise experience, especially outside of Nashville. For CMA to do that for the fans out there, it's very cool."

For information about Joe's Pub and upcoming CMA Songwriters Series performances including the March 19 show, visit [joespub.com](http://joespub.com) or call (212) 967-7555. Official sponsors for 2008 CMA Songwriters Series include American Airlines, ASCAP, BMI, Great American Country (GAC) and SESAC.



## INTERNATIONAL

### INTERNATIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

JAN. 15 - FEB. 1

CELTIC CONNECTIONS

Glasgow, Scotland

[celticconnections.com](http://celticconnections.com)

JAN. 16 - 26

TAMWORTH COUNTRY MUSIC  
FESTIVAL

Tamworth, Australia

[tamworthcountrymusic.com.au](http://tamworthcountrymusic.com.au)

JAN. 30 - MARCH 22

30TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL  
COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Shutzenhaus Albisgueti

Zurich, Switzerland

[albisguetli.ch](http://albisguetli.ch)

JAN. 31 - FEB. 1

WESTERN EXPERIENCE

Den Bosch, The Netherlands

[westernexperience.com](http://westernexperience.com)

FEB. 6 - 8

14TH INTERNATIONAL COUNTRY  
MUSIC FAIR BERLIN

Berlin, Germany

[countrymusicmesse.de](http://countrymusicmesse.de)

\*Events and dates are subject to change.

Visit [CMAworld.com/international/touring](http://CMAworld.com/international/touring)  
for more information.

#### CMA CLOSE UP STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

1. CMA CLOSE UP 2. 0896-372X 3. OCT. 1, 2008 4. BI-MONTHLY	
5. SIX 6. \$25.00	
7. CMA, ONE MUSIC CIRCLE SOUTH, NASHVILLE, TN 37203-4312	
8. CMA, ONE MUSIC CIRCLE SOUTH, NASHVILLE, TN 37203-4312	
9. TAMMY GENOVESE, CMA, ONE MUSIC CIRCLE SOUTH, NASHVILLE, TN 37203	
WENDY PEARL, CMA, ONE MUSIC CIRCLE SOUTH, NASHVILLE, TN 37203	
ATHENA PATTERSON, CMA, ONE MUSIC CIRCLE SOUTH, NASHVILLE, TN 37203	
10. CMA, ONE MUSIC CIRCLE SOUTH, NASHVILLE, TN 37203-4312	
11. NONE 12. HAS NOT CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS	
13. CMA CLOSE UP 14. AUG/SEPT 2008	
15. AVG. NO. COPIES EA. ISSUE	NO. COPIES SINGLE ISSUE
8,183	8,000
3,464	3,603
2,964	3,046
487	479
25	25
6,940	7,153
200	150
100	80
400	300
300	200
1,000	730
7,940	7,883
243	117
8,183	8,000
876	916

16. DEC 08 / JAN 09

17. *Athena Patterson* 10/1/08

**EMMIE ANDERSON-WISNIEWSKI**, record label executive, 33, died Oct. 22 in Franklin, Tenn., from complications related to pregnancy. Anderson-Wisniewski, a Louisiana State University graduate, had been employed for more than 10 years by Universal Music Group Nashville, where she served as Senior Director of Marketing at the time of her death.

**JIM PALFR**, Dobro player and steel guitarist, 75, died Oct. 5 in Nashville. Born in Eldridge, Ala., and raised in Flint, Mich., Baker served in the U.S. Army before relocating to Nashville in 1963. In addition to working as a member of the Mel Tillis Statesiders Band in the early '70s, Baker recorded on sessions with Bill Carlisle, Roy Drusky, Jim and Jesse and other artists.

**NEIL BRAKE**, photographer, 47, died Nov. 4 at his home in Franklin, Tenn. Born in England, he was raised from age 5 in the United States. Brake's photographs have been published by The Associated Press and Agence France-Presse and featured in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *The New York Times*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Time*, *USA Today* and *CMA Close Up*. His professional honors include being named Alabama Photographer of the Year, national photographer of the year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and three-time winner of *The New York Times*' Chairman's Award. Brake also served as a staff photographer at Vanderbilt University Creative Services and, at the time of death, as Senior Photographer at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

**DANNY DILL**, songwriter, 84, died Oct. 23 in Nashville. Born Horace Eldred Dill in Huntingdon, Tenn., the Nashville Songwriter Hall of Fame member is best known as co-writer of two Country classics. With the late Marijohn Wilkin, Dill crafted "The Long Black Veil," recorded initially and turned into a Top 10 hit by Lefty Frizzell in 1959 and subsequently covered by artists including Joan Baez, The Band, Johnny Cash, Jerry Garcia, the Kingston Trio and Mick Jagger. He is celebrated as well for joining with Mel Tillis to write "Detroit City," a Top 10 hit for Bobby Bare in 1963. Dill entered the music business as a performer, working with his wife Annie Lou Stockard as Annie Lou and Danny. Together, they appeared on the Grand Ole Opry and opened shows for Eddy Arnold, Ernest Tubbs, Hank Williams and others. After his divorce, Dill switched his focus to songwriting; he joined Cedarwood Publishing as their first staff writer and later wrote for Buckhorn Music. Eddy Arnold, Willie Nelson, Jim Reeves and Faron Young are among the many artists who have recorded songs from Dill's catalog.

**BRION FORD**, singer and son of the late Country Music Hall of Fame member "Tennessee Ernie" Ford, 56, died in White House, Tenn., from lung cancer. Born in San Gabriel, Calif., Ford followed his father's footsteps into a musical career. During the 1980s, he and his brother-in-law Don Gay toured as a duo. Ford also performed in productions at Opryland USA.

**JAY MILLER**, former radio executive, 57, died Nov. 15 in Brooksville, Fla., from kidney cancer. Born in Champaign, Ill., he served as VP/GM of WQYK/Tampa until retiring from radio to open a high-end sporting goods store with his wife Jamie in 1998.

**NICK REYNOLDS**, founding member of the Kingston Trio, 75, died Oct. 1 in San Diego, Calif., from acute respiratory disease syndrome. The son of a Navy captain, Reynolds and his three siblings sang frequently at home as they grew up in Coronado, Calif. In the mid '50s, while earning his business degree from Menlo College in Atherton, Calif., he formed the Kingston Trio with friends Dave Guard and Bob Shayne. Their performances at San Francisco's Purple Onion led to a contract with Capitol Records. Reynolds stayed with the group until they disbanded in 1967, by which time they had lofted 13 hits into the Top 10 and helped launch the folk music craze, whose emphasis on traditional material and acoustic texture set the stage for the rise of Country Music in years to come.

In Memoriam compiled by **BOB DOERSCHUK**

**JAN. 6**

**Single Tree** / *Down in Dixie* / SSmack  
**various artists** / *Undone: A Music Fest Tribute to Robert Earl Keen (live)* / Right Ave./Dickson Prod./Thirty Tigers

**JAN. 20**

**Bobby Osborne** / *Bluegrass and Beyond* / Rounder  
**Bruce Robison** / *His Greatest* / Premium

**JAN. 27**

**Andy Friedman & the Other Failures** / *Weary Things* / City Salvage/Kindred Rhythm  
**Dry Branch Fire Squad** / *Echoes of the Mountains* / Rounder  
**Pat Green** / *What I'm For* / BNA  
**The Mickeys** / *Walk Along* / Riverbeat Music  
**Alecia Nugent** / *Hillbilly Goddess* / Rounder  
**various artists** / *Johnny Cash Remixed* / Compadre/Music World

**FEB. 3**

**Dierks Bentley** / *Feel That Fire* / Capitol

**FEB. 10**

**Ted Russell Kamp** / *Poor Man's Paradise* / PoMo/Dualtone  
**Megan Munroe** / *One More Broken String* / Diamond Music Group  
**Michael Martin Murphey** / *Buckaroo Blue Grass* / Rural Rhythm

**FEB. 17**

**Mickey Clark** / *Winding Highways* / ear X-tacy Records  
**Brigitte DeMeyer** / *Red River Flower* / BDM Music  
**Darryl Holter** / *Darryl Holter* / 213 Music

**Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit** / *Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit* / Lightning Rod  
**Gurf Morlix** / *Last Exit to Happyland* / Rootball

**FEB. 24**

**NewFound Road** / *Same Old Place* / Rounder  
**Randy Weeks** / *Going My Way* / Certifiable  
**Jake Owen** / *Easy Does It* / RCA

**MARCH 3**

**Raul Malo** / *Lucky One* / Fantasy  
**Buddy and Julie Miller** / *Written In Chalk* / New West

**MARCH 17**

**Sarah Darling** / *Every Monday Morning* / Black River Music Group

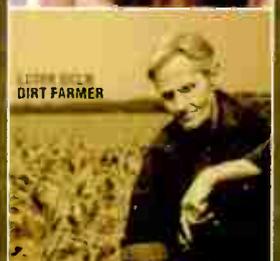
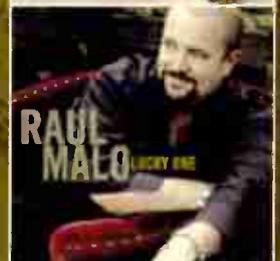
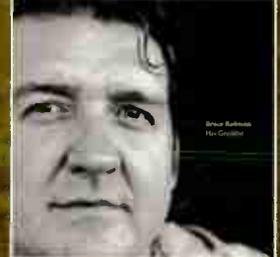
**APRIL 21**

**The Boxmasters** / *TBD* / Vanguard

**MAY 19**

**Levon Helm** / *Dirt Farmer II* / Vanguard

New CD Releases compiled by  
**ATHENA PATTERSON**



**K**itty Wells sat calmly, almost regally, in a back room of the library at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, quietly contemplating her life and career.

The Nashville native has done quite a bit of reflection recently, thanks to a new exhibit at the Museum. "Kitty Wells: Queen of Country Music, Presented by Great American Country Television Network," which remains open until June 14, 2009, puts her history-making life in a big-picture perspective through exhibits of awards, chart reproductions, vintage TV footage and stage wear, including the peach dress she wore to the CMA Awards at the Grand Ole Opry House in 1976 on the night she was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

"Things," she reflected, "worked out pretty well for us."

That line alone proves that Wells is the Queen of Understatement as well as of Country Music.

"Well," she explained, with a smile, "I let other people do the bragging. I'm not one to really brag and carry on like that."

Of course, no one would blame Wells if she ever did engage in a little self-promotion. Before Loretta Lynn first told off her husband in song, before Tammy Wynette belted out her orchestrated declamations, before Dolly Parton stirred her pot of sonic fragility and glitz, Wells enjoyed a 14-year run of Top 10 hits that helped make it possible for women to achieve success as Country artists.

Wells wasn't the first female to make a mark on this music. Patsy Montana sold a million copies of her classic "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart," released in 1935. Lulu Belle Wiseman found acclaim on "The National Barn Dance," broadcast from Chicago over WLS radio, as half of the husband-and-wife team Lulu Belle and Scotty.

But no woman nabbed a solo No. 1 single on the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs chart until Wells, who achieved that distinction with "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels" in 1952.

"If it hadn't been for Kitty Wells," Barbara Mandrell suggested in a famous quote that's documented in the "Queen of Country Music" exhibit, "there wouldn't be a Dolly Parton or Tammy Wynette, and there certainly wouldn't be a Barbara Mandrell."

The magnitude of what Wells achieved becomes clearer when you put her into the context of her time. Women earned the right to vote in 1920, just 32 years before her ascendance, and during her peak commercial years in the 1950s society still maintained a strict division of roles according to gender. Men worked for a paycheck to support the home; women tended the house and took care of the kids. The feminist movement had yet to develop, though the frustrations that sparked it were already brewing.

"Kitty was always speaking for women," observed Patty Loveless, who covers numerous Country songs from the 1950s and '60s on her latest album, *Sleepless Nights*. "I do believe that she was a voice for all women during that time."

Many women had only recently entered the workforce, during World War II, as men were called into battle and factories suddenly needed personnel to meet the military's needs. And when the soldiers

Long Lives the Queen  
CELEBRATING  
**KITTY WELLS**



"Kitty was always speaking for women. I do believe that she was a voice for all women during that time."

— Patty Loveless



Kitty Wells at opening of Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum exhibit "Kitty Wells: Queen of Country Music, Presented by Great American Country Television Network." photo: Donn Jones



Kitty Wells, 1994  
photo: Dennis Carney



Kitty Wells, c. 1954  
photo: Walden Fabry

came back home, many of those women found it difficult to return to the role of housewife.

"After World War II, things began to change," the late Minnie Pearl is quoted as saying in the "Queen of Country Music" exhibit. "Women began getting fed up with their way of life."

Coincidentally, Wells first achieved success thanks to a song about being fed up with "The Wild Side of Life." Recorded by Hank Thompson, this single spent 15 weeks at the top of the charts, with a lyric that castigated a woman for choosing liquor and "the glamour of the gay night life." Lured by the prospect of a \$125 recording payment, Wells agreed to record "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," which rebutted Thompson's hit by placing the blame on philandering husbands.

The timing in 1952 for release by Decca Records of this single was as perfect as Wells' interpretation of its message. Her performance was strong and defiant, stern but not harsh, pained but not defeated. The song lodged for six weeks at No. 1 (equivalent to the amount of time Faith Hill's "Breathe" and Carrie Underwood's "Jesus, Take the Wheel" spent at the top position in this decade) and opened the door for Wells to follow it with a series of singles that mined the divide in broken homes, including the post-split "I Can't Stop Loving You," the resigned "Release Me," the forlorn "You Don't Hear" and the divorce ruminations "Will Your Lawyer Talk to God" and "Mommy for a Day."

Despite the disharmony of that subject matter, Wells enjoyed a home life marked by enduring love and stability. At 18, she married fellow singer Johnnie Wright in 1937, and the couple has stayed together for more than seven decades. Wright was part of a hit-making duo called Johnnie and Jack; when they toured with their band to play at radio stations to promote their shows in various markets, Wells would perform a few solo tunes. Acting as her manager, Wright eventually decided to make his wife the headliner in their show, despite an admonition from Roy Acuff, who believed the move was financial suicide.

Looking back, Wells remembered that Acuff, the King of Country Music, "kind of settled down when Johnnie showed him that you could headline a show with a woman. I don't think they" — the audiences who came to their shows — "really thought a whole



Kitty Wells



Johnnie Wright and Kitty Wells, 1951



Kitty Wells at induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame during the 1976 CMA Awards at the Grand Ole Opry House.  
photo: CMA archives



Kitty Wells with producer Owen Bradley at The Quonset Hut, c. 1955. photo: Emer Williams

lot about who headlines a show. We were always there together anyway."

Their relationship, like her rise to stardom, forecast an era when old adages might be reconsidered or even reversed, such as the truism that behind every successful man is a woman. In their case, Wright was always there to bolster Wells' career, which she believes could not have taken off without his support.

"He's always promoted my career," she maintained. "He really promoted me more than he did Johnnie and Jack."

That promotion elevated Wells into a uniquely distinguished career, measured by a catalog that includes 23 Top 10 singles and 35 Top 10 albums.

Since her 1976 induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame, other female artists, including Hill, Reba McEntire and Shania Twain, have been referred to on occasion as the Queen of Country Music. This doesn't cause Wells to feel slighted, though she admits that the passage of time may have made her a less immediate presence than she once had been.

"Some of the new artists might not be quite so familiar with my singing or with my songs," she said.

Still, the very fact that any performer might earn that distinction testifies to the legacy of Wells, who established the possibility that Country Music might have and acknowledge someone as its Queen at all. And those who are aware of history know who the true Queen is and will always be.

Just ask Loveless, who shared the stage with Wells and Lynn on the program that marked the reopening of the Ryman Auditorium in 1994. On that night, these artists, representing three generations of women in Country Music with careers that spanned five decades, joined to sing "Making Believe," which Wells had recorded in 1955. More than music bound them, as Loveless maintained.

"It is a common thread," she insisted. "And Kitty is what holds it all together."

*CMA created the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1961 to recognize individuals for their outstanding contributions to the format with Country Music's highest honor. Inductees are chosen by CMA's Hall of Fame Panel of Electors, which consists of more than 300 anonymous voters appointed by the CMA Board of Directors.*



SHOW DOG NASHVILLE ARTIST TRAILER CHOIR VISITS CMA ON HALLOWEEN TO PERFORM SOME TUNES FROM THEIR DIGITAL EP, INCLUDING FIRST SINGLE "OFF THE HILLBILLY HOOK."

Taylor Shults, Manager, TKO Artist Management; George Nunes, GM, Show Dog Nashville; Shug, percussionist; Crystal of Trailer Choir; Curt Motley, Booking Agent, Paradigm; Tammy Genovese, CMA CEO; Hank Adam Locklin, CMA Senior Manager of Membership and Industry Relations; and Butter and Big Vinny of Trailer Choir.

photo: Amanda Eckard

## 2008 cma events

### DECEMBER

"The 42nd Annual CMA Awards" re-airs on CMT

MONDAY, DEC. 1, 9 PM

TUESDAY, DEC. 2, 1 PM

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10, 9 PM

THURSDAY, DEC. 11, 2 PM

(all times Eastern)

"CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock" re-airs on GAC

SUNDAY, DEC. 7, 4 AND 8 PM

MONDAY, DEC. 8, 12 MIDNIGHT

MONDAY, DEC. 22, 8 PM

TUESDAY, DEC. 23, 12 MIDNIGHT

(all times Eastern)

## 2009 cma events

### FEBRUARY

TUESDAY, FEB. 17 - THURSDAY, FEB. 19

CMA Board of Directors Meetings / Orlando

### MARCH

TUESDAY, MARCH 3

Country Music DJ and Radio Hall of Fame Dinner / Nashville Convention Center / CRB.org  
CMA is a proud sponsor.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4 - FRIDAY, MARCH 6

CRS-40 / Nashville Convention Center / CRB.org  
CMA is a proud sponsor.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19

CMA Songwriters Series / Joe's Pub / New York / Tickets: joespub.com

MONDAY, MARCH 30

CMA Broadcast Awards submissions accepted at Broadcast.CMAawards.com.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31 - SATURDAY, APRIL 4

Tin Pan South / Nashville / tinpansouth.com  
CMA is a proud sponsor.

### APRIL

FREE CMA Directory mailed to Sterling and Organizational members as a benefit of CMA membership. CMA Directories available to purchase at CMA (615) 244-2840.

ASCAP HONORS CMA WITH SILVER BOWL AT PRESENTATION DURING ASCAP COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS AT RYMAN AUDITORIUM TO MARK CMA'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY. ASCAP Senior VP Connie Bradley and CMA CEO Tammy Genovese.

photo: Ed Rode



CMA RECEIVES SPECIAL AWARD FROM INTERNATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT BUYERS ASSOCIATION TO COMMEMORATE CMA'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY.

Randy Wright, IEBA Conference Chairman and First VP; CMA CEO Tammy Genovese; and Joe Nichols.

photo: Rick Diamond



BILLY BOB THORNTON AND HIS BAND THE BOXMASTERS HOST THE SECOND ANNUAL "ALL FOR THE HALL" NEW YORK BENEFIT IN OCTOBER AT THE NOKIA THEATRE TIMES SQUARE FEATURING A DINNER, AUCTION AND GUITAR PULL. PERFORMERS INCLUDED LARRY CAMPBELL, RODNEY CROWELL, JERRY DOUGLAS, VINCE GILL AND EMMYLOU HARRIS, WITH PROCEEDS DONATED TO THE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM.

Tammy Genovese, CMA CEO; Hannah Storm, Co-Anchor, "ESPN SportsCenter;" Steve Turner, Chairman, Board of Officers and Trustees, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum; Chely Wright; and Rod Essig, Booking Agent, Creative Artists Agency and Co-Producer, "All for the Hall."

photo: Donn JONES

