

CMA Close Up

2010 | VOLUME 1

**2009:
THE YEAR IN
COUNTRY
MUSIC**

**CHRIS
YOUNG**

Sings His Life

**WHO NEW
TO WATCH**

BIG KENNY

Sowing Sonic Seeds

**NEW VIDEO
CHANNELS**

Action Goes Online

BRENDA LEE

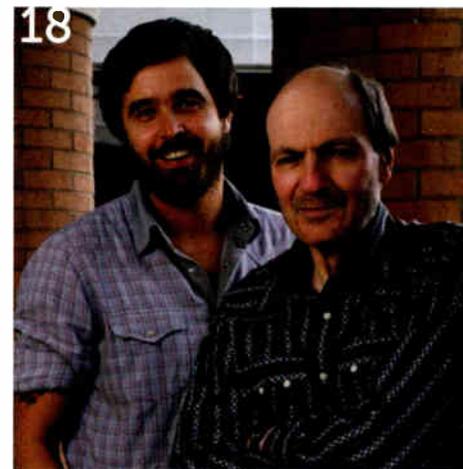
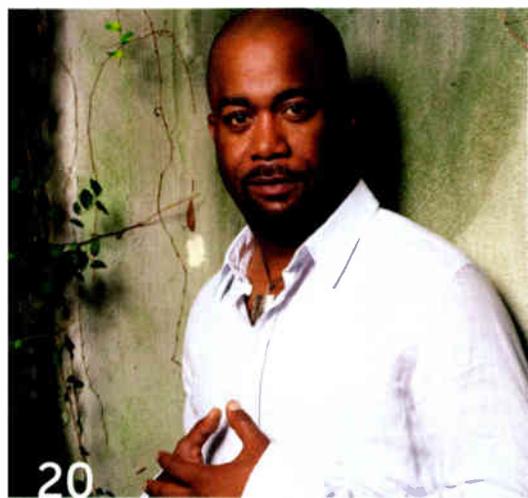
*The Archetype for
Country Stardom*

**CMA
RESEARCH
UPDATES**

Unveiled at CRS



**DARIUS
RUCKER**
**CMA NEW ARTIST
OF THE YEAR**



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With the resignation of CMA CEO Tammy Genovese in early December, a page was turned in the organization's history as the Country Music industry's most determined and effective advocate.

Shortly afterward, in January, a national search began to find a new Executive Director, with Charlie Anderson, President and CEO of Anderson Merchandisers and former CMA Board Chairman, in charge of a Board committee delegated to oversee this process. CMA Board Chairman Steve Moore, Senior VP of AEG Live! is serving as interim Director of the organization during the search.

This committee is charged with defining the duties and establishing the necessary qualifications for potential applicants. It will also hire a national search firm to identify and vet those applicants as well as establish a procedure for submitting applications.

The history of CMA is a chronicle of gifted individuals working together as a team to further their common goal of celebrating Country Music and empowering those who work on its behalf. This reservoir of talent has enabled the Board to recruit members for the search committee whose experience, dating as far back as 1975, allows the perspective to complete its mission successfully.

CMA's greatest asset is the music to which it is dedicated. That combination of leadership coupled with the unique artistry and legacy of Country Music ensures that the interests of our members and the fans they serve remain secure and in good hands.

Inquiries for this position can be e-mailed to **ExecutiveSearch@CMAworld.com**.

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WHO new to watch in 2010

photo: Justin Key



THE BAND PERRY

REPUBLIC NASHVILLE

photo: Golden Music Nashville



BENTON BLOUNT

GOLDEN MUSIC NASHVILLE

photo: Sean, Lou Fievet



COOPER BOONE

CITIFEST

photo: Welcome Hall



JODY BOOTH

DIAMOND MUSIC GROUP

photo: Michael Elms



LAURA BELL BUNDY

MERCURY NASHVILLE

photo: David Tsay



COLDWATER JANE

MERCURY NASHVILLE

photo: James Minchin III



EASTON CORBIN

MERCURY NASHVILLE

photo: Joe Hardwick



JEREMY CRADY

FLYING W

photo: Margaret Malandrucco



TYLER DICKERSON

LYRIC STREET

photo: Sean L. Smith



MASON DOUGLAS

RURAL RHYTHM

photo: Kristin Barlowe



MARGARET DURANTE

UNIVERSAL REPUBLIC

photo: S.R. Hume



BRETT ELDREDGE

ATLANTIC

photo: Justin Key



FAST RYDE

REPUBLIC NASHVILLE

photo: Ryley Antman



ADAM FISHER

LOFTON CREEK

photo: Golly Locks



ANNA GARBOTT

BLUE STEEL

photo: courtesy of Brantley Gilbert.com



BRANTLEY GILBERT

AVERAGE JOE'S ENTERTAINMENT

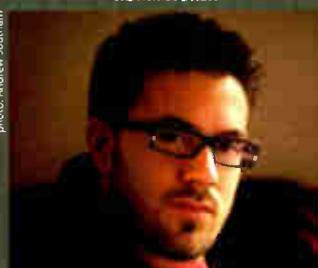
photo: Johnny Arquedas



GIRLS GUNS & GLORY

LONESOME DAY

photo: Andrew Southam



DANNY GOKEY

19 RECORDINGS LTD./RCA NASHVILLE

photo: Cameron Powell



GOLD HEART

RURAL RHYTHM

photo: Ana McCray



CHRIS HANNERS

LITTLE HOUSE

photo: Dale Manning



THE HARTERS

BIGGER PICTURE GROUP

photo: David Clements



SUSAN HICKMAN

4 CLOVER ENTERTAINMENT

photo: Kate Powers



MALLARY HOPE

MCA NASHVILLE

photo: Smaltz & Baskin



THE JANEDEAR GIRLS

WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE

World Radio History

A partial list of Country Music artists with a debut single set for release to radio sometime in 2010 or a debut album set for release via national distribution to retail sometime in 2010.



CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL JOHNSON



SCOTT LINDSEY



CORB LUND



CATHY-ANNE McCLINTOCK



JAKE McVEY



JASON MITCHELL



KYLIE MORGAN



MUSTANG CREEK



MUSTANG SALLY



JOE PUG



BRYAN RAGSDALE



SUZY RAGSDALE



ASHLEY RAY



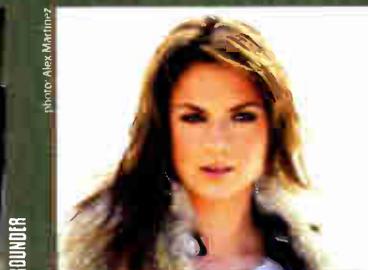
SAVANNAH JACK



STEEL MAGNOLIA



SUMMERTOWN ROAD



BRIDGETTE RATUM



JOSH THOMPSON



TY WILLIAMS



WILLIAMS RILEY BAND



BLAKE WISE

NOT PICTURED
 BLACK PRAIRIE, Rounder
 BLACKBERRY SMOKE, BamaJam
 ASH BOWERS, Stoney Creek
 BAYLIE BROWN, Show Dog-Universal Music
 BURNS & POT, Blue Steel
 SARAH BUXTON, Lyric Street
 CARTER S CHORD, Saw Dog-Universal Music
 COLDWATER CANYON BAND, Kountreeboyz Entertainment
 RICHIE FIELDS, Joint Journey
 CHRIS FILER, Lofton Creek/3 Kidney
 JESSICA HARP, Warner Music Nashville
 WALKER HAYES, Capitol Nashville
 SEAN HOGAN, Lakeland Heart
 HOUSTON COUNTY, Stroudavarious
 CHRIS JANSON, BNA
 JASON JONES, Warner Music Nashville
 MATT KENYON, BamaJam
 KRISTA MARIE, BBR/Holeshot
 JENNETTE McCURDY, Capitol Nashville
 HANNAH McNEIL, Red/Spinville
 JERRAD NEIMANN, Sea Galle/Arista Nashville
 THE PARKS, Lyric Street
 MICA ROBERTS, Shaw Dog-Universal Music
 GWEN SEBASTIAN, Lofton Creek/Open Road
 SHEL, Moraine Music
 SINGLETREE, Big 7/Lofton Creek
 JASON STURGEDON, Nine North
 THOMPSON SQUARE, Stoney Creek
 MICHELLE TURLEY, Victorio
 JAMES WESLEY, BBR
 EMILY WEST, Capitol Records Nashville
 BRAD WOLF, Evergreen

2009

THE
YEAR IN
COUNTRY
MUSIC

TAKING STOCK OF AN INDUSTRY IN TRANSITION

Two perspectives on the state of Country Music took shape throughout 2009. One was constructed from numbers, some of them adding up to a picture touched by the shadows. The other was more ephemeral, illuminated by the undeniable and enduring appeal of the format. Each is crucial to our understanding of where we stand today and where we are bound tomorrow.

Not all of the statistics were negative. Where only seven of the 10 top-selling all-genre albums of 2008 topped the 1 million mark, every one of this year's Top 10 passed that milestone, as measured by The Nielsen Company between Dec. 29, 2008 and Jan. 3, 2010, with Taylor Swift's *Fearless* topping the list.

For the fifth consecutive year, Nielsen SoundScan reported music sales of more than 1 billion units (albums, singles, music videos, digital tracks), in a slow but steady ascent from 1.01 billion in 2005 to 1.5 billion in 2009. The focus continued to shift away from physical product, as physical album sales declined but sales of digital music leapt upward from 65.8 million in 2008 to an unprecedented 76.4 million in 2009 – a hefty 16.1 percent escalation. The decline in album sales was less dramatic than in any other genre except jazz, dropping by 3.2 percent from 2008 numbers as opposed to 20.9 percent in rap, 23.3 percent in metal and 34.3 percent in Latin, for example.

Digital music accounted for a record-setting 40 percent of all music purchases, with digital album sales up 16 percent to 76 million and Swift joining the Black Eyed Peas, Michael Jackson and Lady Gaga as the first artists ever to sell more than 10 million digital tracks.

Country maintained its high profile on radio. Swift's "You Belong with Me" and "Love Story" were the two most played songs. In terms of total detections, four Country artists – Toby Keith, Rascal Flatts, Tim McGraw and Swift – were among the Top 10 of the year. Media Research Inc. (MRI) determined that 20.34 percent of adults in the United States listen to Country radio, a slight decrease from the previous year's 21.8 percent yet still the most popular music format on the air. About 45.9 million American adults per week listened to Country radio, including 35.6 percent of the adults living in the top 25 DMAs (designated market areas).

Country obviously shares the entire music industry's concerns as listening and buying patterns evolve, sometimes in unpredictable directions and with unanticipated speed.

ALBUM SALES

Six albums — two more than in 2008 — debuted simultaneously at No. 1 on the *Billboard* 200 and *Billboard* Top Country Albums charts in 2009: Reba McEntire's *Keep On Loving You*, Rascal Flatts' *Unstoppable*, George Strait's *Twang*, Sugarland's *Live on the Inside*, Carrie Underwood's *Play On* and Keith Urban's *Defying Gravity*.

On the list of best-selling albums of the Nielsen SoundScan era, dating back to 1991, Shania Twain's *Come On Over* ceded the top position to Metallica's self-titled album, with 15,487,000 and 15,500,000 units sold respectively. But the top-selling artist of the same period of time remains Garth Brooks (68,363,000 albums sold), with three other Country artists making it to the Top 10 as well: George Strait (No. 6 – 41,483,000), Tim McGraw (No. 7 – 38,677,000) and Alan Jackson (No. 8 – 37,447,000).

The Year in Country Music 2009 is a partial listing and was compiled by Amanda Eckard. Special thanks to CMA Communications Department interns for gathering information throughout the year.

TOP 10 COUNTRY ALBUMS

Source: Nielsen SoundScan



1

3.2 MILLION



2

1.8 MILLION



3

1.3 MILLION



4

1.2 MILLION



5

1.1 MILLION



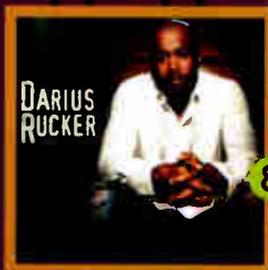
6

975,000



7

959,000



8

884,000



9

782,000



10

723,000

ADVERTISEMENTS, ENDORSEMENTS AND BUSINESS VENTURES

Corporate partners flocked to team up with Country artists and television commercials were a prime stomping ground for Country acts. As a spokesperson for BC Headache Powder for the next two years, Trace Adkins will be featured in radio ads, retail store POP displays, perform at exclusive events and more.

Charlie Daniels appeared in a Geico commercial. Whitney Duncan, KingBilly, Little Big Town and Phil Vassar were featured in Red Roof Inn ads, photo galleries, Webisodes and promotions. Husband and wife duo Joey + Rory became the face of **Overstock.com**.

Lady Antebellum's No. 1 single "I Run to You" was featured prominently in commercials for TIAA-CREF. The group also partnered with Brita in the FilterForGood campaign, which encourages people to use fewer disposable water bottles as a step to better the environment.

Miranda Lambert introduced the Country audience to "The Touch, The Feel of Cotton" for Cotton Incorporated. Martina McBride was featured in Sunny D orange drink ads. Brad Paisley appeared with Wyclef Jean and Avril Lavigne in an ad for T-Mobile.

Rascal Flatts was featured in a s'mores-themed ad for Hershey's. Taylor Swift appeared in the "Risky Business" inspired commercial for the video game "Band Hero." Wynonna struck a personal note in a commercial for the weight-loss aid alli.

Country stars lent their names to everything from clothing lines to food dishes to wine. Jason Aldean became the latest spokesman for Wrangler, Kenny Chesney's clothing line Blue Chair Bay was released and Toby Keith launched TK Steelman, a men's and women's brand of

clothing. Keith also announced plans to open a sixth franchise of his I Love This Bar & Grill in Michigan.

Brooks & Dunn's candy alter egos were featured in an M&Ms ad. Faith Hill teamed up with Coty to create the fragrance Faith Hill Parfums, while husband Tim McGraw partnered with the same company for the second time to offer the men's cologne Southern Blend. Jack Ingram teamed with KC Masterpiece Barbeque Sauces.

Jewel's *Lullaby* was the first album featured in the Fisher-Price music series. Blackbird Vineyards named one of their "Signature Series" wines after Martina McBride. Craig Morgan became the spokesperson for Bush's Grillin' Beans. Kellie Pickler appeared in print ads for Sexy Hair products.

Rascal Flatts had a breakfast dish named after them on Denny's Rockstar Menu and promoted the American Living fashion line from JCPenney. Aaron Tippin created his own brand of nutritional supplements.

Taylor Swift teamed up with American Greetings to create her own line of greeting cards and Wynonna joined Hallmark in offering one-of-a-kind Mother's Day cards. Taylor Guitars created a signature guitar inspired by Swift.

Several Country artists partnered with Cracker Barrel Old Country Store to release exclusive albums, including Alan Jackson, George Jones, Montgomery Gentry, Dolly Parton and Zac Brown Band. In addition, the restaurant / retailer offered apparel and lifestyle items as part of The Alan Jackson Collection, an 'Opossum' Webkinz Pet in honor of George Jones and Dolly Parton pink rocking chairs plus, an album of photos of her taken throughout her career.



Rascal Flatts don American Living clothing for JCPenney.



Lady Antebellum and TIAA-CREF



Brad Paisley with the T-Mobile myTouch 3G with Google



Joey + Rory shoot an Overstock.com commercial.



Aaron Tippin nutritional supplements



Miranda Lambert films a commercial for Cotton, Inc.



Taylor Swift signature Taylor guitar



Craig Morgan shoots an ad for Bush's Grillin' Beans with Jay Bush.



Kellie Pickler in an ad for Sexy Hair



The Alan Jackson Collection at Cracker Barrel Old Country Store





Summer was definitely a hot time for Country's biggest tours, with huge stars teaming up on the road for shows attended by millions of fans.

Perhaps the biggest news of the year was the return of Garth Brooks to regular performing, if only in one venue and one city. Brooks announced that he will perform intimate acoustic shows at the Wynn Las Vegas resort and casino. The superstar will play a series of dates each year for five years, most of which have already sold out, including all the shows in December.

Kenny Chesney, the only Country artist to make *Pollstar's* All Genre Top 10 Tours, got a little help on his "Sun City Carnival Tour" from Lady Antebellum, Miranda Lambert, Montgomery Gentry and Sugarland in stadiums throughout the country.

Toby Keith welcomed Jack Ingram on his "Biggest & Baddest Tour." Tim McGraw toured with Lady Antebellum on the "Southern Voice" tour. Brad Paisley brought Dierks Bentley and Darius Rucker out on his "Paisley Party Tour" and later in the year brought Bentley and Jimmy Wayne along

for the "American Saturday Night Tour."

Rascal Flatts had the "Bob That Head Tour" with Jessica Simpson and the "American Living Unstoppable Tour" with Rucker. Sugarland headlined the "Love on the Inside Tour," with openers Jakes Owen and Matt Nathanson.

Taylor Swift kicked off her own headlining tour, "Fearless 2009," with Gloriaana and Kellie Pickler. Swift appeared as well at several dates on Keith Urban's "Escape Together Tour," which also saw Jason Aldean, Lady Antebellum, Sugarland and Zac Brown Band opening.

Country artists teamed up for huge co-headlining tours in 2009. Trace Adkins and Martina McBride came together for the "Shine All Night Tour," which continues through 2010. Jack Ingram, Jamey Johnson, Little Big Town and Montgomery Gentry performed on the "Country Throwdown Tour." Johnson joined Randy Houser for "CMT on Tour '09."

Several Country artists toured overseas, including Dierks Bentley, Toby Keith, Alan Jackson, Joe Nichols, Sugarland, Taylor Swift and Keith Urban.

Listed below are the Top 10 All Genre Tours measured by total gross dollars and Top 10 Country Tours measured by total gross dollars and attendance, according to data from *Pollstar* for North American shows played from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2009.

ALL GENRE TOP 10 TOURS

(gross in millions)

U2	\$123.0
Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band	94.5
Elton John / Billy Joel	88.0
Britney Spears	82.5
AC/DC	77.9
Kenny Chesney	71.1
Jonas Brothers	69.8
Dave Matthews Band	56.9
Fleetwood Mac	54.5
Metallica	53.4

COUNTRY TOP 10 TOURS

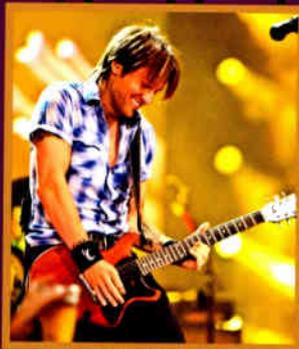
(gross in millions)

Kenny Chesney	\$71.1
Eagles	42.8
Keith Urban	42.7
Rascal Flatts	42.2
Brad Paisley	35.4
Toby Keith	29.7
Taylor Swift	25.5
George Strait	22.0
Alan Jackson	10.5
Sugarland	7.8

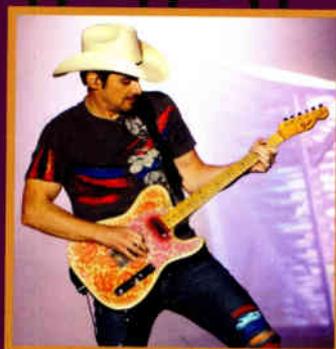
COUNTRY TOP 10 TOURS

(attendance)

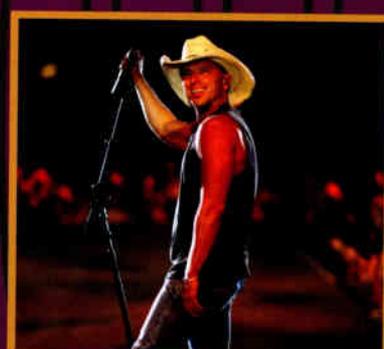
Kenny Chesney	1,034,021
Brad Paisley	834,845
Rascal Flatts	769,167
Toby Keith	719,009
Keith Urban	675,278
Taylor Swift	542,437
Eagles	330,769
George Strait	225,710
Alan Jackson	179,534
Sugarland	175,158



Keith Urban



Brad Paisley



Kenny Chesney

COUNTRY RADIO

Though News/Talk continued as the dominant format in radio, Country remained at the top among music categories, with 2,008 stations devoted to the format — more than double the number of the next purely musical category, Spanish, with 936.

(Source: *Inside Radio*, December 2009)

TOP 5 COUNTRY SONGS IN BILLBOARD

1. Lady Antebellum	"I Run To You"
2. Zac Brown Band	"Whatever It Is"
3. Randy Houser	"Boots On"
4. Darius Rucker	"It Won't Be Like This for Long"
5. George Strait	"River of Love"

TOP 5 COUNTRY SONGS IN COUNTRY AIRCHECK

1. Jason Aldean	"She's Country"
2. Zac Brown Band	"Whatever It Is"
3. Darius Rucker	"It Won't Be Like This for Long"
4. Keith Urban	"Sweet Thing"
5. Toby Keith	"God Love Her"

photos: Chesney - Glen Rose; Paisley - Ben Enos; Urban - Jeff Johnson

MOVIES, MUSICALS AND SOUNDTRACKS

Country stars lit up the big screen in 2009. Tracy Byrd and Lee Ann Womack appeared in the independent flick "Noble Things." The soundtrack for the movie featured Bo Bice, Byrd, Mark Chesnutt, Drew Davis Band, Jenny Gill, Zona Jones, Blaine Larsen, Tracy Lawrence, the Rachels, Pam Tillis, Lane Turner and Clay Walker.

Billy Ray and Miley Cyrus starred in "Hannah Montana: The Movie," with Taylor Swift and Rascal Flatts making cameo appearances and contributing to the soundtrack. Swift helped out the Jonas Brothers in their concert film "Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience."

Tim McGraw garnered rave reviews as Sean Tuohy starring opposite Sandra Bullock in the movie "The Blind Side" and also supplied his song "Southern Voice" to the closing credits.

Country Music Hall of Fame legends Kris Kristofferson and Willie Nelson appeared on film as well. Kristofferson joined an all-star cast in "He's Just Not That Into You" and Nelson appeared in "One Peace at a Time," a film about solutions to global problems.

Taylor Swift appears on the big screen again in February 2010 in "Valentine's Day." The soundtrack will feature her song "Today Was a Fairy Tale" as well as tracks from Jewel, Willie Nelson and Steel Magnolia. "Kenny Chesney: Summer in 3-D" hits theaters in April and Trace Adkins will appear in "Lifted" in September. Dwight Yoakam will reprise his role in "Crank: High Voltage" and Miley Cyrus will star in "The Last Song" and "Wings" in 2010. Filming began in Nashville for "Love Don't Let Me Down" featuring McGraw and songwriter Marshall Chapman and "A Pure Country Gift" with Katrina Elam and George Strait.

Songs by Brittini Black, Tift Merritt and Carrie Underwood appeared on the soundtrack for the Renee Zellweger/Harry Connick, Jr. movie "New in Town." Country Music Hall of Fame members Floyd Cramer and Brenda Lee were featured on the *An Education* soundtrack.

Jessie James recorded a song for the *Confessions of a Shopaholic* soundtrack. Patsy Montana and Bob Schneider songs are on the *All About Steve* soundtrack. Dolly Parton's classic hit "Jolene" was featured on the soundtrack for the roller derby film "Whip It."

Released in January 2010 and produced by T Bone Burnett, the soundtrack for "Crazy Heart" includes Ryan Bingham, Lightnin' Hopkins, The Louvin Brothers, Buck Owens and Townes Van Zandt.

Dolly Parton's popular Broadway musical "9 to 5," which debuted in Los Angeles in 2008, made its Broadway bow in New York in 2009 and received four Tony Awards nominations. The original cast soundtrack for "9 to 5" was released on Parton's record label.

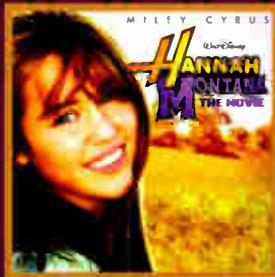
Joe Nichols and Lorrie Morgan will grace the stage when "Pure Country," adapted from the 1992 George Strait film, hits Broadway in 2010.



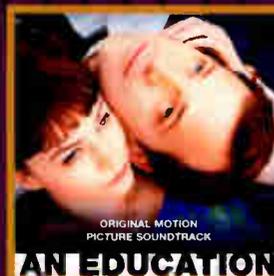
Billy Ray Cyrus and Miley Cyrus in "Hannah Montana: The Movie."



Lee Ann Womack in "Noble Things."



Sandra Bullock and Tim McGraw in "The Blind Side."



Hannah Montana: The Movie: © Disney; 9 to 5: © Broadway; Noble Things: © Columbia TriStar; New in Town: © Columbia TriStar; Crazy Heart: © Columbia TriStar; Whip It: © Columbia TriStar; An Education: © Columbia TriStar

2009

THE
YEAR IN
COUNTRY
MUSIC

TELEVISION

"The 43rd Annual CMA Awards" showed why it is still "Country Music's Biggest Night." Aired live on the ABC Television Network on Nov. 11, the Awards dominated prime time ratings, beating second-place CBS by 5.7 million viewers (17.2 million vs. 11.5 million) and by 66 percent in Adults 18-49 (5.3/14 vs. 3.2/8). ABC ranked No. 1 in all six half-hours of the night, both in Total Viewers and Adults 18-49, and also took top honors across all key Adults, Men and Women demographics (18-34/18-49/25-54) and Teens 12-27, while also registering as the top-rated broadcaster among Kids 2-11. An estimated 35.8 million viewers watched at least some portion of the broadcast.

The 2009 CMA Music Festival increased attendance by 7.2 percent over the previous year and contributed \$22 million to the local Nashville economy. "CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock," which captured the four-day Festival in a three-hour network TV special on ABC, with 7.4 million total viewers, topped CBS (7 million) by 6 percent, NBC (5.6 million) by 32 percent and Fox (4 million) by 85 percent. The broad demographic attracted by Country Music also helped ABC finish first for the night among Women ages 18-49 and 25-54 and Teens 12-17.

Reality shows were prime stomping ground for Country talent. Mega hit "American Idol" dedicated a whole episode to the Grand Ole Opry, with performances by Brad Paisley, Randy Travis and Carrie Underwood, while Kellie Pickler performed on a later episode and Steve Martin and Keith Urban performed on the season finale. Shania Twain, who served as a guest judge for "American Idol" auditions in August, joined the Jan. 19, 2010 broadcast as a celebrity guest.

Martina McBride performed on "The Bachelorette." "Dancing with the Stars" had Julianne Hough and Chuck Wicks as a competing dance couple, and Rascal Flatts and Taylor Swift performed. (Jewel had to drop out of the show just days before the new season was set to begin due to fractured tibias in both legs.) Trace Adkins and Kellie Pickler got to work on "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."

Clint Black followed in Adkins' footsteps, competing to be "The Celebrity Apprentice," while Adkins made a cameo in the season finale of the series.

Big Kenny of Big & Rich, Bucky Covington, Jack Ingram, Heidi Newfield, Emily West and Wynonna tested their elementary skills on "Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?" Wynonna also put her trivia knowledge to the test on a celebrity episode of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?"

America got to enjoy some of its greatest talents when Reba McEntire and Rascal Flatts performed on "America's Got Talent."

Talk show queen Oprah Winfrey dedicated a number of her shows to Country Music, featuring Kenny Chesney, Martina McBride, Tim McGraw, Rascal Flatts, Darius Rucker, Sugarland, Taylor Swift, Carrie Underwood and Wynonna throughout the year.

LeAnn Rimes starred in the Lifetime Original Movie "Northern Lights" with Eddie Cibrian. The 2002 Kenny Rogers book *Christmas in Canaan* was adapted into a TV movie. Jace Everett wrote and performed "Bad Things," the theme song for the series "True Blood."

At the beginning of the year, Barack Obama was sworn in as President and Garth Brooks and Jennifer Nettles of Sugarland performed on the televised "Inaugural Celebration Concert."

Trace Adkins performed on the "National Memorial Day Concert." Kenny Chesney made his "Austin City Limits" debut. Rosanne Cash, Vince Gill, Loretta Lynn, Martina McBride, Tim McGraw and Carrie Underwood were all featured on "In the Spotlight with Robin Roberts: Bright Lights. Big Stars. All Access Nashville."

The Grascals, Lee Greenwood, Neal McCoy, Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton and Wynonna helped raise money for muscular dystrophy on "The 44th Annual Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon." McEntire was featured on "A&E Biography."

The "King of Country" was honored during the "George Strait: ACM Artist of the Decade All-Star Concert" on CBS which featured artists including Brooks & Dunn, Faith Hill, Alan Jackson, Tim McGraw, Taylor Swift, Keith Urban and Lee Ann Womack.

Sugarland introduced their first network TV special, "Sugarland: Live on the Inside," on ABC. Taylor Swift was chosen as one of NBC's "People of the Year" and was featured on the special "Dateline NBC: On Tour with Taylor Swift." Carrie Underwood performed on "CNN Heroes: An All-Star Tribute."

Sitcoms and dramas also had a dose of Country, with Jack Ingram appearing on "Army Wives," Taylor Swift playing a wayward teen on "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" and Wynonna playing herself on the comedy "Kath & Kim." In November, Swift became only the second Country artist (after Garth Brooks) to be the host and musical guest on "Saturday Night Live." She appeared on the show in January 2009 as the musical guest.

The holidays were bright with Country. Billy Currington and Reba McEntire kicked off the holiday season on "The 83rd Annual Macy's



Julianne Hough and Chuck Wicks compete on "Dancing with the Stars."



Faith Hill sings the theme for "Sunday Night Football."



Clint Black with the cast of "The Celebrity Apprentice"



Kristian Bush and Jennifer Nettles of Sugarland, Darius Rucker, Oprah Winfrey, Carrie Underwood and Kenny Chesney on "The Oprah Winfrey Show."



LeAnn Rimes stars with Eddie Cibrian in Nora Roberts' "Northern Lights."



Martina McBride and Kid Rock perform on "CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock."



Kellie Pickler high fives a volunteer on "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."



Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood host "The 43rd Annual CMA Awards."

Thanksgiving Day Parade." Faith Hill welcomed McEntire and Carrie Underwood for her "A Home for the Holidays" special. Underwood hosted her own special, "Carrie Underwood: An All-Star Holiday Special," with guests Brad Paisley and Dolly Parton. Sugarland performed on "Christmas in Washington." Trisha Yearwood sang holiday tunes on "Christmas at Belmont."

Televised sports events had a decidedly Country flavor. Hill reprised her role as the musical intro for "NBC Sunday Night Football" and Hank Williams Jr. once again asked "Are you ready for some football?" for "Monday Night Football." Hill also performed during the pre-Super Bowl festivities in January 2009 and her husband McGraw kicked off the 2009-10 National Football League season, performing before the first game in September. Sara Evans performed during the seventh-inning stretch at the Major League Baseball All-Star Game, Martina McBride sang at the AFC Championship Game and Keith Urban sang at the Daytona 500.

Trace Adkins filmed the TV pilot, "Tough Trade," featuring executive music producer T Bone Burnett. Clint Black, who has directed several of his own music videos, was named executive producer of "American Storytellers," which will develop hit songs into a series of dramatic episodes. Brad Paisley will help create and co-produce the tentatively titled "Nashville," which will feature Country stars and their songs. Garth Brooks and Lifetime Networks are developing the TV movie "Unanswered Prayers" based on the hit Brooks song.

The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) certified 11 Gold, 7 Platinum and 4 multi-Platinum Country Albums in 2009. Gold indicates sales of 500,000 units, Platinum represents 1 million, and multi-Platinum indicates each million after the initial Platinum. The RIAA gives these awards throughout the sales life of an album and does not have to be released in the same year it achieves one or more of these milestones.

Taylor Swift saw her two commercially released albums enter multi-Platinum territory, with *Taylor Swift* selling 4 million units and her sophomore release *Fearless* scanning 5 million. Also scoring a double-whammy was Sugarland, whose debut, *Twice the Speed of Life*, hit 3 million albums sold, and the duo's latest, *Love on the Inside*, reaching the 2 million mark.

Debut albums from three of Country's hottest new acts reached Platinum status — Lady Antebellum's self-titled debut, Darius Rucker's *Learn to Live* and Zac Brown Band's *The Foundation*. Other albums hitting the Platinum pinnacle included *Wide Open* by Jason Aldean, *Unstoppable* by Rascal Flatts and *Troubadour* by George Strait.

Gold-certified albums were Steve Holy's *Blue Moon*, Jamey Johnson's *That Lonesome Song*, Blake Shelton's *Pure BS*, George Strait's *Twang* and Keith Urban's *Defying Gravity*.

Digital downloads hit an all-time high in certification for Country singles. The RIAA certified six multi-Platinum singles, 16 Platinum and 37 Gold. Taylor Swift dominated in the digital singles realm, racking up four multi-Platinum singles ("Love Story" (4x), "Our Song" (2x), "Teardrops on My Guitar" (2x) and "You Belong with Me" (2x)), and four other Platins ("Picture to Burn," "Tim McGraw," "White Horse" and "Should've Said No.") Tim McGraw was the only Country artist other than Swift to hit multi-Platinum in digital singles, with "Don't Take the Girl" and "It's Your Love," a duet with wife Faith Hill.

Aldean was the sole occupier of the Gold Longform Video certification, for "Wide Open Live & More!"

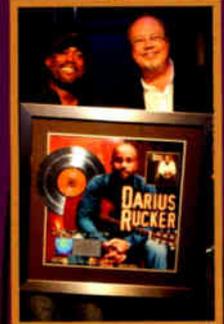
Country continued to grow in the cell phone ringtone market, with RIAA certifying one Platinum (Swift's "Love Story") and five Gold (Aldean's "She's Country" and "Big Green Tractor," Brooks & Dunn's "Hillbilly Deluxe," Dixie Chicks' "Not Ready to Make Nice" and Zac Brown Band's "Chicken Fried") Mastertones.



Jamey Johnson celebrates the Gold certification of *That Lonesome Song* with producers the Kent Hardy Playboys. Jim "Moose" Brown, Dave McAfee, Wayd Battle, T.W. Cargile, Jamey Johnson and Kevin "Swine" Grantt (not pictured Cowboy Eddie Long).



Miranda Lambert receives Gold certification for her digital single "Gunpowder & Lead" from Executive VP Butch Waugh and Chairman Joe Galante of Sony Music Nashville.



Darius Rucker receives a Platinum plaque from Capitol Records Nashville President and CEO Mike Dungan for *Learn to Live*.



Kenny Chesney is honored with a plaque recognizing 15 million in career digital sales, the highest-selling of any male Country artist. Sony Music Nashville Executive VP Butch Waugh; Kenny Chesney; Sony Music Nashville Chairman Joe Galante; and Sony Music Entertainment CEO Rolf Schmidt-Holtz.



Sugarland show off their two multi-Platinum plaques on the set of "GAC Nights." Host Suzanne Alexander; Sarah Trahern, Senior VP, Programming, GAC; Jennifer Nettles and Kristian Bush of Sugarland; and Ed Hardy, President, GAC.

Big Kenny with Jeff Foxworthy on "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?"



Taylor Swift and George Eads on an episode of "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation."

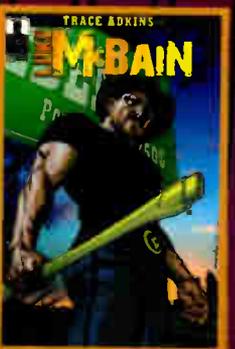
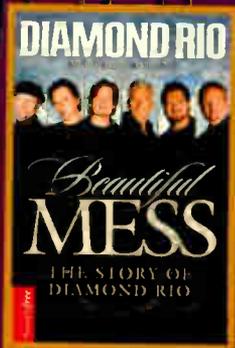


Molly Shannon, Wynonna and Selma Blair on "Kath & Kim."

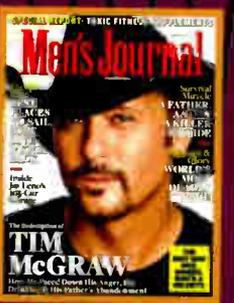
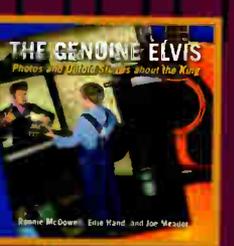
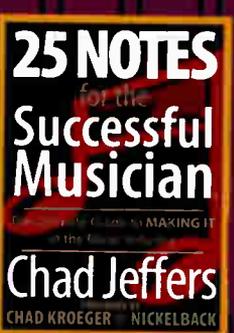
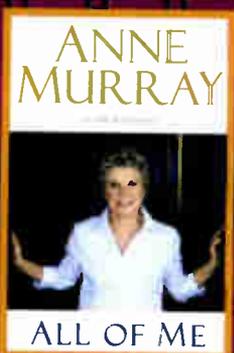
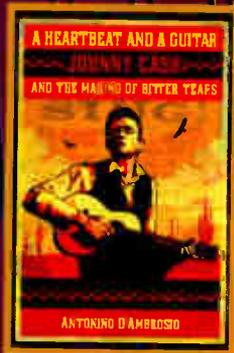
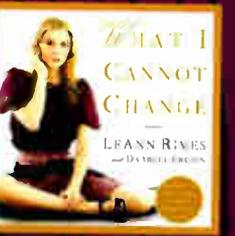


Johnson, Chesney and Lambert - Tony Phipps; Johnson - courtesy of UMG; Rucker - courtesy of Capitol Records Nashville; Sugarland - Jenny Dew

2009
THE YEAR IN COUNTRY MUSIC



Taylor Swift likeness in "Band Hero."



Country artists became authors in 2009. Diamond Rio offered *Beautiful Mess: The Story of Diamond Rio*, an autobiography written by the band members and Tom Roland. Alan Jackson updated his 1994 cookbook *Who Says You Can't Cook It All* with new recipes and offered autographed copies on his Web site. Anne Murray released her autobiography *All of Me*, written with Michael Posner. LeAnn Rimes teamed up with songwriter Darrell Brown to pen *What I Cannot Change* based on the song by the same name. Banjo legend Ralph Stanley released his tome, *Man of Constant Sorrow: My Life and Times*, with co-writer Eddie Dean. Trisha Yearwood, whose first cookbook was released in 2008, will release *Home Cooking with Trisha Yearwood* in April 2010.

Willie Nelson was among many musical artists that contributed to *Ray Charles — Yes Indeed*, a limited edition collector's book dedicated to the blues and Country great. Antonio D'Ambrosio penned *A Heartbeat and a Guitar: Johnny Cash and the Making of Bitter Tears*. Edie Hand, Ronnie McDowell and Joe Meador released *The Genuine Elvis*. Musician Chad Jeffers wrote *25 Notes for the Successful Musician*. Donald Passman updated his *All You Need to Know About the Music Business* for its seventh edition. Music fans were able to learn about the origins of songs in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Story Behind the Song*.

Trace Adkins' likeness and persona was used for the basis of the comic book series *Luke McBain*, about an ex-con who returns to his Louisiana hometown.

Kenny Chesney, Alan Jackson and Denise Jackson, Reba McEntire and Brad Paisley graced the covers of *People* magazine's *People Country Special* issues, with Chesney, Paisley and Keith Urban representing "Country's Hottest Guys" on *People Country's* July issue. Paisley and wife Kimberly Williams-Paisley appeared with their two sons on the cover of the regular *People* magazine and Paisley went solo on the cover of *Guitar Player* and *Reader's Digest*.

Taylor Swift was Country's cover girl in 2009, appearing on the covers of *Allure*, *Bliss*, *CosmoGirl*, *Girl's Life*, *Glamour*, *InStyle*, *Rolling Stone*, *Self*, *Seventeen*, *Teen Vogue* and more. Carrie Underwood appeared on *Entertainment Weekly*, *Lucky*, *Parade* and *People Style Watch* magazine covers.

Tim McGraw was on the covers of *Men's Journal* and *People*. Julianne Hough, Martina McBride and LeAnn Rimes showed off their bikini bodies on the cover of *Shape*. Hough, Swift and Underwood were all included in *People's* "100 Most Beautiful People" list. Trisha Yearwood graced the cover of *Good Housekeeping*.

The number of video games featuring Country content grew in 2009. Fans were able to be in a band with a virtual Taylor Swift in Activision's "Guitar Hero" spin off "Band Hero." "Guitar Hero World Tour" added songs by Brooks & Dunn, Brad Paisley and Rascal Flatts. Toby Keith songs were added to the Rock Band Music Store as well as a six-pack for Xbox and PlayStation. Ira Dean, formerly of Tricken Pony, created the theme song for the golf game "Golden Tee."

Carrie Underwood performed among other "American Idol" winners at the launch party for American Idol Experience, a new attraction at Walt Disney World.

Three Country luminaries — Roy Clark, Barbara Mandrell and Charlie McCoy — were inducted in 2009 into the Country Music Hall of Fame, which was created by CMA in 1961.

The Music City Walk of Fame honored Cowboy Jack Clement, Mike Curb, Charlie Daniels, Kid Rock, Dolly Parton, Marty Stuart and Josh Turner with stars on the ever-growing memorial display.

Crystal Gayle received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and it was announced that Alan Jackson has been selected to receive a star in 2010.

Vince Gill and Amy Grant received the Jack C. Massey Leadership Award from the Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee for community leadership. Jack Ingram set a record in the *Guinness Book of World Records* by completing 215 radio interviews in 24 hours.

George Jones' "He Stopped Loving Her Today" was among 25 songs added to the Library of Congress National Recording Registry. Toby Keith was awarded the Distinguished Service Award from the Military Officers Association of America.

Montgomery Gentry became members of the Grand Ole Opry. Randy Owen was honored with the Donald R. Myers Humanitarian Award by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Clay Walker received the Hope Award from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's Mid South Chapter for his commitment to community service. Jimmy Wayne was presented with the Dr. Richard H. Carmona Doorway of Hope Award for his work with homeless youth.

On *Steve Wariner c.g.p., My Tribute to Chet Atkins*, Wariner performs 11 beautifully guitar-driven tunes inspired by and plucked from the catalog of the late six-string master. Steve Earle released a covers album of Townes Van Zandt songs including "Pancho and Lefty" and "No Place to Fall."

The Charlie Daniels Band, Emerson Drive, Lee Roy Parnell, John Rich, Steve Wariner and Wynonna were among the artists to pay tribute to the late guitar virtuoso Les Paul in Nashville at the Ryman Auditorium. Faith Hill and Kid Rock helped pay tribute to rocker Neil Diamond, who was honored as MusiCares Person of the Year at a show in Los Angeles. Jennifer Nettles paid tribute to Bruce Springsteen at the Kennedy Center Honors in Washington.

Country support of the U.S. military has always been strong. Bucky Covington, Billy Ray Cyrus, Jack Ingram, Toby Keith, Craig Morgan, Kellie Pickler, Mark Wills and Lee Ann Womack participated in USO Tours overseas and at U.S. military bases.

Jeff Bates, Diamond Rio, The Charlie Daniels Band, Neal McCoy, Keni Thomas, Trent Willmon and Mark Wills joined "The Spirit of America Tour," performing for troops at U.S. military bases. Michelle Branch performed at "Salute the Troops" USO concert at The White House Fourth of July party.

Mark Chesnutt, Craig Morgan and Chris Young teamed with Stars for Stripes to visit and entertain troops at military bases abroad. The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes tapped Stephen Cochran for a tour to perform for troops in the Middle East. Joe Nichols performed for troops in Kuwait and Iraq.

Trace Adkins played a free concert on Armed Forces Day at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in Fort Worth, Texas. Rodney Atkins, Jypsi, Jake Owen, John Rich, Darius Rucker, Carrie Underwood and Hank Williams Jr. performed shows at Fort Campbell in Kentucky to honor the Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division.

Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn honored fallen soldiers on Memorial Day on the radio program "A Salute to America's Heroes" that broadcast on the Armed Forces Radio Network. Billy Ray Cyrus, Charlie Daniels and Lee Greenwood performed for Sean Hannity's Freedom Concerts, which raise money for families of soldiers killed or wounded in combat.

Vince Gill and Amy Grant hosted an evening of music at the Kennedy Center in Washington to honor wounded military personnel with Alison Krauss, Mac McAnally and Darius Rucker. Randy Houser and Jamey Johnson partnered with CMT One Country to support the USO by collecting fans' postcards that thanked the troops for their service.

Big Kenny of Big & Rich, Randy Houser and James Otto hosted a benefit for homeless veterans in Nashville. Montgomery Gentry, Phil Vassar and Lee Ann Womack headlined the 6th Annual American Freedom Festival, which broadcast to military bases on the Pentagon Channel.

Wynonna performed at an event at Fort Bragg honoring troops from the 82nd Airborne Division, 3rd Brigade Combat Team on their return from Iraq, which was taped and aired later on "The Oprah Winfrey Show."

Zac Brown Band performed at the Fort Hood Community Strong concert. Cracker Barrel Old Country Store donated a portion of proceeds from the sales of Montgomery Gentry's *For Our Heroes* album to the Wounded Warrior Project.



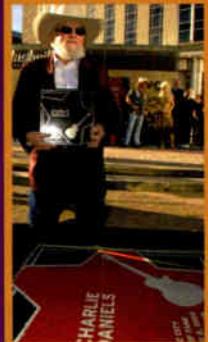
Country Music Hall of Fame inductees Charlie McCoy, Barbara Mandrell and Roy Clark.



Charlie Daniels and Dolly Parton receive stars on the Music City Walk of Fame.



Montgomery Gentry is inducted into the Grand Ole Opry.



CHARLIE DANIELS



Carrie Underwood and Jake Owen at the "Salute to the Troops" concert at Fort Campbell in Kentucky.

Tom Baldrica, VP, Marketing, Sony Music Nashville; Butch Waugh, Executive VP, Sony Music Nashville; Jake Owen; Keith Gale, VP, National Promotion, RCA Nashville; Ann Campbell, wife of Maj. Gen. Campbell; Skip Bishop, VP, Promotion, Sony Music Nashville; John Campbell, son of the Maj. Gen.; Carrie Underwood; Maj. Gen. John F. Campbell, Deputy Director, Regional Operations, J-3; Renee Bell, Senior VP, A&R, Sony Music Nashville; and Lesly Tyson, Director, National Promotion, Arista Nashville.



Chris Young, GAC host Nan Kelley and Craig Morgan visit Baghdad, Iraq for "Stars for Stripes: Wounded Warriors Return."



Kellie Pickler receives a special commendation for her work with the military, from Col. Robert Tuczak at a concert in New Jersey.



Steve Wariner greets Charlotte Lawson at a U.S. military base in Vilseck, Germany.

tribute photos: Daniels and Parton - Jess Lewis; Hall of Fame inductees - John Russell; Montgomery Gentry - Billy Kunglsey; military photos: Kelley/Morgan Young - Chester Simpson; Owen/Underwood - Allen Brown; Pickler - Wes Vause; Warner - Specialist Gerald Wilson

CMA TOPS \$1 MILLION MARK IN ANNUAL DONATION TO METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



by BOB DOERSCHUK

Folks in Nashville are used to seeing school buses ply the city streets in mornings and early afternoons during the school year. But on the stormy night of Dec. 8, the familiar yellow vehicles were making their ways toward an unusual destination: the Schermerhorn Symphony Center.

Clustered along the curb where limousines normally drop off dignitaries and guest virtuosi, they unloaded groups of students from Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), all of whom were about to exhibit the tangible results of CMA's "Keep the Music Playing" campaign, dedicated to support music education in the MNPS through donations of 50 percent of the net proceeds from each annual CMA Music Festival.

The tradition continued on this particular night, as Kellie Pickler presented a check for \$1,066,632 to the school system. Added to previous donations, this raised CMA's contributions to \$3,312,053 since the program launched. These gifts have funded construction of music labs and purchased 2,500 musical instruments and a variety of supplies for MNPS through a partnership with the Nashville Alliance for Public Education (NAPE).

Speaking from the stage of the Laura Turner Concert Hall, Pickler emanated an enthusiasm that helped to warm the room's elegant design. She spoke personally from her experience as a child, remembering the inspiration she derived from music as well as the difficulties of coming from a town too small to provide quality instruments for its schools.

"No child ever should be denied access to musical instruments," she insisted. "It's one of the greatest gifts you can give to someone, whether they're a child or an adult or a grandma or a grandpa. Music heals. It should never *not* be available to anyone, especially a child. If we put these instruments in their hands and allow them to access music at a young age, who knows? The next Beethoven could be up here right now."

And then, interrupting herself, she glanced at the students from the Mt. View Elementary Renaissance Kids, assembled in period costumes with vintage instruments in hand and ready to open the evening's round of musical performances. "You are so cute!" she exclaimed as the audience laughed. Then, when one young girl smiled back at her, Pickler impulsively gave her a hug.

"Oh, don't you cry," she playfully admonished. "Don't make *me* cry! My eyelashes will fall off." Then, turning back to the audience, Pickler observed, "She's like, 'You're crazy.' Well, music makes you crazy too, but it's a lot of fun."

Pickler kept the spirit light with the adults as well. When Pam Garrett, NAPE Executive Director, displayed the \$1,066,632 check to the applauding audience, Pickler nodded toward representatives from MNPS onstage and joked, "Y'all get to go shopping now."

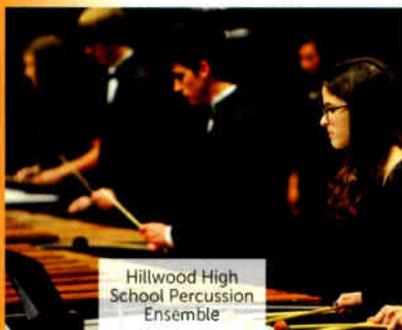
Other speakers took their turns at the podium, each reflecting on the importance of "Keep the Music Playing." Garrett paid tribute to CMA's "brilliant 'Keep the Music Playing' program," noting that "these groups (of student performers) would not be here without the Country Music Association and their donations."



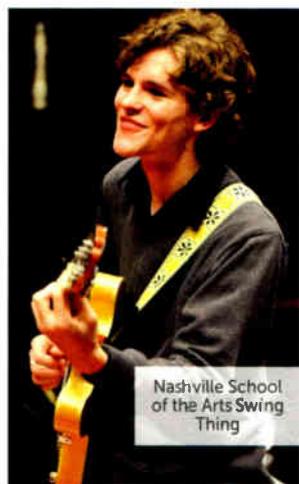
CMA's latest donation to Keep the Music Playing tops \$1 million. Alan Valentine, President and CEO, Nashville Symphony; Dr. Jesse Register, Director, Metro Nashville Public Schools; CMA Board Chairman Steve Moore, Senior VP, AEG Live; Kellie Pickler; and Nashville Mayor Karl Dean.



Mt. View Elementary Renaissance Kids



Hillwood High School Percussion Ensemble



Nashville School of the Arts Swing Thing



Pearl Cohn High School Chorus

"KEEP THE MUSIC PLAYING ALL-STARS" DEMONSTRATES THE SUCCESS OF INVESTING IN MUSIC EDUCATION



Hume-Fogg High School Silver Jazz Band

Alan Valentine, President and CEO, Nashville Symphony, affirmed that "education is at the very core of our mission. Our great hope is that some of these wonderful young musicians will wind up one day performing on this stage as adults, either in the Nashville Symphony or as artists," he concluded. "And those that aren't we hope will be in our audience."

CMA Board President Steve Moore, Senior VP, AEG Live!, lauded the artists whose uncompensated appearances at CMA Music Festival help maximize CMA's annual contribution to the campaign. "Children and music education are the central focus of CMA Music Festival," he said. "Quality music education should be the right of every child, and it is our goal to make sure that every child who wants to participate in band or orchestra or music programs is able to do so. And none of this would be possible without the support of our artist community."

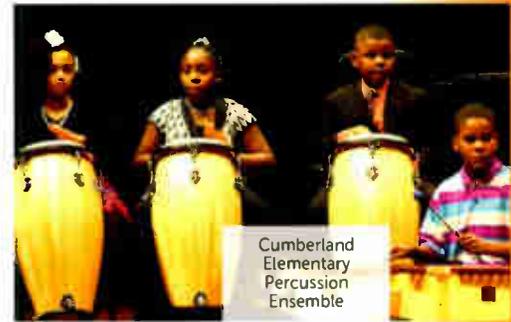
Dr. Jesse Register, MNPS Director, cited research that confirmed the positive impact of music instruction on student academic performance. Noting that support from local business and community groups facilitates that process, he added, "CMA's support is a perfect example of the community involvement we need in our schools. Without this support, many of our students would not have access to the instruments needed to participate in music programs. This partnership is one of the bright spots that set Nashville apart from other cities. We're fortunate to be here in Music City, where we are surrounded by professionals who are passionate about music and whose passion extends to helping our young people experience its benefits."

That point was amplified by Nashville Mayor Karl Dean. "'Keep the Music Playing' is a perfect example of a successful public/private partnership with our schools," he said. "When we listen to the music of our Keep the Music Playing All-Stars, we see and more importantly we hear the impact of CMA's contributions to our schools and students."

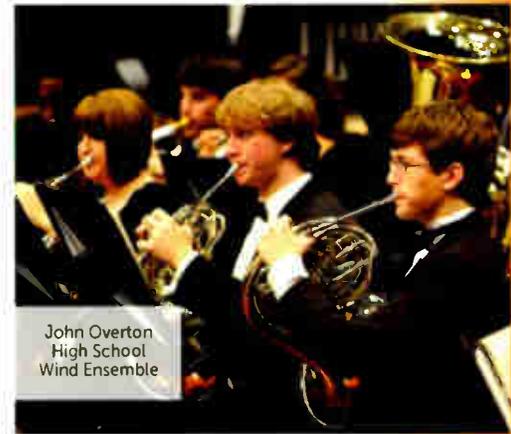
The Keep the Music Playing All-Stars is the umbrella name for nine student ensembles selected by Carol Crittenden, MNPS Coordinator of Performing Arts, to perform at the Schermerhorn. The Mt. View Elementary Renaissance Kids opened with selections drawn from classical repertoire, traditional carols, Latin plainsong and French/Iroquois sources. They were followed by the Cumberland Elementary Percussion Ensemble, who presented "Jingle Bells" and a Jamaican holiday song "Christmas A Come;" the 19-voice Pearl Cohn High School Chorus, accompanied by director Llewellyn Peter on a Baldwin grand piano obtained through Keep the Music Playing; the McGavock High School Capital Sounds, who delivered a Broadway-style production complete with choreography and rousing harmonized vocals; the Nashville School of the Arts Swing Thing, a tight unit that segued from a ballad treatment of "The Christmas Song" to a show-stopping "Jingle Bell Rock" with lead vocalist and senior Danzell Beverly, 17, working the crowd; the powerful Advanced Concert Band from Oliver Middle School, where 276 of the 650-member student body are involved in music classes; the John Overton High School Wind Ensemble, which cast "A Christmas Fantasia" and "Sleigh Ride" in shimmering, brassy timbres; the Hillwood High School Percussion Ensemble, whose array of mallet instruments created an exotic impression on "Skating" and "Yuletide Festival;" and the Hume-Fogg High School Silver Jazz Band, which closed the evening with spirited, professional musicianship on "Winter Wonderland" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," featuring senior Lily Ferguson, 18, on lead vocals.

Crittenden sent the satisfied audience on its way with one last expression of appreciation. "CMA, we love you," she declared. "And let's give all of these wonderful students a big hand. They're incredible."

Prior to the concert, Ingram Industries and SunTrust bank sponsored a private reception for the Boards of CMA, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, NAPE, Nashville Music Council and Education committee and Nashville Symphony.



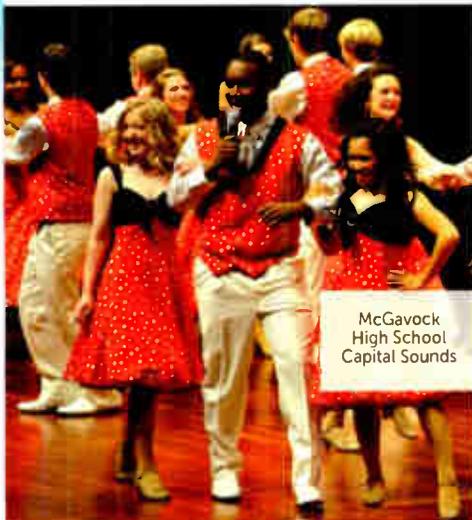
Cumberland Elementary Percussion Ensemble



John Overton High School Wind Ensemble

"CMA's support is a perfect example of the community involvement we need in our schools."

— Dr. Jesse Register, Director, MNPS



McGavock High School Capital Sounds



Oliver Middle School Advanced Concert Band

CHRIS YOUNG

by DEBORAH EVANS PRICE

CHRIS YOUNG WILL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT PATIENCE ISN'T ONE OF HIS VIRTUES.

STILL, THE RCA RECORDS ARTIST HAS LEARNED THAT GOOD THINGS DO COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT, AS HE RECENTLY SCORED HIS FIRST NO. 1 SINGLE WITH "GETTIN' YOU HOME."

It's been out for a long time and it almost died on the charts a couple of times," he said of the song, which he wrote with Cory Batten and Kent Blazy. "It's an 'anything can happen' business. I don't know what it is about this song that has connected to people so well. I'm sure glad it did."

The 24-year-old native of Murfreesboro, Tenn., achieved his success by working hard since he first roamed Music Row, looking for a record deal while still in his teens. "If you were to ask me when I was 17 if I was mad because I didn't have a deal, I would have probably said yeah," he admitted. "Now I'm so glad I got it when I got it. People tell you to be patient and wait. I'm not a patient person, but I think everything definitely happened the right way for me."

Sitting in the Music Row office of Lytle Management Group, Young exudes a youthful enthusiasm tempered by a hard-earned appreciation for having claimed his place in the spotlight with a chart-topping single and an album, *The Man I Want to Be*, that rose to No. 6. It's a goal he's pursued for a long time, beginning with his performances as a teenager. By the time he had transferred as an undergraduate from Belmont University to Middle Tennessee State University, Young was doing 150 shows per year.

"I like talking to a crowd," he said. "I'm not going to stand up there and talk for an hour, but I like doing a little lead-in on songs and making people laugh and making it entertaining. I thoroughly believe that if you set up a song right, it will make a difference if somebody listens to it or not. I think it matters."

Young's reputation as a great live act earned him an offer to perform regularly at Cowboys in Arlington, Texas, where he fronted a seven-piece band three nights a week. "It was a great learning experience for me," said Young, who also used his time there to watch and learn from the major artists who headlined at the famed honky tonk. "I'd watch their shows and see how they worked the crowd."

Like many young artists anxious to get a record deal, Young turned to television for an opportunity to be seen and heard. As part of his prize for winning the 2006 season of "Nashville Star," which aired at that time on the USA Network, he was signed to RCA. His self-titled debut album, produced by Buddy Cannon, spawned two chart singles and made him the best-selling new male Country artist of 2006.

However, it was through recording *The Man I Want to Be* that Young feels he really hit his stride. "I really love every part of that record," he said. "I made a record where I can honestly say I love every song. As an artist, that doesn't always happen, but I love all

the songs on the record. They could call me up and say any track is going to be the next single and I'd say, 'Go ahead!'"

Young was thrilled as well to have James Stroud at the controls as producer. "I love that man!" he insisted. "I'd jump in front of a train for that guy, I would. In the studio, I have so much respect for him. We work really well together. I've found what every artist looks for in a producer."

That respect and affection are mutual. "Several years ago, Chris interned for my wife Laura at her publishing company," said Stroud. (Laura Petty Stroud, owner of Big Alpha Writers Group.) "So I had been fortunate enough to get to know him and hear him sing. I was amazed at the quality and richness in his voice and was extremely honored when he asked me to produce his sophomore album."

Young's sound is rooted in the new traditionalist school, fueled by his respect for Alan Jackson, Waylon Jennings, Marty Robbins and Keith Whitley, among many other artists. "Chris has been a fan and student of Country Music and its artists," said Stroud. "He has a vocal range and sound that is needed in our format today. I was thrilled for Chris, his family and RCA Records. I am proud to have been a part of his first No. 1 single and positive there will be more to follow."

"I just love Country Music," Young concurred. "I think what I grew up listening to — the Keith Whitley stuff and Alan Jackson stuff — that's what you get out of me. It's not all of who I am, but it's a part of who I am."

The album includes "That Makes Me," Young's upbeat ode to doing things old-school, which he penned with Batten and Blazy, as well as poignant ballads "The Shoebox," written by Tom Hambridge and Jeffrey Steele, and a Monty Criswell composition, "The Dashboard." In total, Young co-wrote three of the album's 10 tracks.

"Our thought process on this record was we're going to cut a serious record," Young said. "The rule was, 'No tongue-in-cheek funny songs, no drinking songs.' When we made this record, we wanted to make a record that was similar to the first Clint Black record (*Killin' Time* from 1989, also released on RCA), where every song was just a great, great song. That's all we were looking for — songs that you gave one listen and you loved them. We were really just trying to make a serious Country record for somebody to pick up and listen to all 10 songs and think every song on there was a good one. I think it led us to a lot of things that were more serious and more me as a person."

As an example, he cited "Voices," which he wrote with Chris



SINGS HIS LIFE AND COUNTS HIS BLESSINGS

Tompkins and Craig Wiseman. "Voices' is talking about how big family is to me," Young said. "I'm real close to my dad, mom and sister and my grandparents. If you come to enough shows, you'll probably see them at some of them. I think there are a lot of people that are real close to their family."

"The Dashboard" is another of Young's favorites. "It's about a guy going away to war — and I picked that song because at the end he comes back," he said. "There's a happy ending to that song. Everybody always writes the sad endings. This song has a happy ending to a serious subject and it's something that a lot of people don't choose to talk about. My cousin is over in Afghanistan right now. It's a real dangerous place to be. He's over there and serving, and he loved this song when he heard it. So it's cool to be able to play that and talk about him."

Young believes that art should reflect life. "The title of the record is *The Man I Want to Be* because it shows you who I am as an artist and then who I am as a person too," he said. "We wanted to say a lot on this record."

Two seasoned covers mingle amidst the album's newer tunes. Young needed just one take to nail the soulful version of Tony Joe White's classic "Rainy Night in Georgia." It was another story on "Rose in Paradise," the Jennings hit, written by Stewart Harris and Jim McBride, but he had a good reason to be nervous, since Willie Nelson came in to join on duet vocals. Stroud remembered that the legendary artist eventually put Young at ease by saying, "Drop that, man. Come here and let me tell you how good your voice is."

That session was a dream come true for Young — another example, he admitted, of life seeming almost too good to be true these days. "Even sitting here right now, it has not fully hit me yet that I've had a No. 1 song," he confessed, shaking his head and smiling. "I'm just going to freak out one day. I did a duet with Willie Nelson. I've been playing the Grand Ole Opry. I played the Ryman last night and I remember thinking, 'Man, I always wanted to get to play this stage.' There are just so many things that I've been able to do — I'm counting myself as lucky."

"THE TITLE OF THE RECORD IS *THE MAN I WANT TO BE* BECAUSE IT SHOWS YOU WHO I AM AS AN ARTIST AND THEN WHO I AM AS A PERSON TOO."

— Chris Young

ChrisYoungCountry.com

SONGWRITERS BOBBY BRADDOCK AND JONATHAN SINGLETON

This issue marks the debut of CMA Close Up's Generations series. Every installment will feature a discussion between prominent figures, each one distinguished in one area of the music industry and each representing a different generation. The goal is to create a dialog between those who have a long record of achievement as well as those who have emerged recently as leaders in their field, from which all who listen in might learn. We begin with two respected songwriters, meeting for the first time in this encounter.

by EDWARD MORRIS

A member of the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame since 1981, Bobby Braddock broke into the Nashville music business as pianist and backup singer for Country Music Hall of Fame member Marty Robbins, who became the first artist to record any of Braddock's songs. Though he recorded albums for five major labels and would produce three Blake Shelton albums, songwriting remained the focal point of Braddock's work. His long list of hits includes "D.I.V.O.R.C.E.," "Golden Ring," "I Wanna Talk About Me," "People Are Crazy," "Time Marches On" and "He Stopped Loving Her Today," which was honored in both 1980 and 1981 at the CMA Awards as Song of the Year. In 2007, Louisiana State University Press published the first volume of Braddock's memoirs, *Down in Orburndale: A Songwriter's Youth in Old Florida*. The final volume will be titled *Hollywood, Tennessee: A Life on Nashville's Music Row*.

A native of Jackson, Tenn., Jonathan Singleton wrote Gary Allan's "Watching Airplanes" and Billy Currington's "Don't" with Jim Beavers and Josh Turner's "Why Don't We Just Dance" with Beavers and Darrell Brown. His band, Jonathan Singleton & The Grove, records for Show Dog-Universal Music; recently they toured with Eric Church and opened shows for Little Big Town and Carrie Underwood.

Is co-writing a natural condition or a strategic necessity?

Braddock When I first came to town in the 1960s, maybe 20 or 30 percent of the No. 1 songs were co-written. Now I think it's something like 70 or 80 percent. Co-writing is certainly the norm now. I'm always flattered when anyone wants to write with me, even if I can't always do it.

Singleton I think that's what publishers use for the "baby writers" coming into town — you co-write. That's how you meet different people. I had never co-written with anybody before I came here. In my band, the keyboard player wrote songs, and I wrote songs that were totally different. That was the problem we were having in trying to market the whole thing. When I started co-writing, I figured I could learn from anybody.

Braddock Probably about half of my hits I wrote by myself and half I co-wrote. I have to admit there's a certain pride that comes from writing a song by yourself: Then nobody wonders about who wrote what. But there are some songs I'm sure glad I co-wrote. "He Stopped Loving Her Today" with Curly (Putman) and "People Are Crazy" with Troy Jones. I wouldn't have missed out on either one of those, that's for sure.

Singleton It's odd for me to turn in a song I didn't co-write. I need somebody to bounce it off of. If you have your schedule set and have to go co-write with this guy or girl, then you're regimented into five days a week of writing, which I needed to do to practice. I'm still practicing, still trying to learn.

Where do songwriters congregate these days, aside from publishers' offices?

Braddock There's a big writers' building next to Sony/ATV, the old fire hall.

Singleton You can still smoke in the fire hall. I've heard that Brown's Diner used to be the place where all the songwriters would hang out. It's still a small community, where everybody has worked with everybody.

Braddock A lot of songs used to begin in bars when people were sitting around drinking and doing other things. Then some people came along who sort of introduced a work ethic. Bob McDill was one of those. He came in and worked 9 to 5 and showed that it worked. Look at those hits McDill wrote. I think more people approach it like a real job now than they used to.

Bobby, were you surprised at the response and awards that you earned with "He Stopped Loving Her Today?"

Braddock When I wrote it, I thought it was an OK song. I did not think it was a masterpiece. I really didn't. (Producer) Billy Sherrill played me what he had done on it with George Jones, and I realized then that maybe there was something in the song that went beyond what Curly and I were

"I MAY BE THE ONLY WHITE MAN PAST 60 IN AMERICA WHO'S GOING DOWN THE ROAD LISTENING TO 'MY HUMPS.'"

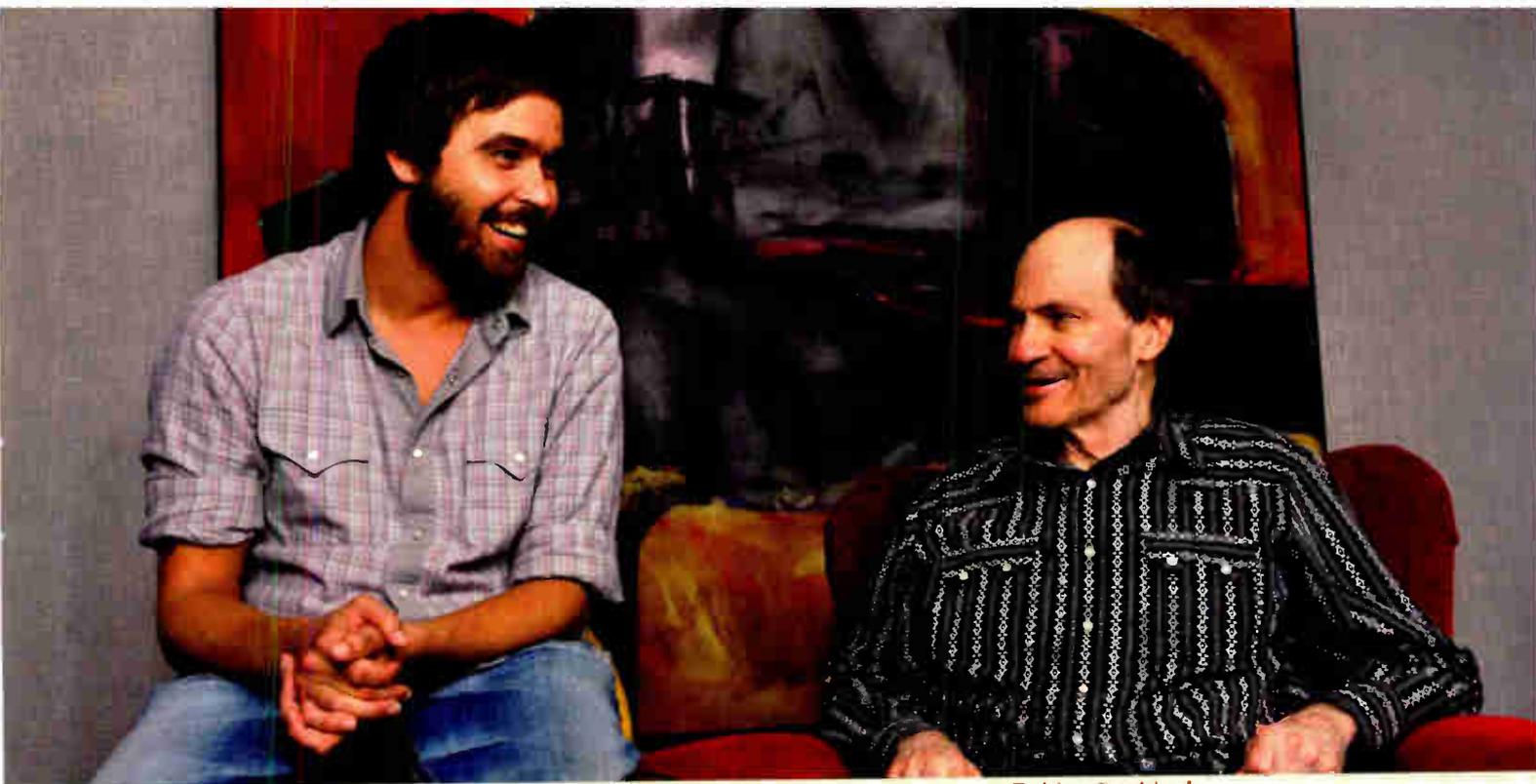
Bobby Braddock

seeing in it. I think Billy's production and George's performance elevated it. Maybe it kind of raised the bar. George thought it was too sad, but he sang it about as good as anybody ever sang anything. I think Curly and I have both written better songs, but I don't mind people telling me I'm wrong.

Jonathan, how did the success of "Watching Airplanes," which you wrote with Jim Beavers, affect you?

Singleton That was my first cut, the first time I got a hold, the first everything. I wasn't sure exactly what was going on. It took off, and it was weird to me to hear (afterward) that someone whose name I knew wanted to write with me. I was scared to death. I'm wondering, does this mean I've got to do it again? I'm still not sure what we did.

Braddock Well, you wrote a song that was not like anything else that was out there. That's what stood out to me. It was totally original. People love that.



Jonathan Singleton

Bobby Braddock

Singleton When you get a song on the radio, all of a sudden you're listening to Country radio 24 hours a day, waiting for your song to come on. I caught myself doing that for a long time. I love Country Music and I listen to it a lot. But I just love music — anything. So I try to go back now and not just listen to Top 40 Country. There's some reason that song was different, and the reason was probably that we didn't know that we were supposed to do it any other way.

Once you've had a big hit, is there an impulse to "repeat the formula," so to speak?

Braddock I'm more likely to do that musically than I am lyrically. Three or four times, I've gone into the studio (to demo) and my longtime guitar player (Brent Rowan) said, "Bob, you're kind of doing 'Time Marches On' all over again," referring to the groove and chord change pattern. And I'd think, "Damn! I am!" So it's easier to repeat a groove or a riff. It's an innate thing.

Singleton At one point, I was writing the same chorus over and over. But I caught it. I haven't had that many hits, but I've made it a point to try not to do something exactly alike. After Jim Beavers and I wrote "Airplanes," we agreed we were not going to write it again — not even

"A LOT OF US LIVE THOSE COUNTRY SONGS, YOU KNOW, THOSE SHENANDOAH SONGS, THOSE ONES THAT ARE REAL."

— Jonathan Singleton

talk about it. So then we spent three months trying to rewrite it. Then we tried to do these R&B kind of things, and that's where we got lucky with "Don't." We've got that new Josh Turner song out ("Why Don't We Just Dance") that's also kind of R&B. So now I can't write any more R&B.

Braddock I love Country Music better than any other kind but, like you said, you like all music. I do too. I think it's important, especially for older guys, to know what young people are listening to, and not just in Country. So over the years, any time a huge act comes along, I always sit down and study them. Pearl Jam, Hootie & The Blowfish, The Black-Eyed Peas — I may be the only white man past 60 in America who's going down the road listening to "My Humps."

How important are rural references to contemporary Country songs?

Braddock The overwhelming majority of people in the United States do not live in rural areas. Most of them live in suburbia. Maybe 10 to 15 percent live in small towns. That's still a huge, solid part of the Country Music fan base, though. It's still a different world out there in small towns, a different mentality and a different culture than it is in the city.

Singleton Sometimes when we go in to play a bigger city, it seems like they're coming out to Country Music just for the weekend, which means you get drunk and hoot and holler. But a lot of us *live* those Country songs, you know, those Shenandoah songs — those ones that are real.

Braddock There are things you used to put in Country songs that you just wouldn't put in there now. Some people might think it's a self-pitying thing. There's a certain machismo that's come along in Country Music now that would forbid a male Country singer from saying, "I sat down and cried my eyes out last night," like some of the early hillbillies did. They're not as apt to do that now.

Has the rising importance of digital singles affected your work?

Braddock I think singles are alive and well. It's sort of like it was in the 1950s, when it was totally singles-oriented. I wouldn't say it's the disappearance of CDs, but I think eventually it's coming to that. I believe the songwriters who will be able to make a living are those who are able to write hits.

Singleton When I was 13 or 14, you'd go buy a CD, you'd see who wrote on it and where they cut the songs, and you'd just speculate how awesome it was to make this record. But I don't think they do that anymore. There's not that physical thing of opening the sleeve and seeing what's on there.

Braddock It seems like Country Music and gospel music have not been hit as hard as the other genres, because many fans are older people and people who are probably not as much into technology.

Singleton The thing you can't replace is sitting in the front row with a beer, watching the artist sing that song.

JonathanSingletonandTheGrove.com
BobbyBraddock.com

CMA New Artist Award Winner

DARIUS RUCKER

One of the most surprising moments at the 2009 CMA Awards last November came early in the evening, shortly after Darius Rucker had launched into "Alright," which along with "Don't Think I Don't Think About It" and "It Won't Be Like This for Long" adds up to three consecutive No. 1 hits released from his Platinum-selling debut album, *Learn to Live*.

As if unable to confine his enthusiasm to the Sommet Center stage, he jumped down to the arena floor and, still singing into his wireless microphone, strode past the front row seats, slapping or locking hands with his fellow artists. That was entertaining enough, but when he then climbed up into the stands to greet his fans directly, accepting their back slaps and embraces without missing a note of his vocals, the moment took on an additional and special meaning.

"I just have so much respect for all the artists and everybody that was there," Rucker said, looking back on that exhilarating performance. "But I wanted to play to the people, to the fans. To do that, I had to go up there. Radio has been amazing to me, and if those people weren't calling into radio and asking for my songs, I wouldn't be here talking to you."

That, in a nutshell, is the story of Rucker's rise to success as a Country artist, an ascent confirmed by his announcement later that night as CMA New Artist of the Year. Like all who have earned this distinction through the years, Rucker was recognized for the unique talent that he brings to the table as an artist — yet in several significant ways, he stands out even in this stellar company. Unlike previous winners, he came to Country Music as a performer already familiar to the general public. And not just familiar: He had earned worldwide recognition as lead singer with Hootie & The Blowfish, who parlayed years of working the Southern bar circuit into a supernova exploding with sales of their album *Cracked Rear View* topping 16 million copies in the United States alone.

"That was certainly a double-edged sword," admitted Mike Dungan, President and CEO of Capitol Records Nashville, which released *Learn to Live* in September 2008. "What was really attractive about it was that Darius has always had an immediately recognizable voice. That is such a valuable commodity in anything, to know what it is right away. The difficult thing was, when you come from another format, and especially when you have the kind of magnificent sales that Hootie & The Blowfish had, there were a lot of skeptics in the world of gatekeepers — Country radio. Several applauded and cheered, but many more did not think we would be able to deliver the kind of music that would get his career up and running. In the end, I think the music itself made fans out of all the skeptics in the radio world."

"That was a big thing because a lot of program directors were saying, 'Darius is coming out with a Country record,'" Rucker agreed. "But it was really just an industry thing. I'm sure these people were expecting to hear 'Hold My Hand' or 'Only Wanna Be with You' with a lap steel or a fiddle."

But instead of refried Hootie hits, *Learn to Live* delivered 14 songs, all but one written or co-written by Rucker with a complete

and real Country aesthetic, drawn from his eclectic listening tastes while growing up in South Carolina. "In the '70s you had one or two AM stations in your town that played The Beatles and early Stevie Wonder," he remembered. "They played it all. And I sang along to it all. I was in my early 20s before I realized that everybody who sings can't sing everything. I mean, even now I put together a 20-piece orchestra and do all Sinatra songs once a year for the (Medical University of South Carolina) Children's Hospital in Charleston. But I can't get out of my brain this old Kitty Wells song called 'Will Your Lawyer Talk to God?' I'm cutting it!"

For years Rucker felt the call to draw more Country into his music, especially when it became clear that this wasn't an option for the band he had helped take to the top. "The last three or four Hootie records, I said to the band, 'Look, let's do the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band thing. Let's go and play Country Music,'" he recalled. "I always thought we were pretty close to it. We listened to it on the side. But they all wanted to play rock 'n' roll. I understand that; that's what we were. But I just wanted to make a record I wanted to make."

He shared this thought with Doc McGhee, whose client list over the years has stretched from Hootie, Bon Jovi, KISS and Mötley Crüe to Chris Cagle and Jynsi. The legendary manager expressed skepticism at being able to find a major record label that would sign the singer as a Country artist. But as Rucker remembered, that changed during a conversation with Dungan.

"Doc was bragging about how great the Hootie tour was doing, and Mike said, 'How do you know that?'" Rucker recalled. "Doc said, 'Well, I manage those guys.' And out of the blue, Dungan went, 'I always thought the black guy was a Country singer.'"

"That's exactly what I said," Dungan confirmed, with a laugh. "I don't know if it was so much from the music that I heard them do on the radio, but when I saw them on television Darius felt like he had the sense and sensibility of a Country singer in the way he emoted. The feeling, the phrasing, everything about him felt very comfortable to me, like one of the greatest singers."

Negotiations led briskly toward Rucker's welcome to Capitol Records Nashville. The search for a producer ended nearly as quickly, right after his introduction to fellow South Carolina native Frank Rogers. "He came out to meet me on the road in the middle of the Hootie tour," Rucker said. "Fifteen minutes after we met, we were talking about what kind of record I want to make. I remember saying, 'I want to make a record that, whether the people like it or not, they have to admit that it's a Country record.'"

With that assurance, they went to work, beginning with a title that Rogers had come up with: "All I Want." Forty minutes later they had built a song around it; recorded with Brad Paisley sitting in on guitar, it would make the final cut for *Learn to Live*.

These performances, and these co-writes that teamed Rucker with Dave Berg, Chris DuBois, Ashley Gorley, Clay Mills, Rivers Rutherford, Chris Stapleton and other celebrated Nashville composers, connected emphatically with Country fans. Specifically, the songs tapped into his urge to tell stories through lyrics. "A Country song is a story song," Rucker said. "If you have a hit on the radio, it's a song that says something in its lyrics. You can't just make up words and have funky

RUCKER

by BOB DOERSCHUK

chords; it's not going to work that way. You've got to move people."

Equally important, these songs eased his access to the airwaves with help from Rucker's willingness to mee: PDs and fans face to face on radio tours. That connection, symbolized in the outreach of his CMA Awards performance, was as good a fit for Rucker personally as his talents are to the format that has returned his embrace.

"It's my personality!" he insisted. "I love talking to people. It's not a chore for me to go out after a show and meet people. I still can't believe they want my autograph! Everybody used to say to me, 'How could you be so happy here? You were in the

"I was in my early 20s before I realized that everybody who sings can't sing everything." —Darius Rucker

biggest band in the world!' But in all that, there were peaks and valleys. All you guys remember are the peaks; we remember the valleys."

Relationships with fans and peers are central to Rucker's plans as he starts on his sophomore album, with sessions that began in January and a release scheduled tentatively for the fall. He is, for example, in no great hurry to battle up toward top billing on arena tours. "I'm not interested," he said, looking ahead to opening for Rascal Flatts on the road. "Sure, don't get me wrong. I will be headlining arenas, but it doesn't have to be this year. I just don't need yet to get excited when we sell out and not excited when we're half full. I just play."

"Besides," he continued, "Country Music is a whole different platform. Country Music fans are going to love you until you give them a reason not to. Pop fans are looking for the next big thing; they're in awe of you. Country fans want to be your best friend. They walk up to you in Nashville and go, 'Hey, let's go have a beer!' And I say, 'Well, come and take my picture,'" he said, laughing. "And that's awesome."

DariusRucker.com



CMA UNVEILS NEW PRIME PROSPECT FINDINGS AT CRS

New insights into consumer trends related to radio and radio Web sites are among the items on the agenda for an updated "CMA Research Presentation," 11 AM to 12:20 PM Thursday, Feb. 25. Following a lunch break, an industry panel will discuss these findings from 2:30 to 4 PM at "CMA Research Workshop, a.k.a. CMA Research — How YOU Can USE It." Both events take place in Room 204 at the Nashville Convention Center during CRS. Taken together, they promise to deliver fresh understandings of today's Country radio market along with strategies for implementing this updated information.

RADIO AND DJ HALLS OF FAME WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a sponsor of the annual CRB dinner and induction ceremony on Feb. 23 during CRS, CMA congratulates Bill Bailey (retired from radio), Laurie DeYoung (WPOC/Baltimore) and Rudy Fernandez (KEAN/Abilene, Texas), new members of the Country Music DJ Hall of Fame, as well as this year's inductees into the Country Music Radio Hall of Fame: Cy Blumenthal (posthumous), Dan Halyburton (President, RadioTime, Dallas) and Michael Hammond (Director of Operations, Citadel Broadcasting, Knoxville, Tenn.).

TALK RADIO THE FRIENDLY NEW FRONTIER FOR COUNTRY ARTISTS

by CRYSTAL CAVINESS



To talk or not to talk? That question faces many musicians who make a living by singing rather than conversing at a time when talk shows top radio ratings. *Talkers* magazine estimates the minimum weekly audience of "The Rush Limbaugh Show" at more than 20 million, "The Sean Hannity Show" at more than 16 million and "The Glenn Beck Program" at more than 9 million per week.

Compare those numbers with the audience for KKKGO/Los Angeles, the most listened-to Country radio station in the United States with 1.2 million listeners weekly, as reported in *Country Aircheck*. According to Charlie Daniels, a frequent talk-radio guest and listener, those numbers speak as persuasively as a well-crafted lyric.

"It's mass media," Daniels said. "Some of the biggest radio shows in the country are talk shows. Plus, I am very opinionated. Talk radio lets people know you better. If you don't want people to know who you are, don't go on talk radio."

From his perspective, Steve Gill considers talk and Country as a good fit. "When you look at the sweet spot of demographics, Country Music is right in line with the talk radio listener, and the talk radio listener is right in line with Country Music," said the host of the Nashville-based, nationally-syndicated "The Steve Gill Show." "It's amazing to me that people in the Country Music industry haven't figured out that if you want to sell concert tickets, CDs or downloaded music, your talk radio listeners are where the money is."

To illustrate the format's potential as a forum for Country fans, Gill remembered taking a call from a concerned listener in the spring of 2009, when debate was raging over whether some Miley Cyrus photos, taken in a session for *Vanity Fair*, were too suggestive.

"Charlie Daniels called and said 'I've got to weigh in and defend my girl Miley,'" Gill recalled. "It's the same as if you have a congressman in Washington."

While it's difficult to correlate interviews on talk radio with spikes in music sales, these appearances clearly help define and convey an artist's opinions and personality. So it was with Bomshel, the Curb Records act that drew attention in October 2009 when booked onto CNN Radio and AP Radio to share their views during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

"The girls got a lot of new fan mail — women listening who would tell their story to them or send them a thank-you message for talking about breast cancer," said Kirt Webster, whose public relations firm, Webster & Associates, counts Bomshel among its clients. "Prior to that, they weren't getting that type of mail because they were unknown. At the time, they didn't have a video out. They didn't have a huge fan base to build off of. Everything they got was brand new."

That's why, in noting the uptick in fan interest, Webster had no doubt: "We knew there was a direct connection to the talk radio spots."

With talk radio, though, there is also a risk. "Based on topic matter, if it's political, you could offend 50 percent of your audience," Webster cautioned. "When you're dealing with breast cancer and how they are trying to help, there is no downside. If it's all about Republicans or Democrats, you could alienate part of your fan base. Do I want to put all of my artists in that position? Never."

Whether talk radio proves a boon or potential bust is ultimately in the hands of the artist. "My advice would be, if you're going to be asked an opinion, give your honest opinion," concluded Daniels. "You cannot please everybody. Stick to your guns. If you're not going to, don't do talk radio shows."

"IF YOU WANT TO SELL CONCERT TICKETS, CDS OR DOWNLOADED MUSIC, YOUR TALK RADIO LISTENERS ARE WHERE THE MONEY IS." — Steve Gill, host, "The Steve Gill Show"

COUNTRY AIRCHECK E-NEWSLETTER VERIFIES CMA RESEARCH

by BOB DOERSCHUK

As Editor and Publisher of *Country Aircheck*, Lon Helton keeps his readers in Country radio and the Country Music industry up to speed. Thousands follow breaking news each day in *Country Aircheck Today*, dig deeper into the issues via the weekly *Country Aircheck Weekly*, and track airplay for new releases each week in *Country Aircheck "The Adds,"* all of which are sent to radio and industry pros for free. A glossy, full-color print edition of *Country Aircheck*, published quarterly and also free, completes the comprehensive coverage.

But Helton and his team also receive tons of information from publicists and record labels that doesn't quite fit the format of his magazine — specifically, news about the latest activities of artists.

Based on his experience as a broadcaster and publishing executive, Helton sensed that this information could help Country stations strengthen their ties to listeners. So he decided in December 2008 to launch an e-mail newsletter, similar in tone and feel to the look and content of *Country Aircheck's* e-news blasts and Web site content but with a focus exclusively on artist news.

Known informally at Helton's office as STAN ("Stations and Artists Newsletter"),

it was beta-tested in March 2009 at KKKO/Los Angeles, WGH/Norfolk, Va., and WKLB/Boston. Since then, it has grown to include 26 stations, which format it as their own e-newsletter by featuring their logo, tagline and/or brand, and pass it along to approximately 500,000 P1s, or most active listeners.

From the start, Helton felt that this idea had potential. But when he encountered

CMA's landmark Country Music Consumer Research Segmentation Study, unveiled at CRS in 2009, he realized that it was even more promising than he had thought.

"We're a small company, so to branch out and invest in a new business is a risky proposition," Helton said. "But when the CMA Research validated what we thought through breakout groups that verified the value of fan newsletters, we were extremely excited because we were already on that case."

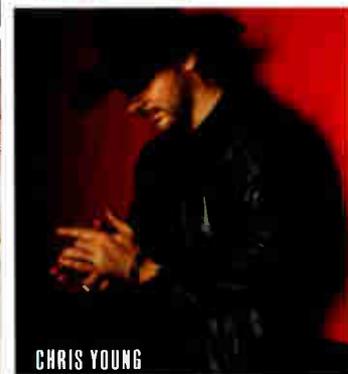
Country Aircheck's artist e-newsletter reflects the research's conclusion that it is imperative for the Country Music world to service the format's most responsive fans — a.k.a., the "CountryPhiles." By compiling and sending the latest artist news directly to radio stations, Helton and his staff provide a means for this targeted group to identify each station as a source not just of entertainment but also information about their favorite format and artists.

"The beauty of what we're doing is that the station gets the credit," Helton explained. "The Country radio station in each market is established to its listener base as the authority, the expert and the friend of the Country artist."

The e-newsletter also serves artists, with content ranging from coverage of their Platinum and No. 1 parties through links to their Web sites and even an audio preview of an episode of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" that featured Kenny Chesney, Darius Rucker, Sugarland and Carrie Underwood.

"Fans really want to know about their relationship with artists," Helton said. "The CMA Research reminded everybody at Country radio how big that relationship is." *Country Aircheck's* artist e-newsletter is available free to *CMA Close Up* readers, who can sign up at CountryAircheck.com/artistnews.html.

In-depth information from CMA's Country Music Consumer Segmentation Study, CMA BrandProspectSM Segmentation Algorithm and CMA Prime Prospects Study is available at My.CMAworld.com.



CMA BRINGS "NEW FACES OF COUNTRY MUSIC" TO CRS-41

As in previous years, CRS-41 will close with the highly anticipated "New Faces of Country Music" concert, in which five fast-rising Country artists each deliver a 20-minute set. These performers were selected by registered attendees at CRS-40. Sponsored by CMA, the event takes place at the "CMA Performance Hall" in the Nashville Convention Center, beginning at 6:30 PM, Feb. 26. It will also feature a presentation of the new CRB-Country Aircheck Awards to honor individuals who have shown outstanding efforts in the Country radio and music industries over the past year.

photos: Country Aircheck photos - courtesy of Country Aircheck; Daniel J. Linnity; Paula Szepiur; Cliff Trappin - courtesy of "The Steve Call Show"; Giannina and Monroe - Kristin Barlowe; Houser - The Factory Photography; Love And Theft - Jeremy Cowart; Young - Marina Chavez; The Factory Photography; Love And Theft - Jeremy Cowart; Young - Marina Chavez.

There's a coffee shop just past the entry into the office tower that serves as headquarters for personal money management expert Dave Ramsey in Franklin, Tenn. The pastries are fresh. Aromas of new brew warm the air. Lights are low, music is soothing and seating is comfortable. And all of the edibles, from java to sweets, are complimentary.

This is worth noting, since nowhere else in Ramsey's gospel is there any mention of a free lunch.

Ramsey's message propagates through his 13-week Financial Peace University program and amplifies through his books for both adults and children, on radio over more than 450 stations to 4.5 million listeners with "The Dave Ramsey Show," on television via "The Dave Ramsey Show" on the Fox Business Network and in public appearances that will include his keynote address on Feb. 24 at the Country Radio Seminar in Nashville.

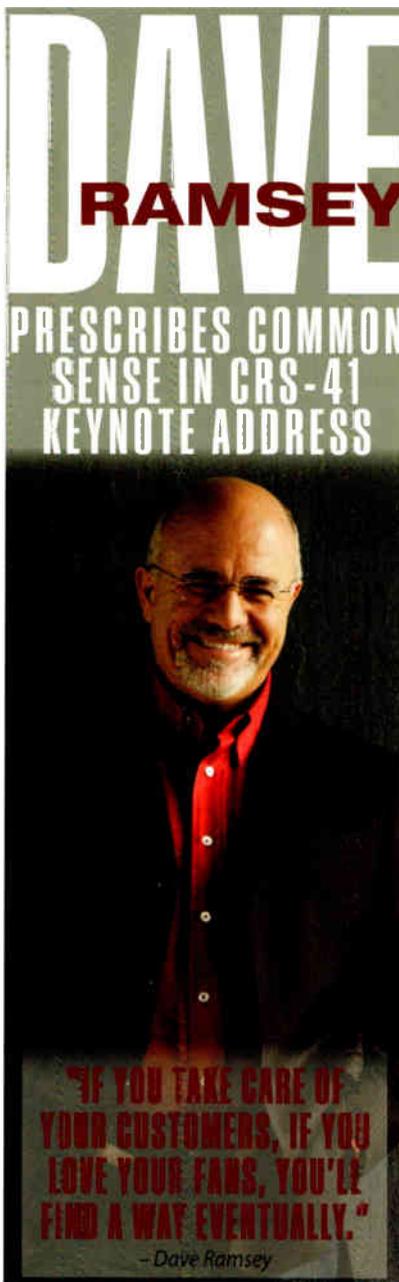
Its essence is deceptively simple: Live honorably and take responsibility for your actions, beginning with a resolution not to spend what you don't have.

In a YouTube video promoting his CRS appearance, Ramsey observed that his program, which has helped more than half a million families escape debt and develop a productive plan for living, can apply directly to the challenges faced by the music industry.

"The very same principles of hard work, honesty, all these little things that we talk about, plus the financial stuff that works in your personal life — guess what? — work in business too," he insisted. "I hope you'll join me at CRS-41 and together we'll try to put this industry on the road to financial peace."

Expanding on that point at his office, Ramsey added that the Country Radio Broadcasters, which presents CRS, "asked me to talk about unpacking the idea that radio is probably going to survive — and the economy and the nation and Country Music in the midst of that — and that maybe some of the shaking of some of the time-honored principles of money and business is going to cause us to return to them if we haven't. Some of the stuff got a little bit too sophisticated and out of control and too driven by stock price in radio and the music business too. So people are returning to what made Nashville great and what made the nation great."

Asked how he would pilot a record label through the challenges faced by that sector of the business, Ramsey cautioned that he has no experience with that particular line of work. However, he suggested, "I'd make everybody in the building read *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, because the cheese has been moved. The world moves. A friend of mine who illustrates the career side of things talks about when Freon came out and refrigeration kicked in: The guys who used to deliver the blocks of ice all went broke except one or two who figured out that if they chipped up that ice and put it in a bag, somebody would buy it for a picnic. And they became millionaires.



by BOB DOERSCHUK

"Like it or not, we're in a 99 cent world in the music business," he elaborated. "It's a tough, tough transition. But the people who find the ways to put the ice in the bag are going to be the new leaders. It may be some of the old rank that does that, but pretty well everyone has established that the \$17.95 CD hasn't got the market it had five years ago. So how is the music business going to serve the fans? Boy, the guy who finds that set of keys is going to own some cars."

Unauthorized free distribution of music is perhaps the thorniest issue facing the industry today. Here, too, Ramsey offered that to begin formulating a general approach, people might consult some of his favorite reading as well as recent actions by a well-known comedy ensemble.

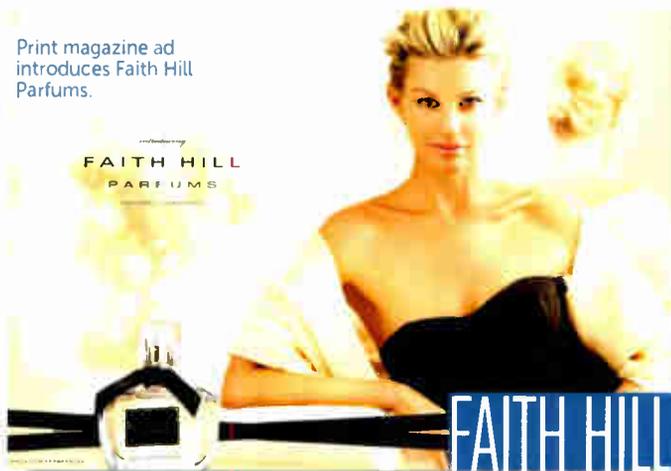
"There's a book called *Free*, by Chris Anderson, that talks about how the efficiencies and instantaneous results of the Internet have driven the cost of producing a product way down to where the consumer is no longer willing to pay for it," he said. "But then you get Monty Python: Everything they own was getting pirated on YouTube, so they came in and did a spoof on the fact that 'all you people are stealing our stuff and we're sick of it,' in a way that only they could do it. Then they put all their stuff on YouTube for free but they put this spoof on the front and said, 'Now, please, go to Amazon and buy our stuff.' And it worked! Their sales went up 20-something-thousand percent on Amazon — and they'd given away their stuff for free. They leaned into the trend rather than try to not admit it was happening. Now, it's not logical to a guy like me; I don't know how that works. But I do know that if you take care of your customers, if you love your fans, you'll find a way eventually."

Though his programs are designed to apply to individuals and companies in every walk of life, Ramsey harbors a special affection for the music world. Born and raised in Antioch, a neighborhood of Nashville, equipped with a B.S. in Finance and Real Estate from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, he counts prominent Country artists among his friends and clients. And for all his travels and accomplishments, his September 2005 guest announcer appearance on the "Grand Ole Opry" ranks high on his list of experiences.

"I was standing backstage and getting to talk to some of the classic artists you think of when you think of the Grand Ole Opry," Ramsey said. "Many of them came up and said, 'We listen to you, but Dave, we've been doing this stuff you talk about since before you were born.' One of them said to me, 'I grew up on a dirt floor. They gave me a hard time about saving every dollar I've ever made, but I don't have problems either.' That generation of people, whether they were music people or farmers, had a different mentality. They haven't gotten caught up in the things that companies and people and this generation have gotten caught up in. And they don't go broke. How do you make \$15 million and go broke? It happens in this town every week. It has to do with overspending like a drunken Congressman. It has to do with not living with a plan, not getting into debt, not saving and not giving. These are the basic things that companies and people have to do."

DaveRamsey.com

Print magazine ad introduces Faith Hill Parfums.



Builds a Country/Coty Connection

TIP What does it take to launch a new fragrance for Coty? The qualities are as hard to find in one person as they are easy to list: beauty, elegance, intelligence, confidence, a high public profile ... all of which and more are easily associated with Faith Hill.

And so it was no surprise when, in October, Coty Inc. unveiled Faith Hill Parfums, named for the three-time CMA Awards winner and Warner Bros. recording artist, adding her to a distinguished list of recording artist/sponsors that includes Victoria Beckham, Celine Dion, Jennifer Lopez, Kylie Minogue, Gwen Stefani and Shania Twain.

Research pegged Hill as an ideal partner, according to Steve Mormoris, Senior VP of Global Marketing, Coty Beauty. But beyond her many positive attributes and active interest in beauty products, her identity as an artist was an added plus.

"Country Music is the biggest genre of music in the United States," Mormoris said. "And so Faith has become a much broader cultural force than she might have been when she was starting her career. This surge in the appeal of Country Music showed us that it could be a legitimate segment in which we can find celebrities who could create beauty products for all women, not just women who like Country Music."

Talent brand manager Michael Flutie helped bring Hill and the perfume company together. As founder and owner of Michael Flutie's Office (MFO), he had already facilitated Coty's launch of McGraw, the *eau de toilette* selected for the Fragrance Foundation's 2009 FiFi Awards for Best Fragrance and Packaging of the Year, Men's Popular Appeal. "Tim and Faith represent the intelligence of the American family — or at least the intelligence that every American family would like to believe they have," he explained.

Hill worked closely with Coty in every step of development, from designing the bottle to fashioning the fragrance itself, whose light, floral bouquet was inspired in part by her Southern upbringing. "One of the reasons we chose Coty was that they were insistent on my involvement," Hill confirmed. "It was fascinating to learn about the world of fragrance."

Beginning with a Christmas-season campaign and a budget of more than \$10 million, Coty advertised the product online and in ads with *Elle*, *InStyle*, *People* and other magazines, depicting Hill in reflective moments designed to communicate her values to customers 25 and above, even to those who were not familiar with her music. Hill also took it directly to the public through five live chats on FaithHill.com/fragrances, on which she answered questions submitted by fans. (Examples included: How can we influence our daughters about beauty and self-confidence? And how has your perception of beauty changed as you've gotten older?)

There was also one unexpected burst of publicity at the CMA Awards, when co-hosts Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood bantered humorously about wearing the McGraw and Hill scents. "I was thrilled," Mormoris said. "That moment alone showed me that people embrace Country stars making beauty products. They're fun, they're sexy and they add a lot of dimension to this industry." FaithHill.com/fragrances; Coty.com



Billy Ray Cyrus shares sandwiches with Sandwich Swap 'n' Share eBay charity auction winner Carolyn McKelvy and her son Zachary Plastina.

Spreads the Word in Hellmann's Sandwich Swap 'n' Share Campaign Benefitting Feeding America

TIP What could be more evocative of growing up in America than memories of trading homemade sandwiches with friends at school? And what format celebrates American ideals more than Country Music?

These rhetorical queries actually answer a larger question pondered early in 2009 at Unilever — namely, how can they best represent their upcoming campaign to raise money for Feeding America, the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity?

Their Hellmann's brand of mayonnaise — known as Best Foods west of the Rocky Mountains — would be the vehicle for this effort, which would combine the nostalgia of sandwich swaps with the technology of our era. The Sandwich Swap 'n' Share program launched just before the school year, exclusively on Facebook. Visitors to Hellmann's page on Facebook were invited to build a virtual sandwich and share it with a friend on Facebook. For every sandwich created and shared, Hellmann's donated seven lunches to Feeding America which provides food to more than 25 million low-income people throughout the United States.

As with all such initiatives, a celebrity spokesperson would have to be recruited — someone whose image was consistent with traditional values yet who also had a sense of humor and, if possible, might be known widely as the kind of dad who would happily pack his kids' lunchboxes with sandwiches to carry off to school.

That road led directly to Billy Ray Cyrus, whose album *Back to Tennessee* was released in April 2009 on Walt Disney Records/Lyric Street Records.

"Billy Ray fit perfectly with our Real Food message," explained Jamey Fish, Senior Brand Manager, Hellmann's. "He's a very real guy, very down-to-earth, great personality, very friendly — and he's also a dad. Plus, he loves sandwiches! The man loves sandwiches, as does most of America."

Cyrus spread the word via Twitter. "In fact," Fish recalled, "during the press event in New York where we announced the program, we had computer stations set up where you could log onto Facebook and try it out, and I watched Billy Ray doing that himself."

"This program ties together one of my favorite foods with a creative virtual application that will hopefully inspire folks to join the effort to end hunger by supporting Feeding America," Cyrus confirmed.

The Sandwich Swap 'n' Share program reached its goal of donating 700,000 lunches very quickly. Bids were also placed via an eBay charity auction, with the highest bidder winning an opportunity to swap actual sandwiches with Cyrus backstage at his concert in Niceville, Fla. The winner, Carolyn McKelvy, accompanied by her son Zachary Plastina, 8, ended up trading their turkey and cheese with a nearly identical concoction created by Cyrus. The cheeses differed — but both sandwiches definitely included Hellmann's mayonnaise.

BuildThePerfectSandwich.com; Hellmanns.com

internet loves the video star

Opportunities Abound for Exposure Online

by KEN TUCKER

CMT and GAC are as essential as ever in any Country artist's strategy for the latest music videos. But alongside these two familiar highways, alternate routes are opening that multiply the ways in which videos and viewers can connect.

They're proliferating so much, in fact, that finding and exploiting these outlets is part of Heather McBee's job description as VP of Digital Business, Sony Music Nashville. "I am tasked with finding new opportunities for our content," she said. "Part of my team's role is to go out and experiment

whether it's CMT, GAC, AOL or Yahoo," insisted Ashley Heron, Senior Manager of Marketing, Lyric Street Records. "It's a marketing tool. It's impacting the consumer as quickly and effectively as possible. And there are probably 10 or 15 Web sites that would be open to promoting."

AOL and Yahoo Music, as well as iTunes, VEVO and Web sites in general, can provide an impressive launching pad. "If it's on the Yahoo homepage, it's in front of 100 million visitors a day," Heron noted. "You can easily reach upwards of 100,000 to 200,000 streams a day by premiering on Yahoo, whereas you might not get that kind of streaming on a **CMT.com** or any other partner site.

"We receive more unique impressions online," he added. "The redundant impressions, the cumulative impressions, are exponentially larger for video channels just because of their reach and frequency, but we receive more unique views online."

All of this explains why, in Heron's words, "Online is just as important as our video channel partners."

Not surprisingly, Beville Darden, Editor, **TheBoot.com**, agrees. "We've scored some great video premieres," she said, citing video debuts for Kris Kristofferson's "Closer to the Bone," the title track to his latest album on New West Records, and several live Dolly Parton performances as examples. (In most cases, after a video's initial and exclusive push, it is then released to other outlets, typically after a window of 24 hours.)

behind the scenes



MOMENTS CAPTURED FROM PRODUCTIONS OF RECENT COUNTRY VIDEOS. (l-r) Jessica Harp's "Boy Like Me," Randy Houser's "Boots On," Carrie Underwood's "Just a Dream" and Joe Nichols' "An Old Friend of Mine."

with these other outlets, like the MySpaces and YouTubes of the world, and find out what kind of activity and excitement you can build out of participating in one of these new channels.

"We've never been shy about experimenting," McBee added. "Every video presents a new marketing opportunity. It's not about taking anything away from our traditional partners like radio, CMT and GAC, which we know are the main drivers for our business. It's about how we build on the excitement that's out there for an artist."

Regardless of the outlet, video premieres are a priority for any record label's plan. Arista Nashville, for example, premiered Carrie Underwood's video for "Temporary Home" on iTunes with a two-day exclusive for purchase and download. Its TV debut took place the third day. And Lyric Street Records has gone to AOL's **TheBoot.com** to premiere videos by Love And Theft and Rascal Flatts, **MySpaceMusic.com** for Rascal Flatts and Yahoo! Music (**New.Music.Yahoo.com**) for Bucky Covington and Rascal Flatts. "Every video release from Lyric Street has a premiere partner,

Why are video premieres important to The Boot and other Web sites? "They generate outside interest," Darden explained. "We're trying to make The Boot a brand name. When Kris Kristofferson premieres a video on The Boot, he'll promote it on his Web site and his social networking, and his fans may discover The Boot for the first time and hopefully become habitual readers."

From the label and artist perspective, the numbers accumulated by the top online video portals sweeten that pot. **TheBoot.com**, for example, claims 3.9 million unique visitors per month, as measured by Comscore Media Metric. This helps explain why Universal Records South elected to premiere the video for Joe Nichols' "An Old Friend of Mine" on The Boot a month prior to release of his album, *Old Things New*. It was also featured on the AOL Music homepage, which attracts 26 million unique visitors monthly, according to the company.

"It was about where we could get the biggest bang," insisted Fletcher Foster, former Senior VP and GM, Universal Records South. "A lot of it is

just negotiation to see what you can get out of an outlet. If I give you this, where am I going to be placed? Can I get on the homepage? How long am I going to be up there? It comes down to the real estate that you're going to get on those properties."

One component offered by AOL was an interview with Nichols in which he could discuss his struggles with addiction. "We know that people are going to go to CMT and GAC to watch a video, and **CMT.com** to watch a video on demand, so we really don't try to compete with them for video consumption," Darden said. "But we try to do something different. Joe really wanted to editorialize the video. He wanted to tell why it was so personal to him. He wanted to tell his story about being a year sober and going to rehab and kicking his habit."

There were elements in Nichols' song that helped persuade Foster to launch it on AOL, a cross-genre platform. "An Old Friend of Mine" wasn't just a Country song, it was a lifestyle song," he noted. "It dealt with a lot of personal issues. I thought if I could get more of a cross section of people to watch it, more than just a Country consumer, I could expand the audience base a little bit."

Timing was a factor too. "From a business standpoint, you look at where am I going to get the most eyeballs on this thing the quickest," he said. "We wanted to get it out quickly, and it would have taken a little longer to get it on CMT or GAC, so it really came down to **CMT.com** or AOL."

Warner Bros. Records, was unveiled at the same time on The Boot and, for sale, on iTunes. Premiering a video or song on iTunes is "invaluable," said Kelli Cashiola, VP of Marketing, Warner Music Nashville. "Knowing how popular New Music Tuesday is on iTunes, you cannot purchase the kind of advertising a homepage placement brings."

Balance is equally important in seeking video exposure, between new and established channels as well as between competing sites online given the advantages that each option offers. "We go into it with a pretty clear head about what our expectations are," said McBee. "We recognize what the limitations may be if we give one partner exclusivity over another. It's just about weighing the pros and cons of every opportunity. Does the exposure from that exclusivity offset what you may lose by not going somewhere else? You've got to find that balance. And it's important to have a willing partner that can build a promotion with you that really supports the release and the overall marketing plan of a project."

Even as the jockeying for video exposure heats up, other outlets are on the way. Universal Music Group and Sony Music Entertainment have partnered to launch **Vevo.com**, a destination site for music videos with its own dedicated channel on YouTube. Similarly, Warner Music Group is establishing branded channels within YouTube and other video aggregators in an effort to drive more traffic to and monetize its artists' Web sites; it also partnered recently with Outrigger Media to sell their

video exposure



(l-r) George Strait's "Troubadour," Brad Paisley's "Start a Band" (with Keith Urban) and Billy Currington's "People Are Crazy."

"Online is just as important as our video channel partners."

— Ashley Heron, Senior Manager of Marketing, Lyric Street Records

CMT and GAC don't immediately add every video they get, so alternate release points can give labels quicker exposure. "We have the ability to expedite our pipeline," Heron said. "Once the video is delivered, we have the ability to reach a wide variety of customers immediately."

Noting that more videos are being produced than ever, Jay Frank, Senior VP of Music Strategy, CMT, confirmed that "the amount of placement that we have doesn't increase, so that means there's a lot more opportunities to premiere videos elsewhere. We couldn't possibly premiere every video that came out."

But that doesn't diminish the value on the traditional cable channels. "With a new artist, the CMTs of the world may want us to prove ourselves somewhere or bring them a story," McBee said. "It gives us a chance to work with some of these other partners to build that story and then deliver it to one of our traditional partners who can then make it bigger."

Other platforms can be effective in efforts that involve simultaneous releases on more than one channel. Jessica Harp's "Boy Like Me," on

opportunities to brands and ad agencies.

Despite the growing number of options for video exposure, Sarah Trahern, Senior VP of Programming, GAC, doesn't see them as competition. "The more places Country artists get exposed, the better it is for all of us in the genre," she said. "Would I love to be the only place Country fans had to go? Sure, but at the same time that's just about my business, and my business is successful if Country is successful overall. The more exposure, the better."

Clearly, there's more competition than ever on the video front with odds growing stronger that artists will prosper as their visibility proliferates. "There's such a habit of premiering on CMT and GAC, and now we're competing with MySpace and iTunes and YouTube," said AOL's Darden. "It's disappointing when we don't get something. I always want to know why — what's their reason for doing it somewhere else where we can give them this and this and this? I'm sure other outlets are saying the same things when we get it, but it's friendly competition."

LET THE GAME BEGIN!

COUNTRY STARS SCORE WITH SPORTS EVENTS PERFORMANCES

by KIP KIRBY

The request is simple: "Ladies and gentlemen, please rise for the national anthem." Seventy thousand fans shuffle respectfully to their feet. The stadium falls silent. The opening notes of "The Star-Spangled Banner" soar out over the sound system, delivered by a Country artist who, battling nerves, the glare of the spotlight and the intensity of the moment, works through the performance until the final crescendo triggers a roar of applause and cheers.

It's game time!

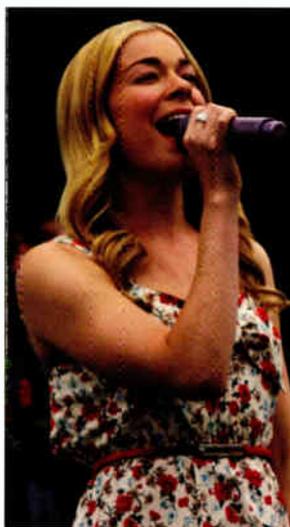
Whether singing the national anthem or doing a halftime mini-concert or post-game show, Country artists can be found frequently onstage in sports venues throughout the United States. The reasons are obvious: They draw well among sports fans and they benefit in turn from the local and national exposure that comes with the territory.

"Our goal is to give the fans the best entertainment value we can," said Scott Cunningham, Director of Game Entertainment, Atlanta Braves. "They aren't just coming for the game; they're coming for an entertainment experience. Our fan base falls into five groups: families, corporate, casual fans, avid fans and entertainment seekers. And being here in the South, a lot of these groups share a common interest in Country Music."

This is good news for artists, especially given the crossover appeal of sports and Country Music, as documented in CMA's BrandProspect Segmentation Study, which found a higher-than-average interest in sports among adults 18-54. It's good as well for some of the franchises whose budgets might not allow them to book the giants of the genre to perform a halftime, pre- or post-game show.

For example, Watkins Glen International, a premier road course in upstate New York, draws a core NASCAR crowd that camps out regularly for race weekends. So Brett Powell, Special Events & Partnerships Manager, International Speedway Corporation, doesn't bother going after big-name entertainment. "Booking the developing acts works out best for us financially," he said. "We look for somebody who's a quality singer but can also appreciate the national and international coverage they'll get while they're here."

Some artists enjoy another advantage from these bookings, in that franchises often help maximize exposure by setting up pre- and post-game acoustic sets for them to showcase their music, coordinating promotional tie-ins with team sponsors and local media, providing mentions and write-ups on team Web sites and arranging interviews with local Country radio stations. At Watkins Glen, acts who sing the national anthem even get help finding gigs in nearby clubs. "We try to help them create a small tour here in this market," Powell said. "Obviously



LEANN RIMES PERFORMS AT THE KENTUCKY DERBY IN 2008.



SHERYL CROW AND SARA EVANS BETWEEN PERFORMANCES AT MLB ALL-STAR GAME IN ST. LOUIS IN 2009.

we have a lot of radio station and venue contacts that can be lucrative for the artists."

Sports franchises can also offer ways to reach fans that are otherwise unavailable. The NFL's Pittsburgh Steelers promotes their musical guests through pre-game e-mails to their million-plus fan database as well as through the team's popular "in-bowl texting system," which allows fans in the stadium to receive a personal videotaped message from the artist on their cell phones. At halftime, the artist is invited to visit one of the texting booths to sign autographs, photos and CDs. "We have a very passionate fan base," said John Wodarek, Marketing Manager, Pittsburgh Steelers. "And Country Music is very popular here in Pittsburgh. We can create a lot of exposure for the artists who play here."

Television exposure is another plus. Because most major sports events are carried live on national broadcast networks as well as local media, TelluRide's performance of the national anthem at a NASCAR race was televised over ESPN. Of course, performing live on TV can be as much a challenge as an opportunity, in this case because the group had to synchronize with an F-18 flyover: When the planes ran late, the group had to stretch. Apparently their performance scored, as they were subsequently booked to do four pregame songs at home plate during the Chicago White Sox's final pre-playoff game; that performance was videotaped by Major League Baseball and posted at MLB.com.

TelluRide entertained as well during Derby Week. The Art of the Game, a Nashville-based marketing and entertainment production company, booked them there as well as Megan Linville and LeAnn Rimes, whose rendition of the national anthem was the first in the Kentucky Derby's history by a nationally recognized recording artist. Though Rimes is a headliner, Doug Fraser, President of The Art of the Game, maintains that sporting events are especially beneficial for new acts, including those who, like Linville, have yet to sign a recording deal.

"When she plays one of these events, she's creating a new fan base for herself, not only through people who hear her sing for the first time but through the publicity and promotion and online activity that she generates," said Fraser. "Emerging artists aren't expensive to book and they provide strong entertainment value. In the sports world, acts have to appeal not only to the fans but to the VIPs and corporate sponsors as well. Country acts who do well benefit even without a major label."

To find these acts, sports organizations maintain relationships with record companies, managers and booking agencies and monitor download activity on iTunes, MySpace and other sites. That's how the Atlantic Coast Conference discovered James Otto. The college football



DEREK SHOLL SINGS AT BALTIMORE'S ORIOLE PARK AT CAMDEN YARDS IN 2009.



CARRIE UNDERWOOD SINGS AT GAME 3 IN THE WORLD SERIES IN 2007, AT DENVER'S COORS FIELD.



JASON MICHAEL CARROLL SINGS AT CHICAGO'S WRIGLEY FIELD IN 2009.

LADY ANTEBELLUM PERFORMS ON NATIONAL TELEVISION AT THE COKE ZERO 400 NASCAR RACE AT DAYTONA IN 2008.



CINCINNATI REDS MASCOT ROSIE RED WELCOMES BRIAN SMITH, JIMI HENDRIX, ADAM CRAIG AND RYAN JONES OF TELLURIDE IN 2009.



conference chose his "Ain't Gonna Stop" as the theme song for its 2009 marketing campaign, "Ain't Gonna Stop on the Road to Tampa Bay." Otto's involvement with the ACC put him in front of hundreds of thousands of college football fans throughout the season, in person and online, culminating in a live concert and national anthem performance at the championship game at the Dr Pepper ACC Championship Game, televised live by ESPN from Tampa.

"This is the first time that the ACC has partnered with a Country artist," said Michael Kelly, Associate Commissioner for Football Operations, ACC. "We looked at a lot of different songs, but when we found a willing partner in James Otto and his management, we zeroed in on making this work. The song has the right feel for college football, not dissimilar from what ESPN does week in and week out with Big & Rich's 'Comin' to Your City.'"

Particularly for emerging artists, exposure of this magnitude can compensate for the fact that these engagements, particularly if they only involve singing the national anthem, are often unpaid. "We've had budgets of \$60,000 to produce postgame shows — and we've had budgets of zero dollars," noted Fraser. "We put Lady Antebellum at the Coke Zero 400 NASCAR race at Daytona on the Fourth of July in 2008 for their first national television appearance. The race was carried live by TNT with a viewing audience of about 16 million. A few months later, Lady Antebellum broke through big time. We helped Jimmy Wayne launch his album (*Do You Believe Me Now*) through **MLB.com**. The site streamed videos from an acoustic in-studio performance, which helped introduce Jimmy's album to around 11.3 million daily viewers after we'd posted it in August 2008."

Veteran agent Rod Essig of Creative Artists

Agency advises considering several factors before booking a free sports show. Does the artist have a new single or album to promote? Will there be TV exposure? Is there a major Country station in the market? Can the act route through on the way to another gig or pick up a paying venue in the vicinity? And will the appearance help their career down the line?

"COUNTRY MUSIC IS
VERY POPULAR
HERE IN PITTSBURGH.
WE CAN CREATE A LOT
OF EXPOSURE FOR THE
ARTISTS WHO PLAY
HERE."

— John Wodarek,
Marketing Manager, Pittsburgh Steelers



DAVID NAIL, WITH DRUMMER ERICH WIGDAHL AND KEYBOARDIST ERIC KINNEY, PERFORMS ON COUNTRY MUSIC NIGHT AT CHICAGO'S U.S. CELLULAR FIELD IN 2009.

"Sometimes just hanging with the PDs (radio program directors) and being able to take them to the game to see you sing can build support for an artist's music," said Essig. "The PD remembers you later and says, 'Do I want to play this record? Sure — I hung out with them and they're cool.'"

"Early on, almost everything we did was without pay," said TelluRide manager Jeff Catton of InTune Entertainment. "We've driven through the night to sing for 60,000 fans at one of these events. We went in the hole. But we looked at it as an opportunity. We know we're going to be here for the long haul. We're building a career. And we decided if it means one visit at a time, one station at a time, one sporting event at a time, so be it. Sometimes it costs you money, but it gives you the opportunity to make a valuable impression on somebody that will help you in your career later on."

Then there's something else that's not so easily quantified: the thrill that artists get from singing before athletes they've long revered. Just ask Jason Michael Carroll. When he performed at a Chicago Cubs game, several of the players ended up coming to his show the next night. And after singing the national anthem at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo at Las Vegas in 2008, Carroll was delighted to later learn that just as he hit the "really, really high note," Ronnie Dunn leaned over to Kix Brooks backstage and said, "Now, that right there was a good job!"

BIG KENNY

SOWS SEEDS OF SOLO SUCCESS

by VERNELL HACKETT

Big Kenny Alphin is known almost as much for the causes he champions as the music he makes, as well as for spreading the gospels of “Love Everybody” and “Music with No Boundaries.” It should come as no surprise, then, that when he released his first solo Country album, *The Quiet Times of a Rock and Roll Farm Boy*, in November 2009, these themes would surface in his tunes.

“Getting to this point was an amazing journey for me,” said Big Kenny. “I’m finally able to speak to everyone in song and lyric about where I’ve been, what I’ve seen, where I come from, the great lessons I’ve learned and the great glory that music has brought to my life and this place where I am now. I feel I’ve been blessed with this music, that I can entertain tens of thousands or millions of people but that I can do good things with it too. We can all do that. Music is this great common denominator that allows us all to come together and express ourselves in a good way and be respected for it.”

Big Kenny was born and raised in Culpeper, Va., where he worked on the family farm and ran his own construction company. When the recession of the late 1980s set in, he was forced to cut his payroll from 75 employees to two — himself and one other man. Luckily, at the same time, someone noticed him singing along to the radio and informed him that people got paid to write songs in Nashville.

“I laid my hammer down and said, ‘You’ve got to be kidding. People get paid to write songs?’ And he said yeah,” Big Kenny remembered. “So for the next year I contemplated it. It was like, ‘What an idea. I’ve got to see this.’ I had never considered moving outside my state at that point in my life. I stayed in Culpeper long enough to make sure everything was running smoothly on the farm. Then I told my dad, ‘I think I want to go to Nashville and try the music business.’ I know that must have surprised him, but he said, ‘Son, go right ahead. I can still take care of this place.’ Now when he sees me, he always lets me know he’s proud of what he and I have done — and he also lets me know that at 80 he can still run that farm. He’s been a tremendous influence on me.”

In leaving Culpeper, Big Kenny brought with him the seeds of a musical style that would blossom fully on *The Quiet Times of a Rock and Roll Farm Boy*. “I grew up with AM radio, where they mixed Merle Haggard, Pink Floyd, George Jones, Queen, Bill Withers, Willie Nelson, The Beatles, Bob Marley, Kansas and Steve Miller Band alongside each other,” he explained.

This background primed Big Kenny to react immediately on arriving in Nashville in 1984. “I stayed in a hotel on West End for about a month,” he recalled. “I saw music the first night I came here and my jaw was on the floor. I couldn’t believe it. Nashville is such a great beacon of creativity, and I want everybody to know that so they can come here and be inspired as I was inspired and maybe they can go around the world and inspire others.”

That privilege came Big Kenny’s way through his writing credit on Jason Aldean’s “Hicktown,” Tim McGraw’s “Last Dollar (Fly Away),”

Gretchen Wilson’s “Here for the Party” and other successful songs. It was amplified onstage and in the studio through Big & Rich, his duo with John Rich. But their travels brought him face to face with the sorrows as well as the beauty of the people and countrysides they visited. Those impressions, tempered by the influences of his diverse musical heroes, paved his path toward *The Quiet Times of a Rock and Roll Farm Boy*. In fact, the album takes listeners on a vivid tour through Big Kenny’s imagination.

Consisting of 10 songs co-written by Big Kenny and two with his credit alone, it starts with the electrifying chant of the Blackfoot Confederacy that kicks off the opening track, “Wake Up,” written with Brad Arnold and Jon Nicholson, dances through a hymn to down-home cuisine with “Fried Corn and Chicken Bread (Be Back Home),” written with Adam Shoenfeld and Judson Spence, and closes with a good-vibe, solo-written sing-along called “Share the Love.”

“With this album, I feel like it is the first time I got to the place where I was going to do it no matter what,” he said. “This record is an expression of music I love. I wrote 150 songs, recorded 50 and then started honing them down into what I wanted to say in this one record. The songs come from a lot of places, so I let them keep coming. I knew I was finally

finished with it when everybody around me told me I was finished — ‘just put it out.’ I was like, ‘I want to cut a few more songs.’ I love the creative process, but I love performing, so when it got to the point where I wanted to get out and perform the songs, I knew they were right.”

Knowing how important it was to recruit a strong team to support his solo excursion, Big Kenny brought CAA (Creative Artists Agency) onboard as his booking agency, Bigger Picture Group for radio promotion, distribution, sales and marketing, Red Light Management to help direct his solo career and Wortman Works, which had also worked with Big & Rich, for publicity.

For each member of this team, a primary goal was to utilize the impressions Big Kenny had already made through Big & Rich while transitioning him toward a solo career. “We started early on, building Kenny’s Web presence with **BigKenny.TV**, a social networking site to build more direct connection with Big & Rich fans and to get them engaged in Kenny’s solo work,” said Bob Cahill, Partner, Bigger Picture Group. “We had the benefit of John (Rich) already having his solo album out (*Son of a Preacher Man*, on Big & Rich’s record label Warner Bros.) and being able to provide his perspective on things. Kenny is a different individual and has his own unique point of view. The thing that makes





them unique as a duo gives their solo work its special perspective as well."

Big & Rich toured this past summer, which not only put Big Kenny in front of the duo's fans but also gave him and Rich the opportunity to perform selections from their individual albums. "This reinforced them as a duo but gave them a viable vehicle to also show that they are unique individuals with their own messages and talents," Cahill said. "We did tap into existing e-mail lists that John and Kenny share access to. Warner Bros. has also been very supportive and helpful in moving the ball forward."

For Big Kenny and his colleagues, *The Quiet Times of a Rock and Roll Farm Boy* is a long-term and ongoing project, with horizons beyond the life of the singles released from it. "When we released the album, we expected the first single, 'Long After I'm Gone,' to be in the mid 20s on the chart, and that's not what most record labels would do," Cahill said. (Released in August, "Long After I'm Gone," written by Big Kenny, Marc Beeson and Richie Supa, debuted at No. 57 and peaked at No. 34.)

"Music is this great common denominator that allows us all to come together."

— Big Kenny

"We view the project as a whole and unusual piece of work," he continued. "While we hope for multiple hit singles, we think it's important to get the album out there early on. We didn't want to wait until it peaks in February. We think the album has a story to tell, and we want to give fans the opportunity to recognize that. So while we're very happy with where we are, we think it's important that we have an 18-to-24-month kind of perspective, and the industry can expect us to stick with it long-term so that the various messages the album contains get out there."

The album's most innovative marketing move may be the CD packaging. "Those who know Kenny know the causes that are important to him, and one of those is to leave the planet a better place than you found it," Cahill said. "In light of that, Kenny had the vision to do something different than what had been done before. A lot of people use recyclable materials in their package, but this package is compostable and plantable."

Twenty-seven varieties of seeds for some of the singer/songwriter's favorite wildflowers are embedded into the cardboard that contains his CD. "You can keep the sleeve or load the music into your iPod and throw the sleeve out in your garden or flower bed, and it will grow," Cahill said. "It is a good message to get out there, and we hope it will gain some attention so maybe other manufacturers of packaged goods will consider this kind of approach."

BigKenny.TV



JULIA BURTON

Here's a twist on a familiar story: Julia Burton was born in Nashville but ended up leaving to seek her fortunes far beyond its border. Enamored with singing Country songs as long as she can remember, she began competing in talent contests at 8 and developed her expressive contralto to the point of performing nationally as Miss West Virginia in the Miss America Pageant of 2005.

It wasn't all glamour on the way up. In addition to singing in her high school choir and at churches, fairs and festivals, Burton earned a degree in public relations at West Virginia University, punched a clock at Wal-Mart and even worked for the West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways. The allure of music eventually led her back to Nashville, where she began to develop her stage craft at Tootsies Orchid Lounge on Lower Broadway.

The fruits of her labor blossom throughout Burton's debut album on Emerald River Entertainment. Produced by Biff Watson, *Woman from the Country* showcases her ability to infuse her positive, upbeat energy into her covers of these 10 songs. Though she handles ballads with unusual sensitivity, she's especially strong when tackling swampy, down-home stomps, epitomized by the title track, written by Steve McEwan and Craig Wiseman and "Hillbilly Love Song," by Adrienne Folllese, Keith Folllese and Buffy Lawson. She also flaunts a playful humor in the mock-solemn intro to "Party Down," by P.R. Battle, Anthony Smith and Michael Garvin, and on her first single, "What a Woman Wants." Penned by Debra Bradshaw, Tamika Tyler and Willie Mack, this good-time wish-list anthem makes it clear that Burton deserves a share of the spotlight back home in Music City.

CDS IN YOUR STEREO "Creedence Clearwater Revival, George Strait, Dave Matthews Band, Shania, Elvis and Kid Rock." **BOOKS ON YOUR NIGHTSTAND** "My Bible and the last of a five-book series I am finishing by Karen Kingsbury." **TITLE OF YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY** "Hope Floats, which is also the title of one of my very favorite movies." **FAVORITE FOOD ON THE ROAD** "Peanut butter is my favorite food on and off the road." JuliaBurton.com

JOSH THOMPSON

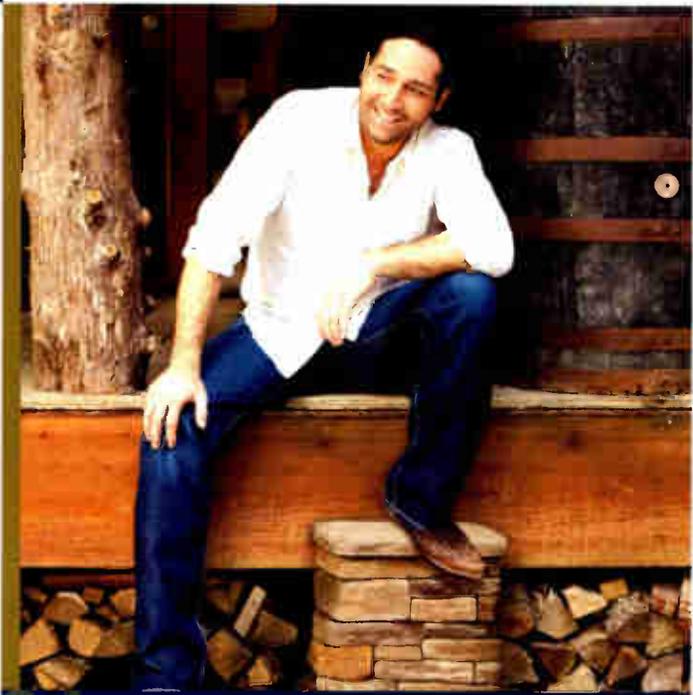
Josh Thompson's future seemed written in concrete — specifically, in his father's concrete business in Cedarburg, Wis., where he began working at 12. Years would pass before Thompson dared to dream about making music as a livelihood. In fact, he was 21 when he got his first guitar.

"I really just intended to play some of my favorite Merle Haggard songs around the campfire," he explained. "But I began writing about six months later. Then it just got into my blood and controlled my life."

By the time he got to Nashville in 2005, Thompson was nurturing a knack for capturing the nuances of life in a lyric and a tune. After landing a music publishing deal and making an initial impression by co-writing "Growing Up Is Getting Old," the title track of Jason Michael Carroll's latest album, with Jeremy Campbell, he built a reputation strong enough to earn a record deal with Columbia Nashville, which released a four-song, self-titled digital EP in November 2009.

On his album debut *Way Out Here*, set for release Feb. 23, Thompson unveils a double-threat talent as a writer and performer. Produced by Michael Knox, the album features 10 tracks, nine co-written by Thompson. The last, "Sinner," he wrote on his own as a profession of repentance tempered by a hint of stubborn pride. Articulated over an understated but dramatic backup, it rings with a quality of honesty that goes beyond craftsmanship.

Other sides of life emerge vividly on Thompson's first single, "Beer on the Table," which he wrote with Ken Johnson and Andi Zack. Using a technique familiar to Country composers, the song is built around a play on words that uncovers a new level of truth: Over a stomping, dance-floor beat prickled by bits of banjo, Thompson runs down his working-man credo, which adds up to "workin' hard all week puts the beer on the table." And you know from the grin in his voice that this artist writes and sings from first-hand experience.



DREAM DUET PARTNER "Lee Ann Womack or Norah Jones." **CD IN YOUR STEREO** "Satisfied by Ashley Monroe." **FAVORITE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION** "My Jeep." **FIRST GIG** "A bar in Marinette, Wis. It was horrible ... long story!" **SOMETHING WE'D NEVER GUESS ABOUT YOU** "I love cantaloupe." JoshThompsonOfficial.com

EASTON CORBIN

Easton Corbin looks back warmly at Gilchrist County, Fla., where he spent his boyhood fishing in the Suwannee River, participating in FFA and 4-H activities and aspiring to a career in Country Music. As a child, he nurtured that dream through hours spent watching "Hee Haw" and "The Grand Ole Opry" with his grandparents and playing vintage Country albums he discovered there while exploring the collections his father and aunt had assembled in their early years. By his late teens, he had developed his guitar chops through lessons with former Nashville session player Pee Wee Melton and was opening for national acts as they passed through his area.

2006 was a milestone year, as Corbin graduated from the College of Agriculture at the University of Florida and, five weeks after marrying his sweetheart Brinn, moved with her to Nashville. Both found day jobs but Corbin also used his contacts to set up an audition with Joe Fisher, Senior Director of A&R, Universal Music Group Nashville. That led quickly to a recording contract, an introduction to producer Carson Chamberlain and work on his self-titled debut album, set for release March 2 on Mercury Nashville.

On these 11 tracks, four of them co-written by Corbin, the feeling is deep Country, from the twang of his guitar to the raw appeal of his vocals. His writing draws from that same well; when he baits his lady's hook on "The Way Love Looks," which he penned with Chamberlain and Mark D. Sanders, you know it's a sign of his affection. But the message rings clearest in his first single: Written by Rory Feek, Don Poythress and Wynn Varble, "A Little More Country Than That" combines an easy-going beat with a melody woven around a catchy motif that lends itself to a litany of images both rustic and romantic. Add that to Corbin's relaxed way with a tune and you've got more than a good song — you've got a vivid intro to this promising artist.



CDS IN YOUR STEREO "Keith Whitley and Merle Haggard." **DREAM DUET PARTNER** "Merle Haggard." **GREATEST PERFORMANCE TO DATE** "The Suwannee River Jam. It was just me and my guitar in front of thousands of people. It was an awesome feeling." **JOB IF NOT AN ARTIST** "I would probably be doing something in the agricultural sector." **WHAT YOU HOPE PEOPLE WILL SAY ABOUT YOU 50 YEARS FROM NOW** "That I was an artist that recorded music that was pure and timeless for all ages."

EastonCorbin.com

MICHELLE TURLEY

Produced by C.F. Turley and released on Victorio Records in October, *Dance With Me Tonight* establishes Michelle Turley's Country cred. There's a boot-scoot, honky-tonk vibe on the up-tempo tunes while her ballads, as well as the mournful waltz "I Can't Cry," recall something of Tammy Wynette's wounded eloquence or, on the buoyant "Now I Know," the confectionary appeal of Olivia Newton-John. Sometimes her references are nearly literal, as in the first line of each chorus on "I Can't Help Lovin' You," not to mention the quotes in the fiddle breakdown alluded to in the title "Caroline (in Orange Blossoms)."

Yet all of these 14 tracks are new, and each was written by a Turley — seven by Michelle alone, three with one or the other of her brothers, C.F. and Kelly, and the rest by C.F. And though she's grounded in traditional Country, Michelle has traveled a circuitous route from the family ranch in Deming, N.M., through their later home in Phoenix and into a more glamorous world as a Ford Agency model for Armani, Donna Karan, Valentino and Versace, among other clients.

Obviously, years spent closer to the land rather than on the runway left a more lasting musical impression. She inherited a love for music from her mother, a singer and piano teacher, and from her father, who fronted a local band called the Playboys. That's apparent throughout *Dance With Me Tonight*, with its strong Country flavor evident from the first notes of her debut single, C.F.'s "Hard Times." A catchy vocal hook cycles through the verses, takes a high-impact break at the top of the chorus and then keeps rocking all the way to a climactic final chord. The lyric warns that bad luck may lead to "living in a tent" and munching "road kill" for supper, but thanks to this spirited debut Turley will surely see brighter times ahead.



SONG YOU'D LOVE TO COVER "I Walk the Line." **SONG YOU WISH YOU'D WRITTEN** "Stand By Your Man," written by Tammy Wynette and Billy Sherrill." **DREAM DUET PARTNERS** "Darius Rucker or Stevie Nicks." **GREATEST PERFORMANCE TO DATE** "My first piano recital when I was 8. My piano teacher allowed me to play my own compositions — six songs. All the other kids performed maybe two. I learned very quickly that performing is not about quantity but quality." **FIRST GIG** "We performed Heart's 'Barracuda' so loudly, the audience was covering their ears and many left the building."

MichelleTurley.net

Debut Spotlight compiled by BOB DOERSCHUK

The magic letter was "P" in the two most recent additions to CMA's ongoing Industry InSite series of instructional Webisodes, each one posted at **My.CMAworld.com** on the third Monday of the month and dedicated to demystifying a specific area of the music industry.

Episode 8, "Publicity — The Portal to the People," went online Dec. 21 with a look into the purpose and the practice of publicity. Whether working with new or established artists, the publicist needs to make sure that their unique qualities, personal as well as musical, stand out before the public. Equally important, the artist often needs to be taught how to communicate those traits through interviews and other contact with the media.

This is a potentially touchy area. While acknowledging that many reporters suspect that media training transforms artists into idealized images of themselves, Wes Vause, VP Media, Sony Music Nashville, added that it is actually about "helping the artist become comfortable on camera" with who they really are.

Jeff Walker, President, AristoMedia/Marco Promotions, cited more effective communication as a goal of media training. As an example, when his clients are asked when their next album comes out, he encourages them to reply not just with the date but in a complete sentence: "My new album comes out on Oct. 21." This makes it easier for "national television shows to utilize this footage in three or four different shows" as a sound bite, Walker said.

The necessity of reaching out toward the public forces artists to go beyond the old paradigm of print publications. "Times have changed a lot," said Dixie Owen, Senior Director, Media and Public Relations, Capitol Records Nashville. "A lot of artists are having to do a lot more work."

Owen therefore insists that her clients learn how to use Twitter to connect directly with fans. But this can be risky. "It's more important than ever to control your appearance," said Mary Hilliard Harrington, President, The Greenroom. "There is always someone with a digital camera phone, and that photo will be up and circulated within five seconds of being taken."

This makes the publicist's role more crucial than ever. "You're the go-between for the artist and media," Owen concluded. "Their dreams are in your hands."

Episode 9, "Getting to Know the PROs," targets a dream that's common to songwriters: getting paid for performances of their material. Posted on Jan. 18, this Webisode examines how the three major performing rights organizations — ASCAP, BMI and SESAC — collect approximately \$2 billion per year, about 89 percent of which goes to the writers.

Like publicists, PROs face hurdles and opportunities posed by new technology. Some, such as watermarks and fingerprints, allow more accurate tracking of performances. Traditional measurements continue to work well in established media. For example, cue sheets document uses of complete or fragments of works in television shows. And "blanket licenses" ensure compensation for music played in settings that range from restaurants to aerobics classes.

However, the Internet has emerged as a kind of wild frontier through which music streams freely. In this unstable medium, PROs issue short-term "experimental licenses," capped perhaps at six months with a blanket charge to be renegotiated depending on whether each Web site enjoys greater traffic, loses popularity or even goes offline. It's less than precise but, as Jody Williams, VP, Writer/Publisher Relations, BMI, insisted, the Internet is "the future of the music business. It's the future of the performing rights organizations."

The question that none on the panel could answer is the one posted most often by prospective members: Which PRO is right for me? That can be determined only by the songwriter, based above all on human connections with PRO staff. On this point, agreement was universal among Pat Collins, President and COO, SESAC, Williams, and Connie Bradley, Senior VP, and Vince Candilora, Senior VP, General Licensing, both with ASCAP.

CMA Industry InSite was created by CMA's Artist Relations Committee under the leadership of its Chairman, Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn, and Vice Chairman Jay DeMarcus of Rascal Flatts. Produced by the digital marketing firm Hi-Fi Fusion, it will examine radio charts, venues/talent buyers and merchandisers among other topics in months to come. CMA members are invited to submit questions to the experts appearing in each episode, with replies posted when received.

JIM "HUTCH" HUTCHINS, luthier, 72, died Jan. 25 in the Nashville area. Hired in 1963 to work at the original Gibson Guitar plant in Kalamazoo, Mich., Hutchins stayed through the company's relocation to Nashville in 1984 until his retirement in 2008. He played a critical role in design and construction of Gibson's Chet Atkins Country Gentleman guitar, which debuted in 1982 after extensive consultations between Hutchins and Country Music Hall of Fame member Atkins.

SHELDON KURLAND, session violinist and arranger, 81, died Jan. 6 in Nashville. Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., Kurland studied at The Juilliard School and came to Nashville to teach at the Peabody College at Vanderbilt University. He also began playing recording sessions and by the late '60s was in such high demand that he left Peabody to work full-time in the studios. As a musician, an arranger and leader of the Sheldon Kurland Strings, he helped establish the orchestral component of the "Countryopolitan" sound. His work can be heard on recordings by Eddy Arnold, Bob Dylan, Crystal Gayle, Waylon Jennings, George Jones, Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton, Elvis Presley, Conway Twitty, Neil Young and many other artists. He performed regularly as well on ABC's "The Johnny Cash Show." Some of the awards won by Kurland throughout his career are displayed on the walls of the Bluebird Café, founded by his daughter Amy.

KATE MCGARRIGLE, singer, 63, died Jan. 18 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, from cancer. Though recognized primarily as folk music artists, Kate and her sister Anna McGarrigle worked often with Country Music Hall of Fame member Emmylou Harris, who sang on their album *The McGarrigle Album* and welcomed them as guests on her 1995 album *Wrecking Ball*.

SHIRLEY COLLIE NELSON, singer, 78, died Jan. 27 in Missouri. Born in Chillicothe, Mo., she began performing at 4 and left home to sing over KMBC/Kansas City at 14. After appearing regularly in the late 1950s on "Ozark Jubilee," she released several singles in the early '60s, including "Willingly," written by Hank Cochran, a duet with Willie Nelson that peaked at No. 10 and marked his first appearance on the charts. Formerly married to deejay Biff Collie, she wedded Nelson in 1963. Following their divorce in 1971, she retired from music. Her memoir, *Scrapbooks in My Mind: Featuring Shirley and Willie Nelson and Many Others*, was published in 2009.

JAMES "MOOSE" SOWARDS, television director, 75, died Jan. 24 in Rose Bud, Ark. While living in Nashville, Sowards directed various local television programs for WSMV as well as "Nashville Now" on The Nashville Network, hosted by Country Music Hall of Fame member Ralph Emery.

MARY WALLACE, historian, 66, died Dec. 21 in Georgiana, Ala., from an accidental gunshot wound. Wallace dedicated her life to honoring the legacy of Hank Williams, as President of the Hank Williams International Society and Fan Club, a chief organizer of the annual Hank Williams Festival in Georgiana and a Board member of the Hank Williams Museum and Boyhood Home.

TERESA WILLIAMS, singer, 44, died Jan. 1 in Nashville. The daughter of rockabilly artist Billy Adams, Williams began traveling at 17 with her family after her father embraced Christianity and launched Billy Adams Ministries International. Her responsibilities ranged from supervising publicity to playing drums for Adams onstage and in the studio. In her mid 20s, Williams joined sisters Tina Maria and Janetta Darlene to form Mountain Harmony, who performed regularly at the Renfro Valley Barn Dance from 1990 through '92 and whose traditional Country vocals were heard on their album *Living on Love*. In 1997, they gave their farewell performance at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

In Memoriam compiled by **BOB DOERSCHUK**

Country Music
Hall of Fame Member

Carl Smith

1927-2010

when he accepted an offer to host his own morning show six times a week and appear every three weeks on the Grand Ole Opry over WSM/Nashville.

This exposure, enhanced by support from Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams and other well-positioned friends, ignited Smith's career. Beginning in 1951 on the Columbia Records roster, he would launch 21 consecutive singles into the Top 10. ("When You Feel Like You're in Love) Don't Just Stand There" and "Are You Teasing Me" both hit No. 1 in 1952; a third single, "Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way," lodged there for eight weeks that year. His peak years were in the early '50s, yet from then through 1973 at least one of Smith's singles each year would chart.

After leaving the Opry in 1956, Smith appeared frequently onstage and on television. As a co-founder

of the Cedarwood and Driftwood Publishing Companies, he involved himself in Music City's emerging business activities. He also joined Country Music royalty by marrying June Carter of the celebrated Carter Family in 1952; their daughter would achieve her own artistic renown as Carlene Carter. Following his divorce, Smith wedded Goldie Hill, who recorded for Decca Records and co-starred with him on a traveling concert extravaganza, the Philip Morris Country Music Show; they had three children and would remain together until her death in 2005.

Though he would return on occasion to record with smaller labels, Smith kept a low profile from the late '70s yet was far from forgotten. His champions in the industry were loyal and outspoken; Waylon Jennings even declined to appear at his Country Music Hall of Fame induction in 2001 to protest the fact that Smith had yet to be included as a member. That oversight was corrected in 2003, when Smith received a standing ovation on being welcomed into the Hall at the CMA Awards.

Smith, 82, died at his home in Franklin on Jan. 16.

by BOB DOERSCHUK

It is a tribute to Carl Smith, the "Country Gentleman," that though he spent the last 30 years of his life away from the music industry, preferring to devote himself to breeding cutting horses at his ranch in Franklin, Tenn., his imprint as an artist grew through his absence, culminating in his election to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2003 — about a quarter-century after he had hung up his hat and packed away his guitar.

To the many artists who had drawn inspiration from his catalog and performances, Smith exemplified the qualities that defined the foundation on which the format had evolved. Backed by his band, the Tunesmiths, often featuring steel guitar master

Johnny Sibert, Smith sang with a full-voiced conviction that lent itself comfortably and equally to heartbroken ballads ("This Orchid Means Goodbye"), honky-tonk grooves that opened the dance-floor path from Hank Williams to Johnny Cash ("Hey Joe!") and on toward rockabilly ("Go Boy Go"), energetic up-tempo numbers ("Loose Change") and even intimate spoken monologues ("I Just Dropped In to Say Goodbye").

All of these Smith tied together with a vocal style enriched by the roots of traditional Country, down even to an occasional yodeled filigree, and a charisma enhanced by his rugged good looks — an attribute that helped cast him into two Western films, "The Badge of Marshal Brennan" (1957) and "Buffalo Gun" (1961), and earn him a five-year run on Canadian television as host of "Carl Smith's Country Music Hall."

Born in Roy Acuff's hometown of Maynardville, Tenn., Smith was a regular performer on WROL/Knoxville, Tenn., before his military service in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Returning to civilian life, he lived and performed in Knoxville, Asheville, N.C., and Augusta, Ga., until 1950,



COUNTRY CRUISES WITH NASCAR

at Sprint Sound & Speed Presented by SunTrust

by TED DROZDOWSKI

If the roar of a cranked-up guitar and the growl of a revved-up engine sound like music to your ears, Sprint Sound & Speed Presented by SunTrust might be your idea of nirvana.

The two-day event in January marked its fifth annual Nashville run by bringing stars of Country Music and NASCAR together to raise money for the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and Victory Junction, a charity founded by Kyle and Pattie Petty that offers year-round camping experiences for children 6 through 16 who suffer chronic medical conditions or serious illnesses.

To date, Sound & Speed has raised approximately \$800,000 and drawn more than 40,000 fans. But this gathering serves another purpose: to celebrate the deep ties between the worlds of Country and NASCAR.

"The people that love Country Music and NASCAR are the same," observed Jason Michael Carroll backstage at the Municipal Auditorium, after sharing a Q&A session for fans with drivers Kyle Petty and Carl Edwards and the group Love And Theft. "It all boils down to this: The fans love and respect things that are real and have heart, and both of those apply to Country singers and racecar drivers. When you see somebody on the track, it's real. When you hear somebody tell a story in a Country song, it's real. That's why we're all one big family."

"People that work in the worlds of Country Music and racing value fan relationships and understand how important they are," added CMA Board President Steve Buchanan, Senior VP of Media and Entertainment, Gaylord Entertainment, and a member of the Sound & Speed Board as well. "But this isn't just an event for fans. The drivers and the artists who participate enjoy the opportunity. There is a mutual admiration that exists between the Country Music and racing communities. Many of the drivers love Country Music, and many of the musicians love racing. This is a unique opportunity for them to interact and build friendships."

"WHEN YOU SEE SOMEBODY ON THE TRACK, IT'S REAL. WHEN YOU HEAR SOMEBODY TELL A STORY IN A COUNTRY SONG, IT'S REAL. THAT'S WHY WE'RE ALL ONE BIG FAMILY."

— Jason Michael Carroll

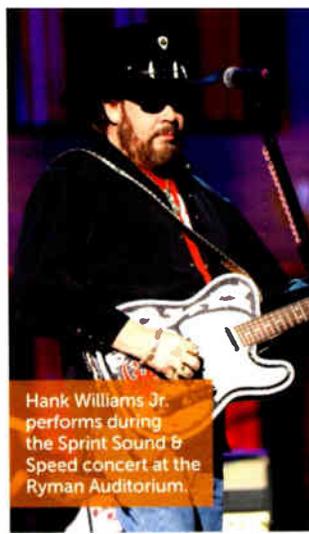
"I grew up on Country Music," said racing icon Kyle Petty, son of NASCAR legend Richard Petty. "I spent my childhood beating it up and down the highway with my father, on the way to races all around the country, listening to Johnny Cash, Floyd Cramer, Merle Haggard and Loretta Lynn on the 8-track. We'd come to Nashville to see Marty Robbins, who drove a racecar, and he'd bring us backstage at the Opry. They were heroes to me."

That union of interests fed a carnival atmosphere at the Auditorium. Fans lined up for autographs. A silent auction collected bids for memorabilia that included CDs signed by Hank Williams Jr. and Trisha Yearwood as well as framed pictures and model cars signed by veteran and up-and-coming drivers. A tire-changing station gave fans a chance to spin wheel lugs and replace rubber like pit-crew members. In the hall that ringed the circular Auditorium, Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s white-and-blue No. 88, David Reutimann's gleaming No. 00 and many other celebrated cars were available for inspection. And of course celebrities were easy to spot, including Carroll, Bucky Covington, members of Diamond Rio, Fast Ryde, Danny Gokey, Nathan Lee Jackson, Kate & Kacey, Danielle Peck, Brady Seals, Ashton Shepherd, Josh Turner, Hank Williams Jr., Holly Williams and Chris Young on the artist side, and Justin Allgaier, Aric Almirola, Clint Bowyer, Kyle Busch, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Denny Hamlin, Kasey Kahne, Brad Keselowski, Jamie McMurray, Reed Sorenson, Tony Stewart, David Stremme, Michael Waltrip and many others joining Petty among the drivers.

One highlight was the debut of the Sound & Speed concert as a Grand Ole Opry broadcast, with two shows on the night of Jan. 8 that brought the Country/NASCAR connection more tightly together than ever. They were intertwined as NASCAR stars Greg Biffle, Jamie McMurray and Waltrip joined Miss Sprint Cup Monica Palumbo to announce performers, including Young, Hank Williams Jr., Vince Gill and his fellow Country Music Hall of Fame member Bill Anderson, who sang his 1983 hit "Southern Fried," complete with its lyrical reference to Richard Petty.

But the most dramatic example of the intersection between Country and NASCAR came with Kyle Petty's Opry debut. After displaying solid vocal and acoustic guitar chops with his first song on the historic Ryman Auditorium stage, the champion driver remarked, "I've never played with a band before. It's cool!"

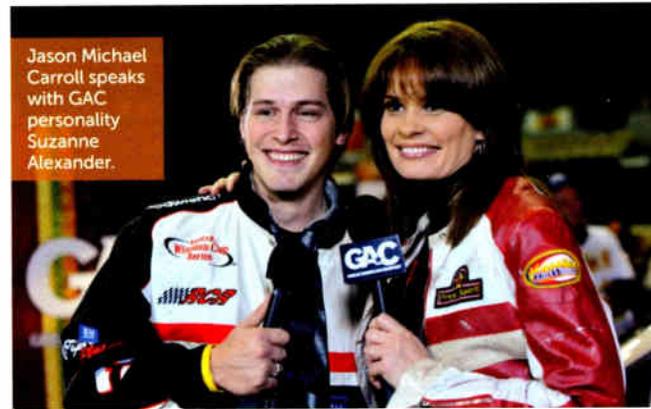
SoundandSpeed.org



Hank Williams Jr. performs during the Sprint Sound & Speed concert at the Ryman Auditorium.



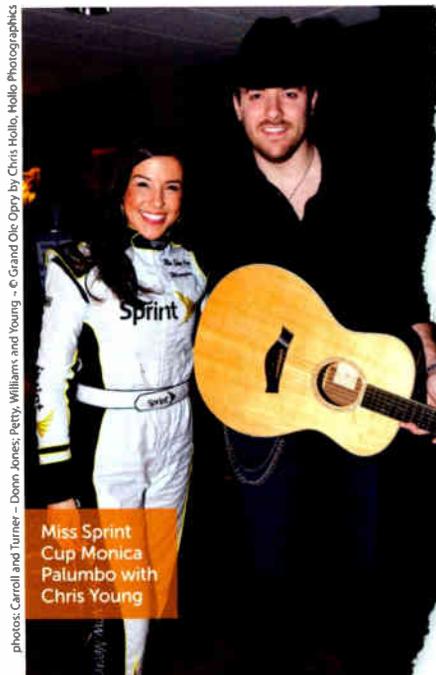
Kyle Petty makes his public performance debut on the Grand Ole Opry during Sprint Sound & Speed.



Jason Michael Carroll speaks with GAC personality Suzanne Alexander.



Josh Turner and Dale Earnhardt Jr. take questions from the audience.



Miss Sprint Cup Monica Palumbo with Chris Young

photos: Carroll and Turner - Donn Jones; Petty, Williams and Young - © Grand Ole Opry; Chris Hollis, Holo Photographics

FEB. 2

Dailey & Vincent / *Dailey & Vincent Sing The Statler Brothers / Cracker Barrel Old Country Store*
Larry the Cable Guy / *Tailgate Party* (DVD) / Warner Bros.
Gordie Tentrees / *Mercy of Sin* / DIY / Burnside
The Texas Sapphires / *As He Wanders* / Indie

FEB. 9

Brand New Strings / *No Strings Attached* / Rural Rhythms
Donna Hughes / *Hellos, Goodbyes and Butterflies* / Rounder
Angelah Johnson / *That's How We Do It!* (CD/DVD) / Warner Bros.
Reba McEntire / *CMT Invitation Only: Reba* (DVD) / The Valory Music Co.
Allison Moorer / *Crows* / Ryko
Michael Martin Murphey / *Beckaroo Blue Grass II* / Rural Rhythm
Suzi Ragsdale / *Best Regards / Less of the Same* (2-CD) / Cyde
Reckless Kelly / *Somewhere In Time* / YepRoc
Josh Turner / *Haywire* / MCA Nashville
various artists / *Valentine's Day* (soundtrack) / Big Machine
Watson Twins / *Talking to You, Talking to Me* / Vanguard
Daphne Willis / *What to Say* / Vanguard
Elizabeth Willis / *Love Comes Home* / Erian

FEB. 16

Kasey Anderson / *Nowhere Nights* / Red River
Backyard Tire Fire / *Good to Be* / Kelsey Street
John Jorgenson / *One Stolen Night and Istiqbal Gathering* / J2
Josh Abbott Band / *She's Like Texas* / Pretty Damn Tough/Thirty Tigers
Marshall Ford Swing Band / *It's About Dam Time* / Indie
Joe Pug / *Messenger* / Lightning Rod
Summertown Road / *Summertown Road* / Rounder
Jenny Whiteley / *Forgive or Forget* / Black Hen

FEB. 23

Sarah Buxton / *Sarah Buxton* / Lyric Street
Johnny Cash / *American VI: Ain't No Grave* / American Recordings/Lost Highway
Deadstring Brothers / *Sao Paulo* / Bloodshot
Don Rigsby & Midnight Call / *The Voice of God* / Rebel
George Jones / *The Great Lost Hits of George Jones* / Time Life
Lynn Miles / *Black Flowers Vol. 1, Vol. 2* / True North
Carrie Newcomer / *Before & After* / Rounder
Paul Williams and The Victory Trio / *Just a Little Closer Home* / Rebel
Guy Penrod / *Breathe Deep* / Servant/Gaither Music
Larry Stephenson / *20th Anniversary* / Pinecastle
Josh Thompson / *Way Out Here* / Columbia Nashville
Josh Williams / *Down Home* / Pinecastle

MARCH 2

Austin Collins and The Rainbirds / *Wrong Control* / Dollar Music
Linda Bandry / *Buenos Dias Country Music* / Indie
Easton Corbin / *Easton Corbin* / Mercury Nashville
Danny Gokey / *My Best Days* / 19 Recordings/RCA Nashville
Great American Taxi / *Reckless Habits* / Thirty Tigers
John Hiatt / *The Open Road* / New West
Marley's Ghost with Cowboy Jack Clement / *Ghost Town* / Sage Arts
Point of Grace / *No Changin' Us* / Word/Warner Bros.
Blake Shelton / *Hillbilly Bone* / Warner Bros.

MARCH 9

Gary Allan / *Get Off on the Pain* / MCA Nashville

MARCH 16

Old Man Luedecke / *My Hands Are On Fire and Other Love Songs* / Black Hen
Travis Rush / *Feel* / Mason
Devon Sproule / *Don't Hurry for Heaven* / Black Hen

MARCH 30

The Grascals / *The Famous Lefty Flynn's* / Rounder
Alan Jackson / *Freight Train* / Arista Nashville
The Living Sisters / *Love to Live* / Vanguard
Gretchen Wilson / *I Got Your Country Right Here* / Redneck

APRIL 6

Black Prairie / *Feast of the Hunter's Moon* / Sugar Hill
Delta Moon / *Hellbound Train* / Red Parlor
Jim Moray / *A Beginner's Guide* / Koch
Becky Schlegel / *Dandelion* / Lilly Ray/IGO

APRIL 13

Blackberry Smoke / *Blackberry Smoke* (expanded) / BamaJam
Noah Earle / *This Is the Jubilee* / MayApple
Lorraine Jordan and Carolina Road / *Carolina Hurricane* / Rural Rhythm
Jo Dee Messina / *Unmistakable* / Curb

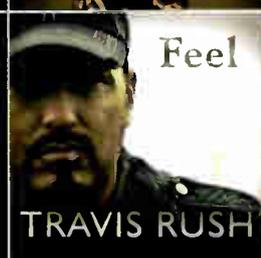
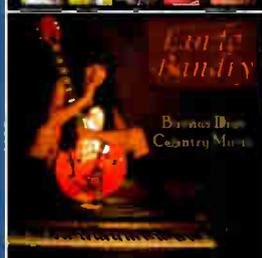
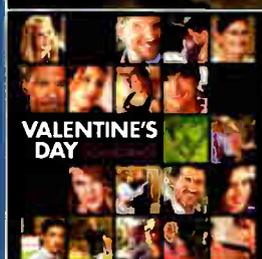
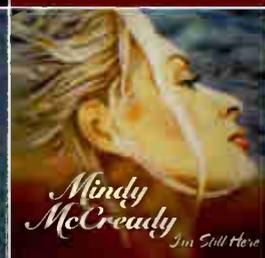
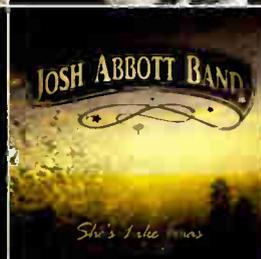
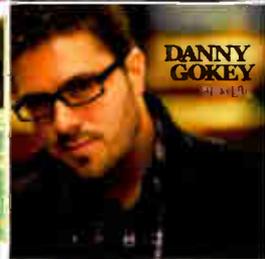
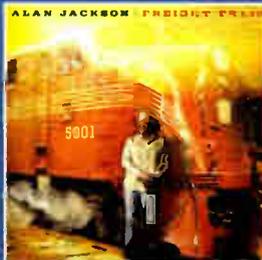
APRIL 20

Merle Haggard / *I Am What I Am, I Do What I Do* / Vanguard
Infamous Stringdusters / *Things That Fly* / Sugar Hill
Mindy McCready / *I'm Still Here* / Iconic
Michael Martin Murphey / *Cowboy Songs Vol. 4, Vol. 5* / Rural Rhythm
Willie Nelson / *Country Music* / Rounder

APRIL 27

Joe Diffie / *Home Coming: The Bluegrass Album* / Rounder
Matt Kennon / *Matt Kennon* / BamaJam
Lonestar / *Party Heard Around the World* / Saguaro Road
various artists / *Country Wedding Songs* / Time Life

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Brenda Lee

Lessons from the Archetype of Modern Country Stardom

by BILL FRISKICS-WARREN

Before "Star Search" gave us Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, before "American Idol" brought us Kelly Clarkson and Carrie Underwood and MySpace gave us Miley Cyrus and Taylor Swift — decades before any of these female teen idols was born — there was Brenda Lee.

As attested by "Brenda Lee: Dynamite, Presented by Great American Country Television Network," an exhibit at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum through June 13, none of these young megastars, despite their staggering success, has yet to eclipse the magnitude of the former Brenda Mae Tarpley.

The only woman inducted into both the Country Music and Rock and Roll Halls of Fame, and a member of the CMA Board for eight years, Lee was, according to rankings compiled by *Billboard* chart guru Joel Whitburn, the most commercially successful female singer of the 1960s. To date, she has sold more than 100 million records worldwide.

She also has the distinction of being the youngest headliner (12) on the Las Vegas Strip and of being a regular teenage guest on "The Ed Sullivan Show," Red Foley's "Ozark Jubilee" and other nationally syndicated television shows. Nicknamed "Little Miss Dynamite" for her diminutive stature, big voice and electrifying stage presence, she has performed internationally since the 1950s, including 30 separate trips to Japan and a 1962 tour of England with The Beatles as her opening act. In 2009, Lee, who still does about 20 shows a year, was feted with the Recording Academy's highest distinction, a Lifetime Achievement Award.

"It still staggers me," said Lee, standing before a glass case displaying a few of her many trophies as she recently walked through the Hall of Fame exhibit.

"When I look at these awards, it's like they're not mine," she elaborated as she graciously accommodated the steady stream of fans that approached her for an autograph. "It's like somebody did really good, but it's not like that person is me because this was not my goal. I didn't have an agenda to win a lot of awards or to make a lot of money or sell millions of records. I just wanted to sing and I've been blessed to do that. And then, along the way, I've been blessed to be recognized for it. But still, this is unbelievable. It absolutely is."

Coming from another performer, such comments might come off as disingenuous or, at the very least, pat. But not coming from Lee, who went into business to help her mother and her sister after her father died. The exhibit's most telling remembrance of this period of her career is a photo of Lee, not quite 10 years old, performing at the Biltmore Hotel in Atlanta shortly after her father's passing. Accompanied by a clarinetist and an accordion player, she's dressed in kiddie cowgirl boots and Western wear.

Two years later, the family moved from Augusta, Ga., to Springfield, Mo., so that they wouldn't have to make such a grueling commute for her to appear on the "Ozark Jubilee" each week. "Otherwise," she explained, "we had to take a Greyhound bus after school on Friday, ride all night, get there at some point on Saturday, do the show, get back on the bus, ride all night, get home Sunday and go back to school on Monday. That got old after a while."



Alluding to these less glamorous days during her induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, she acknowledged, "It's been a long way from the Georgia cotton fields to the Waldorf Astoria." Video footage of her speech, which lavished praise on her producer, the late Owen Bradley, and on the A-team of studio pros who played on her sessions, is included in the exhibit, along with clips from each stage of her career.

"Owen was wonderful," Lee recalled. "He knew his artists so well, not just professionally but personally. He knew what each was capable of and made sure that he got that out of them."

He also didn't limit his imagination, or that of his artists, to the artificial boundaries between Country, pop and rock 'n' roll. "Owen's theory was always 'if it's good, it's everything,'" Lee said. "So we would always try to choose the best song that we could. The A-team guys, Buddy Harman, Bobby Moore, Floyd Cramer, Boots Randolph, Ray Edenton, Harold Bradley, Grady Martin, Hank Garland — who am I forgetting? — and of course the Anita Kerr Singers, we'd all sit around and they'd say, 'Well, I think when she sings this line, we'll come in with this *scooby-dooby-do*.' And then Grady would say, 'I'll play this lick,' and Boots would say, 'How about I do this on the solo?' And that's how it came about."

The "it" of which Lee speaks includes some 250 songs recorded for Decca, a company that's now part of the Universal Music family, by the time she was 21. Some 30 of these were Top 40 pop hits; another 20 or so, most of them recorded in the '70s and '80s, reached the Country Top 40. The biggest, from "I'm Sorry" and "I Want to Be Wanted" to "Dum Dum" and "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," have long been regarded as classics.

Learning of the exhibit in Nashville, Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards sent Lee an autographed photo with a note saying that he listens to her growling 1959 hit, "Sweet Nothin'," on his iPod before every show he plays. Elton John, who has said that he wrote his 1972 smash "Crocodile Rock" with Lee in mind, sent her a blinged-out pair of sunglasses.

These and other celebrity connections pop up throughout the exhibit, including a photo of Lee with the Queen of England and video footage of her cutting up with Bob Hope on one of his TV specials. But maybe most inspirational, amid all her accolades, are the items that testify to how steadfastly Lee has balanced family and show business over the course of her nearly 60-year career.

"We wanted to tell the story of this phenomenal family, of Brenda's incredible focus as a mother and a wife and, now, a grandmother," explained the exhibit's curator, Carolyn Tate, VP of Museum Services, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. "She works around her grandkids' schedule every day. It's amazing, and she's been doing that sort of thing from the beginning."

She has also been married to the same man, Ronnie Shacklett, for the better part of five decades. More than just her childhood sweetheart, Shacklett has guided Lee's career since the death of Dub Albritten, who managed her during her formative years. He even made a note on the back of their marriage license, which also appears in the exhibit, that his brand new bride had a 3 PM rehearsal that day for her May 12, 1963,

appearance on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

"I'm like, 'Wow, Ronnie, how romantic,'" Lee recalled, laughing.

Her personal and professional accomplishments are a matter of record, as is her position in history as something of a prototype for contemporary female teenage idols. Still, Lee admitted, "I'm not sure that I could make it starting out today. Back when I was starting out, the main ingredient was talent, but today it's the complete package. It's the whole look, the whole image, the whole demeanor, the whole attitude. You're a product. You've passed the line of being unique."

That said, Lee does follow and genuinely enjoy many of the young stars of today. For those who are now following the path she blazed as a very young phenomenon, her advice is straightforward: "Commit yourself wholeheartedly to your dream and be prepared to believe totally in yourself, even when no one else believes in you. Sometimes it can be a very long haul with a lot of heartbreak before you see any form of success with your music. I often have young artists come to me and say, 'Well, I'm going to give it a few years and if things don't work out, I'll go back to whatever I was doing before.' I think to be successful in this business, you have to block out that there was a 'before.'"

"Meanwhile," she continued, "If you can be happy doing something else other than having a career in music, do it. Music careers are not for the faint of heart or the easily discouraged or for those who can easily resort to a Plan B. Music can be a very tough vocation. It's a career for those who could never be happy doing



"I didn't have an agenda to win a lot of awards or to make a lot of money or sell millions of records. I just wanted to sing."

— Brenda Lee

anything else."

As for today's young stars, Lee singles out Miranda Lambert and Taylor Swift among other favorites. "They're real people singing about real things," she said. "That's why people are responding to Taylor Swift. It may be teenagers. It may be young adults. I don't care. But they are responding in millions and millions and millions of ways. She's outselling everybody in the industry right now. It's phenomenal."

Swift fully reciprocates the respect Lee shows to her. "One of the things that I've been so thankful for this year is the support of my fellow artists, and Brenda Lee has been so wonderfully gracious toward me," she said. "She's not only a great artist, but also a great role model for other artists who start their careers at a young age."

As Lee sees it, she and Swift share one trait that has proven indispensable to their successes: "She is who she is. She's just being her. She doesn't have a record company saying, 'You have to cop an attitude because you're smiling too much. You need to be a little bit more sullen because that's what's happening right now.'"

"I had a record company one time tell me, 'Don't smile. You smile too much.' I said, 'Are you joking? That's me. That's what I do,' concluded Lee — with, of course, a smile.

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WEDNESDAY, FEB. 24 – FRIDAY, FEB. 26

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MARCH

TUESDAY, MARCH 9 – THURSDAY, MARCH 11

CMA Board of Directors Meetings | Washington, D.C.

THURSDAY, MARCH 25

CMA Songwriters Series | Joe's Pub | New York City | 6:30 and 9 PM | Jim Beavers, Dierks Bentley, Bob DiPiero and David Lee Murphy | JoesPub.com

MONDAY, MARCH 29

CMA Broadcast Awards submissions accepted at Broadcast.CMAawards.com

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JUNE

THURSDAY, JUNE 10 – SUNDAY, JUNE 13

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