

CMA Close Up

2010 | VOLUME 4



RASCAL FLATTS

FULL SPEED DOWN LIFE'S HIGHWAY

CMA AWARDS ONLINE VOTING
SECOND BALLOT AUG. 10 - AUG. 23
FINAL BALLOT OCT. 15 - NOV. 2

CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL
SERVING FANS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY

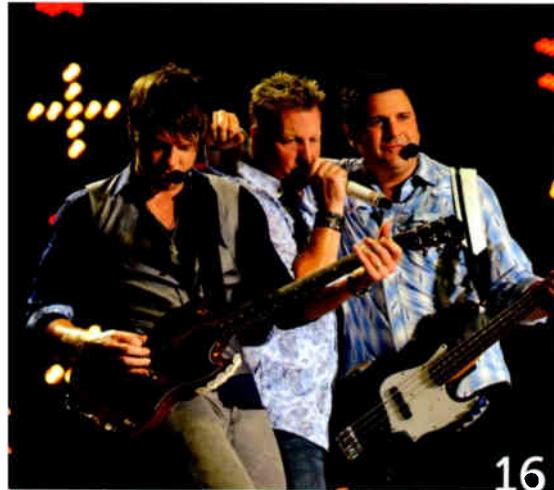
DIERKS BENTLEY
The Country Bluegrass Connection

myspace KARAOKE
Engaging Fans Through Song

JAMES OTTO
Goes for the Soul

VINCE GILL
Swings with The Time Jumpers

"CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL: COUNTRY'S NIGHT TO ROCK" WEDNESDAY SEPT. 1 8/7c ABC



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YOUR VOTE COUNTS FOR THE CMA AWARDS!

In the Country Music world, no honors compare to those bestowed through the CMA Awards. From its inception in 1967, this annual event has paid tribute to the foremost artists and industry achievements of the year, as determined by the votes of those most equipped to extend this recognition: the industry leaders whose own accomplishments have earned them membership in CMA.

CMA membership does come with a key responsibility, which is to maintain the integrity and distinction of the Awards by casting your vote. The qualifications essential for acceptance into the CMA community make it all the more important to make your voice heard. It takes just a few minutes to give these deserving artists, albums, musicians, producers, singles, songs, songwriters and video directors a special place in Country Music history. You'd be surprised how close the voting is sometimes with winners having won by less than five votes! And in a tie, only one vote can make a difference! Please make YOUR CHOICE today and let YOUR VOTE make the difference.

CMA AWARDS CALENDAR**Monday, Aug. 9**

CMA membership renewal payment due at CMA to vote on second and final CMA Awards online ballots.

Tuesday, Aug. 10

Second CMA Awards online ballot notice e-mailed to eligible CMA voting members.

Thursday, Aug. 19

CMA Awards tickets on sale to eligible CMA Individual Sterling and Organizational Members at My.CMAworld.com.

Monday, Aug. 23

Second CMA Awards online ballot voting closes at 5 PM/CT.

Wednesday, Sept. 1

"The 44th Annual CMA Awards" Nominees Announcement on ABC's "Good Morning America"

Friday, Oct. 15

Final CMA Awards online ballot notice e-mailed to eligible CMA voting members.

Tuesday, Nov. 2

Final CMA Awards online ballot voting closes at 5 PM/CT.

Wednesday, Nov. 10

"The 44th Annual CMA Awards" broadcast live 7–10 PM/CT on ABC from Nashville's Bridgestone Arena.

**2010 CMA AWARDS ELIGIBILITY PERIOD**

July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

VISIT CMAEMAILSERVICE.COM FOR CMA AWARDS E-MAIL SERVICE INFORMATION

Educate CMA voting members about CMA Awards nominees and nominated product through CMA Awards E-mail Service. This opportunity to send text or HTML e-mails to voters is available to all nominees, but those who are CMA members may take advantage of discounted rates.

CMA AWARDS CATEGORIES

ENTERTAINER

FEMALE VOCALIST

MALE VOCALIST

VOCAL DUO

VOCAL GROUP

NEW ARTIST

ALBUM

SONG

SINGLE

MUSIC VIDEO

MUSICAL EVENT

MUSICIAN

2010 CMA AWARDS ONLINE VOTING

Second Ballot

AUG. 10 – AUG. 23

Third/Final Ballot

OCT. 15 – NOV. 2

CMAawards.com

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PLEASE RECYCLE
THIS MAGAZINE



CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL

New Standards in Service to Fans, Schools and Community



Back in 1972, few of the 5,000 fans assembled for what was then known as Fan Fair could have dreamed where this event would one day lead. From that debut in Nashville's Municipal Auditorium, CMA Music Festival has exploded into an epic annual celebration of Country Music and, equally, those who love, support, listen to and live for it.

In recent years, the importance of the four-day event magnified with the commitment in 2006 to donate half of each Festival's net proceeds to funding music education in Metro Nashville Public Schools through CMA's "Keep the Music Playing" program, through a partnership with the Nashville Alliance for Public Education. This gesture affirmed that CMA, and the artists participating in each Festival free of charge, were determined to spread the benefits of making music to each emerging generation.

But what makes the 2010 Festival especially memorable is the decision to address more challenges. As Nashville struggled to overcome the effects of disastrous flooding in early May, CMA pledged the remaining 50 percent of this year's Festival net proceeds to The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee for those recovery efforts.

It is fitting that CMA take these actions — fitting because of the music itself, with its veneration of families and friends weathering hardships and joys of life together. It also reflects the essence of CMA, in which industry leaders join to enhance the success of their format. And, again, it goes back to the fans, whose values are the engine that drives Country Music.

All of these factors added up to turn the 2010 Festival into a unique milestone. The numbers outline the essence of the story.

- For the first time in Festival history, all four nightly concerts at LP Field were sold out, with average attendance topping 49,000 each night — a 16.7 percent increase over 2009.
- Attendance at Greased Lightning Fan Fair Hall, home to autograph and photo opportunities, interactive displays and exhibits, giveaways, free samples and more, was 55,385, a 4.25 percent increase over the previous high of 53,000 in 2009.
- Record attendance was achieved in all of the Festival's free areas, with shows at Riverfront Park Daytime Stage drawing 6.4 percent more attendees than in 2009.
- In total, around 65,000 visitors flocked to the Festival each day, up from 56,000 in 2009.
- The Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau (NCVB) confirms a likely increase in visitor spending over the \$22 million recorded by local businesses during the Festival in 2009 (Final figures will be released later in 2010.)
- Festival sponsors and exhibitors enjoyed significant connections with attendees, with more than 700,000 combined activation and consumer engagements through product sampling, dedicated registrations and brand impressions.
- Several sponsors gave additionally to flood relief efforts by The Community Foundation, with ABC and SOAPNet contributing \$50,000, Coca-Cola also giving \$50,000, Manwich donating \$10,000 and Chevrolet donating \$10 for every consumer test drive undertaken at the Festival and \$25 for industry test drives leading up to the Festival.
- Records were set in sales of official Festival merchandise, rising by more than 10 percent over totals for 2009.
- Stats rocketed upwards in terms of online engagement at CMAsfest.com, with 4,500 visitors downloading a new Festival iPhone app, 7,000 creating their own custom schedules of Festival events, 34,900 subscriptions added to CMA, Chevy, GAC and Jason Aldean mobiles and 54,000 messages texted for display on jumbo screens at LP Field shows.
- In its fourth year, the CMA Close Up Award of Merit program ramped up Festival coverage by student journalist participants through real-time blogs posted on CMAsfest.com.
- The world watched the Festival as an affirmation of recovery as much as the pinnacle annual event for Country Music. More than 700 journalists from 200 outlets were credentialed to cover the festivities, including 61 international outlets representing 13 countries.

In other words, whether measured by hard figures or the more ephemeral airs of celebration, optimism and community, this year's Festival already claims a distinctive place in CMA history.

"After all we have been through, and all the hard work everyone contributed to getting the venues and businesses ready for our fans, this is a huge win for everyone who cares about Music City," stated CMA Board Chairman Steve Moore. "This community needed a big win and we got it."



MIRANDA LAMBERT AND BLAKE SHELTON



MARTINA McBRIDE



ALAN JACKSON



KEITH URBAN



KELLIE PICKLER



BRAD PAISLEY



TIM McGRAW



TRACE ADKINS



DARIUS RUCKER



NIGHTLY CONCERT AT LP FIELD



LADY ANTEBELLUM



ZAC BROWN BAND WITH JOEY + RORY

Star-Filled Nights at LP Field

All four days at the Festival led to the unforgettable spectacles that unfolded nightly at LP Field. Many of the most celebrated artists of our time treated fans to thrilling performances, from the opening notes through exciting late sets illuminated by fireworks. There were literally too many highlights to mention among the 37 acts that graced the giant stage, including surprise appearances by Joey + Rory with Zac Brown Band, Jason Aldean with Carrie Underwood, and both Trace Adkins and Miranda Lambert with Blake Shelton. There were many other memorable moments as well, ranging from a rocking a cappella performance of "Elvira" by The Oak Ridge Boys following their rendition of the national anthem on Thursday night, the presentation of the Stars and Stripes by the U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Station Nashville Color Guard and nightly flyovers provided by the VMFA 251 Thunderbolts from the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station in Beaufort, S.C., to a standup comedy set by Paul Harris, lead singer of The Cleverlys.



RASCAL FLATTS



CARRIE UNDERWOOD AND JASON ALDEAN



REBA McENTIRE

Premiere Radio Networks Broadcast Festival Excitement

CMA's official radio partner, Premiere Radio Networks, brought overnight syndicated radio program "After MidNite with Blair Garner" and local on-air talent from top-rated stations from 18 national markets to Nashville to broadcast live interviews for their listeners, with 54 artists participating over three days.



THE BAND PERRY



RORY MARTIN AND JOEY FEEK OF
JOEY + RORY

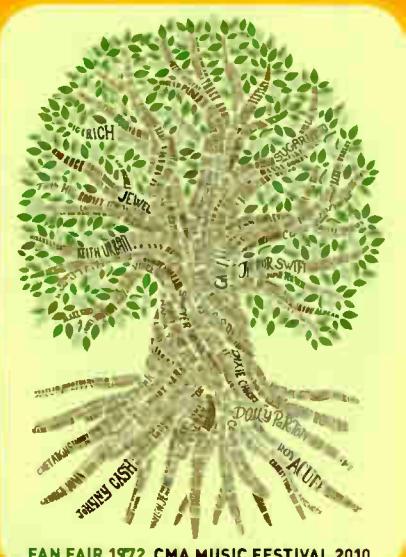


DARIUS RUCKER WITH MIKE WHELESS
AND MARTY YOUNG
OF WQDR/RALEIGH, N.C.



CMAfest.com Brings Online Fans into the Action

New features filled the official CMA Music Festival Web site, including a program designed for attendees to custom-design their own Festival schedules and a section celebrating Festival history and heritage.



FAN FAIR 1972 CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL 2010

CMA Unveils Music Festival Poster

For the first time in Festival history, attendees were invited to take an official Festival poster with them as a special FREE souvenir. Designed as a family tree, it traces the lineage of the Festival, with names of some of the artists who have appeared in the past. Created by CMA and designed by Alex Pearson of Familytree Design + Illustration, it includes more than 200 names, nearly 40 of them drawn by hand.

"CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock" airs Sept. 1 on ABC

The Festival was filmed for a three-hour TV special "CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock," hosted by Tim McGraw and set to broadcast on Wednesday, Sept. 1 on ABC. Robert Deaton is the Executive Producer and Gary Halvorson is the Director. The special, featuring stadium concerts and intimate club performances with behind-the-scenes access to the artists, will be broadcast in 720 P, ABC's selected HDTV format, with 5.1 channel surround sound.



The Party Starts at the Kick-Off Parade and Block Party

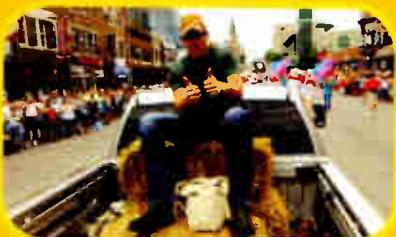
Approximately 14,000 onlookers cheered as Country luminaries, celebrities, marching bands and other notables, led by Grand Marshall Brenda Lee, participated in the Kick-Off Parade on Wednesday. The crowd followed the procession to the Chevy Music Stage on Bridgestone Arena Plaza for the free Block Party where David Nail, Jerrod Niemann, Joe Nichols and Chuck Wicks performed before a severe thunderstorm cancelled the activities and prevented Randy Houser from performing.



DAVID NAIL



PAM TILLIS



RODNEY ATKINS



JERROD NIEMANN



CHUCK WICKS



BRENDA LEE

The Country Network Presents the CMA Skype Lounge

The Country Network Presents the CMA Skype Lounge debuted in the Greased Lightning Fan Fair Hall, with up to 100 fans able to interact directly online and in real-time via Skype. Artists participating included Carter's Chord, Bucky Covington, Buddy Jewell, Love And Theft, Justin Moore, Jimmy Wayne and David Nail, shown taking a question from a fan, with journalist Stephanie Langston emceeing.



CMA Honors The Judds

During a press conference in the Nashville Convention Center, CMA Board Chairman Steve Moore presents Wynonna and Naomi Judd with a plaque and photo display to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the duo's debut.



Durango Acoustic Corner Goes Live on WSM-AM/Nashville

The Durango Acoustic Corner hosted 35 acts performing 19 hours of music in an intimate, air-conditioned setting. For the first time since this feature launched at the Festival in 2004, many of the sets aired live over WSM-AM/Nashville, with radio hosts also conducting live artist interviews on the air.



JIM LAUDERDALE



LYNN ANDERSON

Jo Dee Messina Launches St. Jude Music Fest Road Race

More than \$27,000 had already been raised when the runners took to the streets in the St. Jude Music Fest Road Race. Debuting as a Festival event, this family-friendly fundraiser is dedicated to further research at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital against cancer and other catastrophic diseases. Winners included Team Messina, with the artist herself wearing No. 892, which led all other teams by raising \$5,400 in backing. George Towett, 26, of Atlanta, won in the Overall Male category and Melissa Begin, 34, of Nashville, won in Overall Female rankings.





RIVERFRONT PARK DAYTIME STAGE

Rollin' on the Riverfront Park Daytime Stage

Longer sets, Cumberland breezes, souvenirs, refreshments and the new Macanudo Cigar Lounge and People Country Cabana were among the free attractions that drew large crowds daily to the Riverfront Park Daytime Stage, where 45 acts performed a total of nearly 30 hours of music. The Judds got the Festival off to an energetic start Thursday morning during the kick-off concert where fans were waiting before dawn to see the powerhouse mother/daughter duo.



BUCKY COVINGTON



JACK INGRAM



PATTY LOVELESS



CRAIG MORGAN



JAKE OWEN



THE JUDDS

Stars Connect with Fans in the Greased Lightning Fan Fair Hall

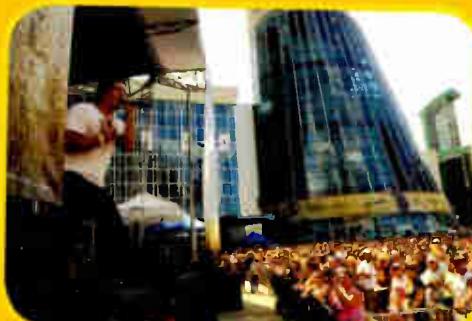
Festival attendees filled the Greased Lightning Fan Fair Hall from its fabled opening rush to closing time, with the line for admission forming on the street outside at 7 PM on Tuesday. A total of 253 artists and celebrities made appearances. After a 10-year absence, Tim McGraw returned with a bang, signing a record 3,000 times in two hours. Other highlights included Rascal Flatts performing a two-song acoustic set, The Judds making their first autograph-signing appearance in a decade and Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn showing up unannounced for a three-hour meet-and-greet session.



TIM McGRAW



RASCAL FLATTS



JASON MICHAEL CARROLL



FANS AT BRIDGESTONE ARENA TEST-DRIVE CHEVY VEHICLES.



EMILY WEST



STEVE AZAR



BO BICE

Chevy Music Stage Electrifies Bridgestone Arena Plaza

Forty acts from dynamic up-and-coming performers and established stars to a special "Classic Country Show" featuring an array of Country Music legends, filled more than 26 hours with entertainment.

International Stars Open Festival Week

At the CMA Global Artist Party on Monday night and the AristoMedia Global Showcase on Tuesday afternoon, artists from around the world welcomed early Festival arrivals and local lovers of Country Music in two talent-packed programs.



PARTICIPANTS AT THE CMA GLOBAL ARTIST PARTY AT THE STAGE ON BROADWAY (L-R) CHIP HUFFMAN, CEO/CHAIRMAN, HUFFMAN & RICE; BRITT McKILLIP OF ONE MORE GIRL; CMA BOARD CHAIRMAN STEVE MOORE; CARLY MCKILLIP OF ONE MORE GIRL; CAMERON CLAYTON; ALEX J. ROBINSON; DAVID BRADLEY; EMCEE ADAM GREGORY; JEFF WALKER, PRESIDENT, ARISTOMEDIA GROUP; MARK MOFFATT, MUSICAL DIRECTOR; TIM MCKAY; JAYDEE BIXBY; SINEAD BURGESS; AND LUKE AUSTIN. (NOT PICTURED: CMA INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT BOBBI BOYCE)



KELLY SITTER AND AL DOELL OF JO HIKK; RITCH SPENCE, WILL STANLEY AND TOBY SCHWIETERING OF EMMA KING & THE HEARTSETS; ARLY KALSEN OF EUROPEAN HIGHWAYMEN; EMMA KING; OVE STOYLEN AND GUNNAR THOMAS OF EUROPEAN HIGHWAYMEN; RONNIE RAE RIVERS; EMCEES MARK O'SHEA AND JAY O'SHEA; ROBERT REYNOLDS, DIRECTOR, INDUSTRY RELATIONS, DIGITALRODEO.COM; CHIP HUFFMAN, HUFFMAN & RICE; AND MATT WATKINS, EVENT LOGISTICS COORDINATOR, ARISTOMEDIA GROUP; (BOTTOM) CMA INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT BOBBI BOYCE; JEFF WALKER, PRESIDENT, ARISTOMEDIA GROUP; IAN HARRISON OF EMMA KING & THE HEARTSETS; JESSIE FARRELL, TRAVIS COLLINS; AND JOE ROBINSON. (NOT PICTURED: STEVEN LEE OLSEN)



Music City Zone Offers Cool Views and Sounds

In addition to the 22 hours of music provided by 24 artists on the Music City Zone Stage, this laid-back oasis at Court House Square gave visitors a place to appreciate beautiful vistas, some locally based products and cooling diversions.



CHARLIE LOUVIN



RIDERS IN THE SKY WITH SAM & RUBY



MANDY BARNETT

Fans Follow Clues to the Fourth Annual Fan Social Presented by CMT

Beginning in May, Web-savvy fans began monitoring clues sent via Twitter and posted on [CMAfest.com](#) and [CMT.com](#) to track down the location of this exciting Festival staple. The trail led to The Wildhorse Saloon, where sleuths were treated to live music featuring Rodney Atkins, Laura Bell Bundy and Randy Houser among others, contests, a guitar giveaway and more.



CHRIS YOUNG



GRETCHEN WILSON



CHRIS JANSON

Merchandise Sales Set New Festival Records

Selling at more than 10 percent above totals for 2009, Festival merchandise included tank-tops and T-shirts among its most popular items, created by Music City Merchandise.

Sports Zone Hosts Dancing, Cooking, Picking and More

From cooking demonstrations to acoustic performances, autograph sessions with all-star athletes to a "Giddy On Up and Dance" lesson with Laura Bell Bundy, attractions were many and the action nonstop at the Sports Zone.



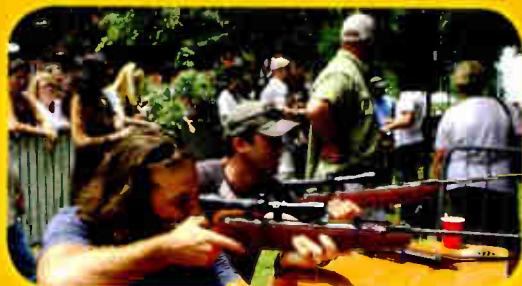
LAURA BELL BUNDY INVITES FANS TO "GIDDY ON UP."



CHEF JOHN "CHAPPY" CHAPMAN HOSTS "CHAP DAT! COUNTRY CREOLE COOKING SHOW," WITH CELEBRITY ASSISTANT DANIELLE PECK.

Athletes and Celebrities Compete in Sports Zone at Fort Nashboro

The Fort Nashboro area overlooking the Cumberland River adjacent to Riverfront Park hosted several athletic contests. In two celebrity events, Sam Brooker of the duo Sam & Ruby partnered with Bubba McPearson of Primos Hunting Calls to take first prize with 156.1 points in the *Outdoor Life* Celebrity Save-A-Stream Pro-Am event. Trent Tomlinson and Gerry Bethage, Fishing Editor, *Outdoor Life*, came in second with 120 points. The *Field & Stream* Celebrity Total Outdoorsman Challenge was won by Rhean Boyer of Carolina Rain with seven points, with Mark Wills finishing at second with nine points (winners receive lowest point scores). And by competing against 50 pre-qualified sports enthusiasts and winning the *Field & Stream* Total Outdoorsman Challenge Regional Qualifier with 28 points, Josh Marker of New Paris, Ohio, earned the right to compete in the upcoming National Championship in Springfield, Mo.



LUCAS HOGE AND TRENT WILLMON TAKE AIM IN THE AIR RIFLE SEGMENT.



COLIN KEARNS, SENIOR EDITOR, FIELD & STREAM; MARK WILLS; RHEAN BOYER; JASON BROWN; AND IAN ROHIN, ASSOCIATE MEDIA DIRECTOR, UNIVERSAL McCANN.



TRENT TOMLINSON VIES FOR FLY-CASTING HONORS IN THE FIELD & STREAM CELEBRITY TOTAL OUTDOORSMAN CHALLENGE.



MARTINA MCBRIDE HELPS RAISE \$102,289 – 29 PERCENT MORE THAN IN 2009 – AT THE 27TH ANNUAL YWCA CELEBRITY AUCTION TO HELP COMBAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.



NASHVILLE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS STUDENTS SAM HUNTER, ELI BISHOP, AUSTIN VALENTINE, EVAN BUNDY AND LUKE MUNDAY PERFORM IN TRIBUTE TO CMA'S KEEP THE MUSIC PLAYING PROGRAM.

Fun in the Sun for Everyone in the Fun Zone

Activities and exhibits in the Fun Zone ranged from autograph sessions to tasty food and drink samples — for dogs as well as humans — to a M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank, courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps.



FANS ENJOY MULTIPLE ATTRACTIONS IN THE FUN ZONE.



JAMIE O'NEAL CONGRATULATES KIMBERLIE HELTON OF HENDERSON, TENN., WINNER OF THE MANWICH OPEN MIC CONTEST.



OCEAN SPRAY INVITES VISITORS TO STEP RIGHT IN.

Citywide Ads Build Anticipation for Music Fest

Nashville got the word loud and clear about the Festival, as four billboards and 260 pole banners heralded the upcoming event. Travelers were notified too, thanks to a wall wrap ad at Nashville International Airport.

Family Zone Caters to Fans of All Ages

The name says it: Family Zone was again home base for parents and kids to make and share Festival memories. The schedule overflowed with activities, including celebrity storytelling from Random House Children's Books, special performances for kids, the YWCA Celebrity Auction with Martina McBride, the Mahindra Tractors Celebrity Bull Riding Challenge, autograph sessions and much more.



JOSH TURNER CONGRATULATES JULIE WILLIS, 7, AND HER BROTHER JEDI WILLIS, 10, WITH THEIR FAMILY, FOR WINNING THE JOSH TURNER DANCE CONTEST.



THE RONALD McDONALD MAGIC SHOW AMAZES AND ENTERTAINS.



WHITNEY DUNCAN TAKES HER TURN IN RANDOM HOUSE CHILDREN'S BOOKS CELEBRITY STORYTELLING.

DIVING DOGS BEAT THE HEAT AT K9S IN FLIGHT "ULTIMATE K9 SPORTS SHOW" PRESENTED BY WAGGIN' TRAIN DOG TREATS.



SUZANNE ALEXANDER, HOST OF "GAC NIGHTS" AND "ON THE STREETS" ON GAC AND PBR LEGEND TUFF HEDMAN CONGRATULATE MAHINDRA TRACTORS CELEBRITY BULL RIDING CHALLENGE WINNERS JAKE LITTLEFIELD AND JASON BROWN.



CMA Music Fest Coverage Spreads Worldwide

More than 700 journalists, photographers and television crew members representing more than 200 domestic and international media outlets from 11 countries, came to Nashville to report on this year's CMA Music Festival. Highlights included the first live coverage of the event by "CNN Headline News," hosted by Robin Meade, as well as the debut of "Daytime," syndicated from Tampa, Fla., to more than 100 markets across the United States. Broadcasters included Associated Press TV, FOX News Channel, "Good Morning America," MSN.com, People.com and more. Media on-site included ABC affiliates, The Associated Press, AOL.com/TheBoot, CMT, Country Weekly, FOX News Radio, GAC, People, Premiere Radio Networks, Reuters, TV Guide, UPI, US Weekly, USA Today and more.



"CNN HEADLINE NEWS" HOST ROBIN MEADE WITH DAVE HAYWOOD, HILLARY SCOTT AND CHARLES KELLEY OF LADY ANTEBELLUM.



Student Journalists and Photographers Cover Festival

The CMA Close Up Award Merit program entered its fourth year of providing opportunities for student journalists to sharpen their skills by filing reports and photos daily on the CMAfest.com blog. Participants included Lisa Hedin, Hillary Evans, Kirby Smith, Typhanee King, Tyl Bicknell, Lindsey Bynum, Jamie Goodsell and Jodee Hammond. All performed admirably, with Hammond, a graduate student in public relations from Kent State University, selected to receive the Award.



ABC Summer Block Party Fills Two Festive Days

On Friday and Saturday some of the brightest stars of ABC daytime programming signed autographs, answered fan questions and otherwise connected with Festival attendees at the ABC Summer Block Party on the Family Zone Stage.



"GENERAL HOSPITAL" CAST MEMBERS PERFORM AS THE BAND PORT CHUCK (L-R) SCOTT REEVES ("STEVEN WEBBER" AND MEMBER OF BLUE COUNTY), DAMIAN SPINELLI ("BRADFORD ANDERSON"), BRANDON BARASH ("JOHNNY ZACCHARA") AND STEVE BURTON ("JASON MORGAN").

Laura Wright ("CARLY CORINTHOS JACKS"), Steve Burton ("JASON MORGAN") and Kelly Monaco ("SAMANTHA MCCALL") FROM "GENERAL HOSPITAL"

ROSSIE MORREALE, HOST OF "DATING IN THE DARK," INTERVIEWS "EXTREME MAKEOVER: HOME EDITION" CAST MEMBERS JILLIAN HARRIS (FORMERLY FEATURED ON "THE BACHELORETTE") AND TRACY HUTSON.

Volunteers Empower CMA Music Festival to Give Where Giving Counts

Every CMA Music Festival owes much to volunteers who contribute their time and talent. This year however, their efforts proved critical in helping CMA extend the positive impact of the Festival.

Following the Nashville flood in early May, CMA resolved to donate half of its Festival net proceeds this year to The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee for flood relief while maintaining its commitment to give the additional 50 percent to music education in the Metro Nashville Public Schools through its Keep the Music Playing initiative.

Within a week of the disaster, CMA issued a call for volunteers. Whether recruited at the first-ever CMA Music Festival Volunteer Fair, held on May 15, or through other channels, more than 200 eventually made themselves available.

They ranged in age from just over 18 to their 60s. For many, this was their first contact with CMA Music Festival; others had offered their services as far back as when Fan Fair, as the Festival was formerly known, took place at the Nashville Fairgrounds. Recruits came from as far away as Michigan. More than 50 came from local public schools, most of them music teachers who drove "Press Express" and staff shuttles from 7 AM until 1 AM each day.

Work began on June 9, as about 75 volunteers staffed the Kick-Off Parade; each had been briefed on carrying inflatables, monitoring the route, escorting artists and more. Others manned information booths at Riverfront Park and Bridgestone Arena; three more opened at other Festival sites on Thursday, with a total of about 20 volunteers answering visitor questions and handing out Festival posters.

In the Greased Lightning Fan Fair Hall, Event Staff volunteers set up and maintained autograph lines, answered questions and interacted with exhibitors and artists, while Artist Escorts brought artists to and from booths safely and on time; both volunteer teams worked together during artist appearances.

At performance sites, other volunteers took notes so that reporters could attribute comments made onstage to the correct artist, made sure registered correspondents received their credentials, set up impromptu interviews and helped sponsors draw traffic to their booths. Throughout the Festival, Fun Team members also entertained attendees while distributing sponsor giveaway products.

At LP Field, volunteers distributed approximately 100,000 iTunes cards with 20 free downloads at a different gate each night. Another group oversaw the photo lines, keeping the flow steady and making sure only four-day ticketholders were admitted. Others plotted artists via golf carts to and from the stage, assisted reporters and even perched on top of the TV tower to make sure media crews could draw their feed from the images on the stage's jumbo screens.



FUN TEAM VOLUNTEER HEATHER HERRIMAN DISTRIBUTES iTUNES CARDS AND GREASED LIGHTNING GLOW NECKLACES AT LP FIELD.



BETSY WALKER, CMA SENIOR COORDINATOR OF MEMBERSHIP AND INDUSTRY RELATIONS, (LOWER LEFT) OVERSEES CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL VOLUNTEERS.

Thanks to their efforts, CMA was able to serve all of the key players successfully — fans, artists, media, sponsors and exhibitors — with expenses kept low enough to maximize the amount allotted for flood relief as well as music education. Their impact on those most in need of assistance could be overestimated.

CMA Music Festival is organized and produced by CMA. Premiere Radio Networks is the official radio broadcaster. Partners include American Airlines; Barnes & Noble; B cycle Playing Cards; Blue Bell Creameries; Citi Black; Chevrolet; Chevy: The Official Ride of Country Music; CMT; Combos Snacks; Dillard's; Dr Pepper; DRIVE4COPD; Durango Boots; Farm Boy & Farm Girl Brands; Field & Stream; GEICO; General Cigar Co., Inc.; Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee; Greased Lightning Cleaning Products; GAC; Jimm's Buffet's Margaritaville; Kraft Lunchables; Jack Daniel's; Mahindra USA, Inc.; Makers Mark; McDonald's; MidSouth Satellite/DISH Network; Ocean Spray; Pedigree Food for Dogs; PlayStation; People Count; Random House Children's Books; RFD-TV; Roper Apparel and Footwear; Sipada Designs; Southern Belle Glamour; Sprint; SunnyD; Super B; Taski D-Lite; Texas On Tour; The Country Network; TNT's "Nemesis Bear"; U.S. Marine Corp; U.S. Air Force; USDA Food Safety Mobile; Velveeta Shells and Cheese; Vortex Ju-Wiggin' Train Dog Treats; World Vision; and Wrangler.

CMA Music Festival wrap-up written by Bob Doerschuk; photo edit by Amanda Eckard. CMA Music Festival photos: Tyler Bicknel, Amanda Eckard, Daniel Green, Jim Hagans, Karen Hicks, Don Jones, Jennifer McVay, Theresa Montgomery, John Russell, Jamie Schramm and Alexa Sullivan. Premiere Radio Networks photos: Scott Hunter

COMMUNITY AND CELEBRATION: CMA PRESENTS THE STORY ON "CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL: COUNTRY'S NIGHT TO ROCK" ON ABC

by BOB DOERSCHUK

WITH ALL THE TECHNOLOGY AT HIS DISPOSAL, METICULOUS PREPARATIONS DATING BACK TO JANUARY AND EXPERTISE MARSHALED BY THE ROUGHLY 50 MEMBERS OF HIS CREW, FOR EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ROBERT DEATON EMOTION IS THE KEY TO DOCUMENTING THIS YEAR'S CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL.

All of the footage that ABC will unfurl 8-11 PM/ET on Wednesday, Sept. 1, in "CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock," was inspired by the fusion of audience and artists that happens at this annual event. This is why Deaton always looks for an opportunity to briefly leave his post in the video truck during the nightly concerts at LP Field and walk through the crowd.

"Normally I can't do that until we're on the last artist of the night and we've already got the song that we want," he said. "But when and if I can, I'll go out by the stage and watch the rest of the performance. It feels totally different than it does in the truck, and I want to be reminded of how awesome an experience it is to be out there."

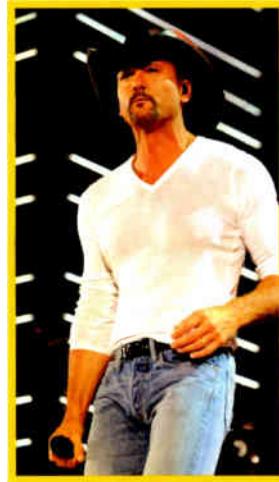
The goal of conveying that feeling to viewers took on a new dimension this year. Deaton understood that four months would separate the epic Nashville flood of early May and the ABC broadcast. Yet the story of recovery, unity and celebration would remain vital, which is why that theme surfaces right at the top of the show, with an opening that differs dramatically from those in previous Festival specials.

Without giving it away, Deaton noted, "I love that at the very end a woman is holding up a poster that says, 'There is no flood that's going to stop this party.' That's really the attitude of the musicians and the neighbors who gave back. That's why we ended up with that opening."

Immersion into the spirit of the Festival guided Deaton's approach. Working for the second consecutive year with a time slot expanded from two to three hours, he was able to feature several artists doing consecutive songs rather than cutting from one artist to another in a more constricted time frame. "There's more breathing room," he explained. "And it just feels better to me. It feels like what it is. It's CMA Music Festival."

To deepen that feeling, Deaton's crews went beyond the LP Field shows and into the heat of the action in Downtown Nashville. One spent a full day with Lady Antebellum, tracking activities that included an impulsive, unscheduled visit to the Greased Lightning Fan Fair Hall. There are "Nighttime Nashville" segments too, capturing two all-star performances before a jam-packed crowd at Fuel Bar & Nightclub. Also, "skits" feature artists riffing and ad libbing, often with sly humor. (Note to viewers: Despite what you'll see in one sketch, Brad Paisley actually does know who Carrie Underwood is.)

To put a final unique stamp on the package, Tim McGraw was brought onboard to debut as host. "If you can get Tim, you get him," Deaton explained. "It had been years since he played the Festival, so when I invited him to perform and he said yes, I got to thinking how cool it would be for him to host as



TIM McGRAW HOSTS
"CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL:
COUNTRY'S NIGHT TO ROCK,"
WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 1 8/7c ON ABC.

well. He turned out to be incredibly quick and fast and completely awesome to work with."

As Deaton's crews roamed the Festival grounds, so did a five-person ABC Digital Media crew gathering material to produce about 30 one-to-two-minute viral segments to promote tune-in to the ABC on-air special. Beginning Aug. 9, these clips will post on [ABC.com](#) and other Disney Web sites as well as on Hulu, YouTube and other online destinations. Here, too, the goal is to evoke the Festival experience through a "you are there" perspective.

"There wasn't a lot of pre-production in the sense of scripting and arranging schedules," said David Beebe, Director of Video Production, Disney/ABC Television Digital Video Group. "A lot was shot on the fly. Most clips focus on single artists, but we've got some that put them in skits. We have one with Blake Shelton bringing his dogs and his mom over to Kellie Pickler's bus and asking her to watch them while he goes onstage. We go to fan club parties with artists. We talk with Martina McBride at her Blackbird Studio. So there's a wide range, from newcomers to bigger

names, all of it with a feeling of exclusivity and intimacy."

"CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock" will also be promoted through multiple media channels, including TV spots on CMT, GAC, Hallmark, Outdoor, SOAPnet, TLC, TV Land and others; on national and local Country radio programs; via print ads in *Country Weekly*, *Field & Stream* and *Outdoor Life*; online through ads on *Country Aircheck Consumer E-News*, Facebook and YouTube and through targeted keyword searches on Google and Yahoo; through sweepstakes, promotions and ads on mobile platforms; and much more. Editorial coverage of the upcoming broadcast will be provided by print outlets including *Entertainment Weekly*, *OK Magazine*, *People* and *TV Guide*, and on television with Associated Press Television, "CMT Insider," Fox News Channel, GAC's "Headline Country," ABC's "Good Morning America," among many others. Also, Tribune Media will syndicate an interview with Keith Urban to more than 300 newspapers and Web sites.

Artists appearing on "CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock" include Trace Adkins, Jason Aldean, Dierks Bentley, Billy Currington, Alan Jackson, Jamey Johnson, Kid Rock, Lady Antebellum, Miranda Lambert, Martina McBride, Tim McGraw, Reba McEntire, Justin Moore, Brad Paisley, Kellie Pickler, Rascal Flatts, Darius Rucker, Blake Shelton, Josh Turner, Uncle Kracker, Carrie Underwood, Keith Urban, Zac Brown Band and surprise guests.

Directed by Gary Halvorson, "CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock" is filmed in high definition and broadcast in 720 Progressive (720P), ABC's selected HDTV format, with 5.1 channel surround sound.



WEDNESDAY SEPT 1 8/7c

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CMAfest.com

DIERKS BENTLEY

On hearing the very first notes of the swampy riff that would become the title track of his new album *Up on the Ridge*, Dierks Bentley knew that he and co-writer Angelo (Petruglia) were onto something that wouldn't be encumbered by genre titles. And so the original plan of writing for two separate projects, one Country and one bluegrass, was shelved; instead of trying to serve two masters, they decided to just let the music come.

"The toughest thing about this record, when you have special guests and a smaller budget, is trying to get people in on the same day," Stewart said. "It's ridiculous! Scheduling was a nightmare because you've only got so many musicians that know how to play this kind of music. Then there are only so many guys if you step out of Flatt-and-Scruggs bluegrass. These aren't your normal A-team, Country session guys, because it's a whole other kind of music."

From hatching the idea to laying tracks in the studio, *Up on the Ridge* took shape in ways that have little to do with business as usual along Music Row. Though radio and critics would eventually validate the album as the right project at the right time in Bentley's career, Bentley did have a few initial concerns about changing things up and going acoustic at the top of his game. But he's never been one to make his music according to trends or popular opinion — a characteristic that's affirmed throughout



"When Angelo played me that riff, that was the turning point," Bentley recalled. "I remember hearing that, going, 'Well, that's a Country thing. It's definitely a bluegrassy vibe. I don't know what this is exactly, but it has to be on the record I'm making.'"

Inspired to put together an album that reflects his love for bluegrass and acoustic music, Bentley approached his longtime friend Jon Randall Stewart to produce. "I kept thinking about who I would get to work on this," Bentley said. "I know Tim O'Brien. I know Alison (Krauss). I know Sam Bush. They're all friends. But I kept thinking about Jon Randall and how far back he goes. He's like the Kevin Bacon of Nashville: He knows everybody, he's played with everybody, he's one of the most talented overall musicians in Nashville — he's unbelievable!"

"We were sitting, having some whiskey, and he said he was thinking about making this record and would I help," said Stewart. "I said, 'Have you lost your mind? You're on your seventh No. 1 and you want to make a bluegrass record with your buddy?' But as we sat there talking, we realized bluegrass is like every other genre: The boundaries have stretched. Dierks and I grew up listening to New Grass Revival, The Seldom Scene, Alison Krauss and all those people, so for us it was, 'Let's use that as our template. Let's incorporate it.' And the very first thing we thought of, which should tell you how crazy all this is, was the idea of doing a U2 song ('Pride (In the Name of Love)') with Del McCoury."

As they began recruiting a cast of bluegrass heavyweights and guests, it became clear to Stewart that the toughest part of the process involved coordinating schedules for Bentley, engineer Gary Paczosa, and Sam Bush, Vince Gill, Jamey Johnson, Alison Krauss, Kris Kristofferson, Miranda Lambert, Punch Brothers and Chris Thile, among other invited artists.

this successful experiment of an album.

"I think the first thing I asked myself was, 'Do you want to call this a side project and kind of have an out? Or do you believe in what you're doing and want to stand up for it and act on faith and put your money where your mouth is when it comes to why you go into doing this?'" said Bentley, who co-wrote five tracks on the album. "You get known for a certain sound you've established — or you get known for having curly hair and you cut it off. People like to think of you as one thing, and Country is all about having a brand. But as a songwriter, it's not just about winning the game all the time. It's about trying to make great music that you will be excited about and taking a chance to veer left or right a little bit. I love playing for large audiences. I love what we've built. I don't want to do anything to take away from that, and I don't think I am. I think I'm just adding to it. Hopefully my fans that have been asking for me to do this for a long time, they know who I am. My records have always had a bluegrass song on there. This is just me reclaiming part of what makes me who I am."

Bentley's record label knows better than anyone what this artist is about, which is why they've treated *Up on the Ridge* exactly as they've treated each of his other four studio albums — except, perhaps, with even greater anticipation and excitement. "They totally have been behind it. I know how lucky I am to have (Mike) Dungan and the whole Capitol team. He's kind of like the Herb Kelleher of Country Music," Bentley said, referring to the Co-Founder and former Executive Chairman, President and CEO of Southwest Airlines. "He makes a team environment and gets excited and passionate about stuff, and he hires good people."

As President and CEO of Capitol Records Nashville, Dungan has the

CULTIVATES THE COMMON GROUND OF COUNTRY AND BLUEGRASS *with UP ON THE RIDGE*

by LORIE HOLLABAUGH

insight and experience to know that veering into uncharted musical territory can be dicey. Yet if the artist has talent and vision, and the music is an organic, honest fit, that can more than mitigate the risk. "Mike Dungan was great. He just said, 'Go make a record.' Of course, Dierks has had seven No. 1s, and we're going to make a bluegrass record ... great! No pressure on me," said Stewart, with a laugh.

"It's always a risk to step out into a side project like this," Dungan said. "However, the music is so good and this was such a natural fit for Dierks that we were pretty confident that no matter what, we would have quality at the end of the line. And that's exactly what we got. This is a kid who moved from Phoenix and discovered that whole acoustic world at the Station Inn and became a regular down there, first in the audience and then getting up onstage and playing with anybody and everybody. This is so much a part of Dierks' general makeup and I think he found this

"The one thing that's probably going to be the biggest driver of this is television," Dungan continued. "The minute the TV bookers saw what this project was about and who the players were and the fact it was Dierks Bentley behind it, they jumped on it. In fact, in a lot of cases, they wanted him to come on the show probably before we would ordinarily want him to come on. We would like a lot of these appearances to hit around street date, but we've been doing them ahead of time because the bookers have been so anxious to get Dierks in place. TV bookers in general have an appreciation for things that are authentic, and I think that's what they saw in this."

If authenticity does indeed open media doors, then *Up on the Ridge*, which premiered on the *Billboard* Top Country Albums chart at No. 65 in June, may achieve the goal Bentley has for bringing the sound and feel of bluegrass and traditional acoustic Country to new markets. "A lot of people who like bluegrass may hear this and go, 'It's not bluegrass. It's

**"I said, 'Have you lost your mind?
You're on your seventh No. 1 and you
want to make a bluegrass record?'"**

— Jon Randall Stewart, Producer, *Up on the Ridge*



Dierks Bentley and Del McCoury soundcheck onstage at the Ryman Auditorium in May.

record easier to make than a regular Dierks record. It's such a natural fit for him and he knows the genre and the players and the music so well."

Despite the rootsy skew throughout *Up on the Ridge*, Dungan decided to stick with what has become Capitol Nashville's established strategy for marketing Bentley's work. "Everyone who heard the record was flipped out about it," he explained. "So we just ended up marketing it the way we would a mainstream record with the addition of joining forces with Vanguard Records and leaning on their expertise in the bluegrass world to make sure we have all our bases covered in that area."

got drums and electric bass," he reflected. "Then Country fans may hear it and go, 'That's hardcore bluegrass.' Different people will hear different things. I just hope my Country audience gets excited about hearing these acoustic instruments and these songs, and I hope the bluegrass people will love what we've done with some of these songs like 'Bad Angel' or 'Bottle to the Bottom.' There's a Country circle and a bluegrass circle, and I tried to lay them on top of each other and find common ground in the two worlds. And I think this record really does that."

DierksBentley.com

{ On break during sessions for *Up on the Ridge* at Brooklyn Studios in New York City: engineer Gary Paczosa; Noam Pikelny of Punch Brothers; producer Jon Randall Stewart; Gabe Witcher, Paul Kowert and Chris Thile of Punch Brothers; Dierks Bentley; and Chris Eldridge of Punch Brothers. }

myspace

KARAOKE

THE ULTIMATE ONLINE KARAOKE
EXPERIENCE TO SING ALONG AND SHARE



Martina McBride
meets MySpace
Karaoke winner
Jennifer Miera,
32, of Rio Rancho,
N.M., backstage at
Gwinnett Arena near
Atlanta.

by BOBBY REED

Fantasizing about stardom is a common pastime for many music fans. What music lover hasn't occasionally dreamed of being famous? One interactive way to indulge that dream, and to practice singing, is to visit MySpace Karaoke at KSolo.MySpace.com. Launched in April 2008 as a channel within the overall MySpace site (MySpace.com), MySpace Karaoke now attracts more than 1 million visitors per month, and it has more than 5 million streams monthly.

Using state-of-the-art streaming and recording technology, MySpace Karaoke allows users to sing, record and play back personalized renditions of their favorite songs to share with friends.

Country Music claims a big part of this vast catalog, with more than 1,500 titles ranging from classics including Hank Williams' "Move It On Over" to dozens of current hits such as the Lady Antebellum chart topper "American Honey" and Miranda Lambert's "The House That Built Me."

MySpace Karaoke is easy to use and the service is free. Its growing popularity isn't surprising when one considers how it overlaps with several cultural trends. The channel appeals to a number of user demographics, including fans of karaoke events at nightclubs, online music entertainment, social networking sites, video-sharing sites and/or TV talent competitions such as "American Idol" and "America's Got Talent."

"Our channel has great content for everybody," said Mari Bower, Executive Director of Business Development and GM, MySpace Karaoke. "Music is a universal language, and no matter who you are — or how old you are, or what you look like — if you have a favorite song and you want to sing it, then this platform is for you."

According to the fourth-quarter 2009 follow-up data to CMA's Country Music Consumer Segmentation Study, 78 percent of Country fans now have home Internet access, 40 percent of online fans visit YouTube to access Country content monthly and 18 percent visit MySpace each month. Trends point to continued growth in online engagement.

One of the primary ways that MySpace Karaoke attracts new users is through contests that encourage users to record and submit their own versions of songs. The grand prize package typically includes concert tickets, airfare to the show, hotel accommodations and the opportunity

to participate in an artist meet-and-greet. Participants as varied as CMA Music Festival, Elvis Presley Enterprises, R&B superstar Alicia Keys and the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team have sponsored MySpace Karaoke contests, as have Country artists including Trace Adkins, Jason Aldean, Dierks Bentley, Lady Antebellum, Martina McBride, Reba McEntire and Taylor Swift.

The Lady Antebellum contest launched in late May. "I think our fans will love MySpace Karaoke," said vocalist Hillary Scott. "We already know how much fun they are! I can't wait to see their versions of our songs and meet the winner."

Scott, along with the other members of Lady Antebellum — Dave Haywood and Charles Kelley — announced the contest with a promotional video that was posted online. Users could click on a banner to view the promo clip and to record their own version of "American Honey," "Need You Now" or "I Run to You."

MySpace Karaoke's contest with McBride ran for two weeks in March, and the singer personally selected the grand prize winner. Contestants had the option to record one of three songs from McBride's latest album, *Shine*, as well as two of her past hits.

"It was fun to look through the entries and flattering that so many people took the time to enter and sing my songs," said McBride.

The grand prize winner, Jennifer Miera, 32, of Rio Rancho, N.M., who recorded a version of "I Just Call You Mine," received travel and hotel accommodations, concert tickets and a meet-and-greet with McBride on May 1 at the Gwinnett Arena, just outside of Atlanta. "Martina has always been such an inspiration to me, and meeting her was a real dream come true," said Miera. "We had such a wonderful time!"

For fans, the appeal of such contests is obvious. From the artist's perspective, participation can result in a spike in sales, as Bower explained with regard to The Fray, a rock band that used MySpace Karaoke to spread the word about its new album.

"We did a promotion with the band when they were pushing their new album and their single 'Syndicate,'" Bower said. "Everyone loves their older hits, like 'How to Save a Life,' but The Fray wanted people to get to know the new song, which they were trying to get up the charts. We structured our contest so that the only way you could win the grand prize — a trip to see The Fray live, opening up for U2 — was to sing the new song. Users really gravitated toward it, with 75 percent of the entries based on the new song. And through our partnership with iTunes, we added a link so that users could very easily click to buy that song, 'Syndicate.' They could listen to it and practice it before recording their own version. The contest was a great success, and it showed that people

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"The more that the artist participates, the better the results we see at the end."

- Mari Bower, Executive Director of Business Development and GM, MySpace Karaoke

Music Karaoke My Karaoke Songs Artists Performances Talent Contests Help
Browse Songs By > Popular New Releases Featured All Songs Top Artists All Artists Advanced Search

would sing a song that they didn't know very well yet. The band was very pleased with the promotion and the engagement around that song."

MySpace Karaoke contests generate thousands of "viral" videos that fans share with their friends. In addition to being an effective marketing tool, the videos are just plain fun. Bower said, "When we did our program with Dierks Bentley, he loved the first-prize video so much that he actually played it at several of his concerts, projecting it on a video screen for his entire audience."

Bower has gained insight into what makes a contest successful. "The more that the artist participates, the better the results we see at the end," she explained. "For most of our contests, like the Reba McEntire one, we do video promotions where we get the artist to record a message for our users. Then we display that throughout the site. It's a huge engagement factor because that makes it very personal for the users. The other key is picking a great selection of content. Having a good mix of old and new songs works well because if you just include new songs, it's a little hard for some users. Also, you want to make sure the songs are melodic and relatively easy to sing, so that users will take them on and share them with their friends."

The channel's success is due in large part to its advanced technology and its user-friendly functions. All that a user needs is a computer, a microphone and a Webcam. Professional-quality audio can be achieved through various effects, such as echo and reverb. Users can change the key if they are unable to hit certain notes.

Another reason for MySpace Karaoke's fast-spreading profile is a feature the company calls "Mikksu," a playful reference to the Japanese pronunciation of the word "mix." This allows a user to record a song and then pass it along to friends, who also perform the song. The resulting video is a multitrack recording with a split screen, showing two, three or four users singing simultaneously.

"We created the Mikksu for a promotion with the TV show 'Glee,' which is all about group singing," Bower said. "The idea was to create an online glee club, so that you and your friends could do four-part harmony. But the amazing thing is that individual users started making these mini-movies, where one person sings all the different vocal parts. It's something that we never even thought of. People will use props, dress up in costumes and choreograph their movements in time to the music. It's phenomenal."

Other MySpace Karaoke features include messaging, which allows users to leave feedback for others; ratings, so users can rate performances; fans/favorites, allowing users to add others as their favorites and be notified whenever a favorite performer records a new song; and a recommendation engine that recommends songs and recordings to users, based on what they record and listen to on the site.

More than 15,000 recordings are made each month at MySpace Karaoke, and the average user spends about 30 minutes on the site during a typical session. Country Music is tied with pop as the most popular genre on the channel.

Video Performances **Featured** Most Played Top Rated Recent



"Hicktown"

Style of: Jason Aldean
Griffin
Missouri

"Shine"

Style of: Martina McBride
Alexa
Illinois

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Audio Performances **Featured** Most Played Top Rated Recent



"American Honey"

Ellie
Ohio
Style of: Lady Antebellum

"Honky Tonk Badonkadonk"

Owen
Pennsylvania
Style of: Trace Adkins

Songs **Featured** Most Played Top Rated Recent

"Love Story"

Style of: Taylor Swift Genre: Country Create Mikksu

Talent Songs New Releases Related Performances

As of April, MySpace had nearly 70 million total unique users in the United States. While many visitors to **MySpace.com** are males in the 14-24 age range, the demographic data for MySpace Karaoke reflects a much more diverse audience that skews slightly more female than male.

"Our audience is very broad," Bower noted. "We have junior-high students on MySpace Karaoke, and one of our favorite users is Sam, who is 78 years old and lives in a nursing home. He's not a typical MySpacer by any stretch, but he's very active. Our users can be stay-at-home moms, or people who act in community theater, or people who sing in their church choir. They just love to perform, and they use our product to do that. Then they can share it with anybody in the United States."

One of those performers might be a future Country Music star, just waiting to be discovered. "Deepening fans' loyalty is certainly one of the core things we do, and we've been very successful at it," Bower said. "MySpace Karaoke is a place for artist-fan engagement, but we also see it as an exciting place for talent discovery."

Dreamers who pose in front of a mirror while singing into a hairbrush now have the technology to feel like superstars, if only for a few glorious minutes. The pop music world currently has top-selling acts that were discovered via **MySpace.com**, so it's only a matter of time before future Country Music sensations begin their quest for fame by recording a MySpace Karaoke video. Who knows? Maybe one day that clip will be shown in the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. After all, some dreams do come true.

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FULL SPEED ON LIFE'S HIGHWAY

by DONNA HUGHES

It's the year 2000, "Gladiator" is named Best Picture at the Academy Awards. Gas costs around \$1.60 a gallon. The Tennessee Titans make it to the Super Bowl, only to lose to the St. Louis Rams by seven points. "Hanging chad" enters the political vernacular. Entertainer of the Year is among the honors extended to the Dixie Chicks at the CMA Awards. And a new group named Rascal Flatts, composed of Jay DeMarcus, Gary LeVox and Joe Don Rooney, releases its debut single, "Prayin' for Daylight," written by Steve Bogard and Rick Giles.

Fast forward a decade. The trio has sold more than 20 million albums, with the latest, *Unstoppable*, certified Platinum and all the rest achieving multi-Platinum status. They had one of the top-grossing tours over the past few years and hit the top of the charts 11 times. Their six consecutive Vocal Group of the Year triumphs at the CMA Awards tie the record set by The Statler Brothers, who won nine times overall in that category. They have played 400 dates as a headline act, more than 700 since 2000, with a ticket tally of nearly six million. These shows have included three consecutive sold-out performances at Madison Square Garden and the first and only concert by a Country artist to sell out Wrigley Field.

They are also marking their 10th anniversary in the business with numerous celebrations, which included honoring their loyal fans at CMA Music Festival by signing autographs and performing a short acoustic set in the Greased Lightning Fan Fair Hall. Their scorching Festival set at LP Field was a practice run for their "JC Penney Presents Rascal Flatts Nothing Like This Tour." On this trek, the guys take their fans on a musical journey, spanning their 10 years of hits, from that first single to their most recent smash, "Unstoppable."

They also entertained attendees at Country Radio Seminar in February by showing somewhat amusing older band photographs and performing some of their hits. That same month they paid tribute to Blair Daly, Marcus Hummon, Wendell Mobley, Jeffrey Steele, Neil Thrasher and the rest of the more than 75 songwriters who have contributed to the band's six studio albums with a festive event at the Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville.

"That was a lot of fun," recalled Rooney. "They've been such supporters of ours for the past 10 years. It all starts with a hit song, a great song, so we thought it would be cool to give back to them. It was a wonderful evening, and they all got up and sang their songs that they wrote for us. It was really cool to hear them do their versions of so many great songs."

There is no sure-fire way to achieve success in the music business, much less sustain that achievement for a decade. But for Rascal Flatts, the formula truly does begin with the music. "We just really concentrated and focused so hard on picking and writing and cutting the greatest songs that we could cut," said LeVox. "I think our personalities have helped, but it all comes down to the music that we've cut and the lives that we've touched that way. Being fans of music first, we always, from Day One, put on a live show that we would want to go see. I think all those kinds of things combined really helped get us where we are. But I would say our music has probably been the No. 1 factor."

Many of the band's peers agree, especially those who have known them the longest. "The Flatts came to our fan club party with an acoustic guitar and three great voices," said Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn of Brooks & Dunn in a written statement, recalling their first meeting. "Joe Don, Gary and Jay are all blessed with the gift of talent God gave. They can write, play, sing and entertain millions with an ease that is unmatched.

But most importantly, they are great guys who we are proud to call friends."

Rascal Flatts traveled with Brooks & Dunn on the duo's "Neon Circus and Wild West Show" in 2003; they also opened shows for Kenny Chesney, Toby Keith and Jo Dee Messina before they began headlining their own tours. Part of their success over the years stems from watching and learning from those acts who took them on the road.

"We got to steal a lot of their ideas when it came time to headline," said DeMarcus, with a laugh, as Rooney added, "That's actually a true statement."

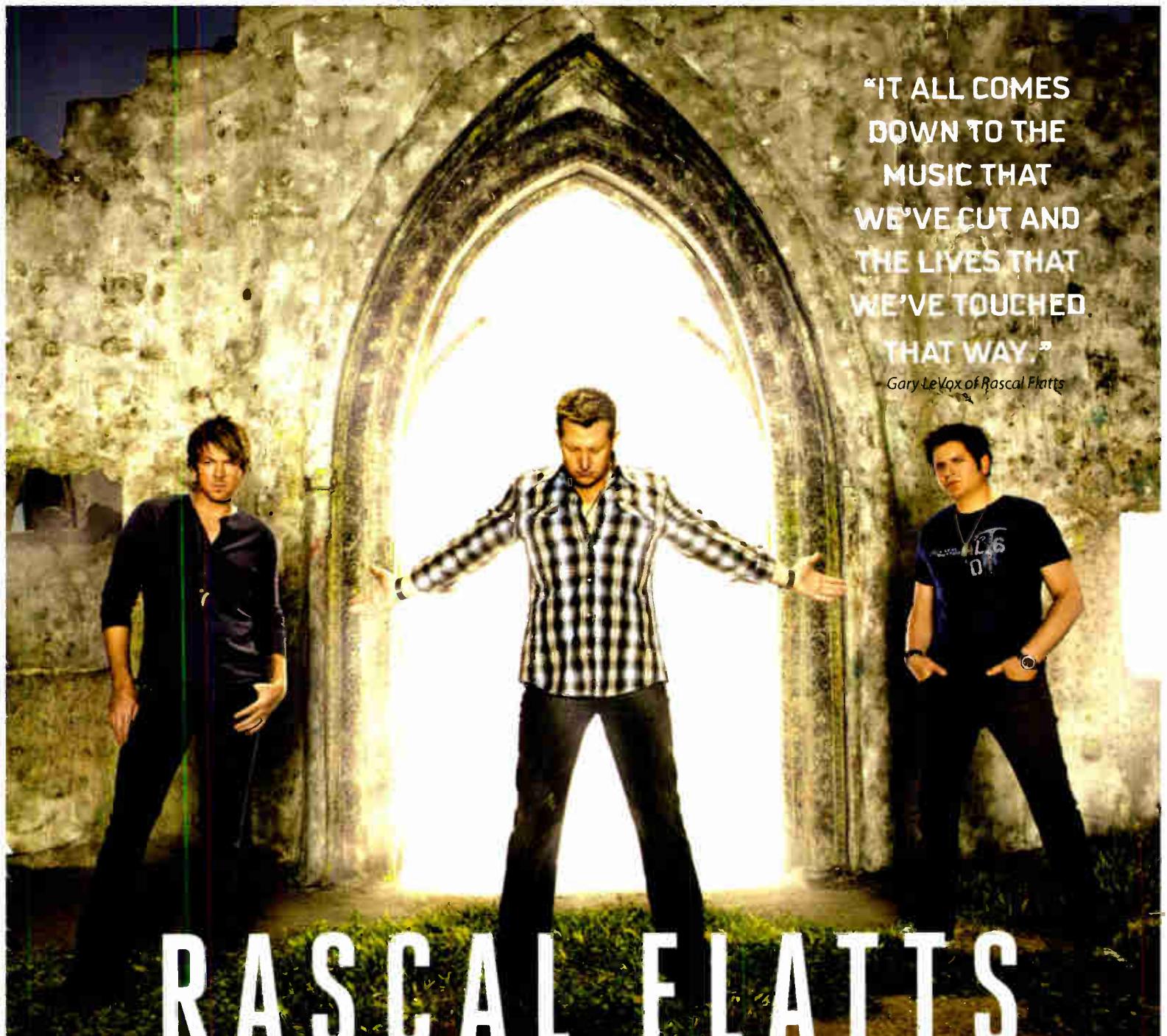
"It really puts you in a place, in all due respect to all of those acts, because they were certainly instrumental to us," DeMarcus continued. "But it puts us in a place to learn what to do and what not to do, and you can learn a little bit of both by being out there with big headlining tours like that. And we learned how we wanted to run our crew, how we wanted to treat our people. They were very good tours. They treated their people very well, and they treated us as an opening act very well."

According to Trey Turner, who co-manages Rascal Flatts with Doug Nichols under the auspices of Turner & Nichols and Associates, there is plenty for upcoming artists to learn from the example of this group in terms of staying successful and relevant. "I think it's all due to the act," he suggested. "They have to stay hungry. They have to want to keep going, because you get into making the money that they make, it's not about where they were 10 years ago. It's about what the next 10 years is going to be. They have to want it, and they have to want to go do it, because this is a very tough business and it's so easy to say, 'I'm gonna stay at the house this year, or two years or three years.'

"The other thing that is so important for a group is the bond between the people," Turner continued. "It's so easy for a group to not make it, just personality-wise. It's like a second marriage, and they have to really be committed to each other, so that's a big factor in a group. The other factor is the music. It's not about who wrote what or who publishes what. It really gets down to every album they cut. They look at the best song and the best song wins."

Summing up, Turner said, "To me, when you've got those three things going together, it's a magical combination because then you're going to be successful and you can go compete. The business is too hard to put out one bad song after another. So if you've got them wanting to be together and wanting to be a group and wanting to cut hit songs, and you still have that hunger to go fight and do what you need to do and get up and do radio and videos and press, now you're talking about the next 10 years. That's what they've rededicated themselves to do."

The immediate future for Rascal Flatts includes a new album, *Nothing Like This*, scheduled to release Nov. 16 on their new label, Big Machine Records. According to DeMarcus, it will complete the 10-year saga by harking back to aspects of the band's earlier sound. "The first couple of records we did with Dann (Huff, producer), *Me and My Gang* and *Still Feels Good*, we went down a path to where we really captured the high energy of our shows — a lot of big arena-rock sound and big massive ballads. It was a bit of a departure for us from *Feels Like Today* and *Melt*, which tended to be more rootsy and a little more Country and focused on our vocals more than our big-band presentation."



"IT ALL COMES
DOWN TO THE
MUSIC THAT
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THE LIVES THAT
WE'VE TOUCHED.
THAT WAY."

Gary LeVox of Rascal Flatts

RASCAL FLATTS

REFLECTS ON 10 EPIC YEARS

"I feel we've recaptured a little bit of what the old Flatts records were about, both with being a little more Country and a little more focused on the vocals and not so much on the bigness of things," Rooney concurred. "We've gone back to a little bit more of the heart and soul of what the older Flatts (albums) were about. It feels like a new beginning, like we're evolving a little bit and showing some growth once again."

With their former label, Lyric Street Records, shuttered, the group expressed its enthusiasm over joining the Big Machine family at a special media event in a vast open suite overlooking Downtown Nashville from the 22nd floor of The Pinnacle at Symphony Place. Following opening remarks from Scott Borchetta, President/CEO, Big Machine Label Group, Rascal Flatts emerged from behind black curtains at the back of the room to field questions.

The mood was upbeat, as Borchetta and the trio briefly improvised some dance steps as speakers pumped out the album's debut single, "Why Wait,"

written by Neil Thrasher, Tom Shapiro and Jimmy Yeary. But consistent with the spirit of their anniversary year, they were thoughtful too.

"We feel like we're just getting started," DeMarcus mused. "We keep celebrating 10 years but we feel like there's so much left to do. Not very many people who get into this industry are able to look back and say they've been able to do it for 10 years. That's what we're really thankful and grateful for."

LeVox echoed this point. "When our day is done and it's time for us to go home and our time on Earth has passed, one thing that we'll never have to do is to ask 'what if?' Never — because we did it."

"We all feel the same way," Rooney affirmed. "I've learned that you can take chances and make things happen with a leap of faith, as simple as that sounds. If you can dream it, it can be accomplished."

RascalFlatts.com

THE CELEBRITY BUS DRIVERS ACADEMY

Expanding Resources and Opportunities for Tomorrow's Tours

by KIP KIRBY

Fresh-cut flowers... chilled champagne in the
fridge... turn-down service with hints on the
pillow.

If this sounds like room service in a five-star boutique hotel, think again. It's just another day at home — when your home has wheels, a 200-gallon fuel tank and an oversized steering wheel. And for entertainers who spend much of their lives on the road, it's service as usual, provided by the person who pilots them along highways and back roads.

But what does it take to be a celebrity bus driver? How do you get hired to drive for the Taylor Swifts, Carrie Underwoods and Keith Urbans of the world? Achieving these goals may have just become easier, thanks to The Celebrity Bus Drivers Academy, co-founded by Chip Huffman and Tandy Rice, President of the sales and marketing company and booking agency Top Billing.

"This type of training school has never been attempted," said Huffman, Founder and former President of Nitetrain Coach Company. "We think the timing is great because Nashville is becoming such an entertainment hub. Approximately 80 percent of the buses that move entertainers — I'm talking about every genre of music — are based in Nashville or in close proximity. Also, a lot of veteran drivers who have served the industry so well for so many years are getting close to retirement age, and we want to be part of helping the next generation enter the business."

From throughout the United States and Canada, 15 certified professional drivers came to the headquarters of Prevost, the well-known coach manufacturer, in Goodlettsville, near Nashville, to attend the Academy's opening in June. Each met a specific set of criteria before being accepted. Each also had a sense of commitment — and \$1,000 for enrollment.

"It's always been my dream to drive an entertainer's coach," said Brian Greenlee of Victorville, Calif. "When I had my first bus, I really enjoyed keeping up the coach and keeping the people on it happy. I've raised my family now, and my wife and I have a strong enough relationship that I could be on the road and work with entertainers."

"I've driven everything under the sun except for one of these buses," said Crystal Schewire of Long Island, N.Y., the only female attendee. "I have been sending in my résumés for the last three years, but I never got an interview for a driver job. All of a sudden this came up and I said, 'This is perfect. It's a thousand dollars. I'm gonna do it.'"

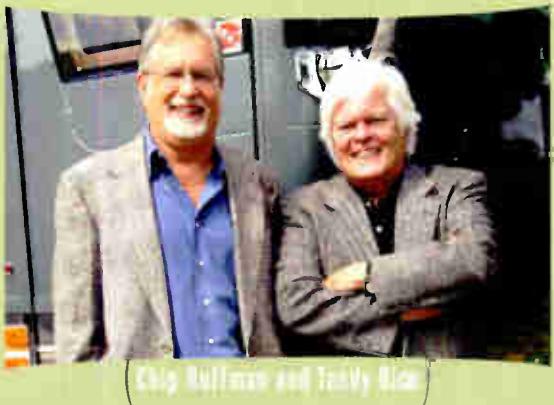
Over the next three days, the drivers listened and learned from experts that included artist and tour managers, veteran celebrity drivers and representatives of various entertainment coach and trucking companies. Sessions were designed to provide insights into the industry as well as hands-on experience. "How Do You Become a Professional Driver?," "Who Rides on the Bus? Why So Many People?," "What Do You Look for When Hiring a Driver?" and "Paperwork: What's Expected" were among the workshops in the curriculum. One session let participants train on a Prevost coach converted with equipment that might be found on a typical celebrity bus.

The amount and quality of information impressed even those enrollees who had experience as celebrity drivers. "I came for networking and skills upgrading," said Ron Doucette of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, whose résumé already includes driving for Gordon Lightfoot and other artists. "This is the only school of its kind, so I couldn't stay away. I plan to take the information and skills I learn back to my customers and offer a higher, better level of service than anyone else in Canada."

Non-students, including expert panelists and observers from the tour bus industry, held similarly positive impressions. "A bus driver for an entertainer is like a landlord," said Jeff Davis, who has produced and managed tours for Randy Travis and served as well as a part-time relief

Students from
The Celebrity Bus
Drivers Academy's
inaugural session.





Chip Huffman and Tracy Rice

driver for the artist. "There's a whole lot more involved than just sitting in the seat and driving from Point A to Point B. You have to operate and maintain all the systems onboard, from the plumbing to the satellite TV to the Internet to the air conditioning. I think the Academy is going to give drivers a chance to learn what they need to know before they actually get out there and have to learn on the job."

Even so, completion of this course by no means guarantees employment. "There are three or four thousand drivers and a thousand coaches in this industry," said Neville Shende, Driver Relations and Safety Manager for Pioneer Coach and author of "The Entertainment Coach Driver: An Inside Look." "It's 1 percent of 1 percent of the professional driving industry. It's majorly competitive, so these companies are going to hire only the best."

Huffman and Rice believe they have this covered. Once drivers graduate from the Academy's core training, they can file with its Top Billing Driver Placement Service. It's a two-tiered operation, designed to give applicant drivers the roadworthiness they need to score a full-time position.

"The first phase is our apprentice program," said Huffman. "Graduates of the Academy will be available to double-drive with veteran drivers that are in excess of DOT/HOS (Department of Transportation/Hours of Service) rules. They will be paid like a normal driver but at a slightly reduced rate to reflect their apprentice status until they get enough experience to step up to a full-time category."

Once drivers accumulate enough experience, Top Billing will try to place them with one of many coach companies. Drivers who get placements through Top Billing will pay a percentage of their earnings to the agency, similar to the process at temporary staffing agencies.

"I've spent the last several months in contact with most all the bus companies, not just in Nashville but the ones located in outlying areas," said Huffman. "I've not only been in e-mail and phone contact with them, but I've visited personally to tell them what we're doing, how we're doing it and why we're doing it. The majority have bought in, absolutely."

As for Rice, while acknowledging that his longtime high profile in the music industry contributes to establishing the Academy's profile, he intends to actively apply his promotional and marketing skills to further its success.

"The story here isn't so much what we've done but the fact that we've done it," he insisted. "Hey, in today's economy, when people have their backs up against the wall, they get real courageous and real ingenious. A lot of drivers are coming to us from big-rig truck driving and they're just worn out. They're beat up from all the hauling and loading and unloading freight. Most of them are mature gentlemen; they've been there, done that. Our job, as far as I'm concerned, is, instead of looking for a nightclub to book an artist to sing, we're looking for a bus to book a driver to drive."

The next Celebrity Bus Drivers Academy session is slated for November.

Huffman-Rice.com

Essential Advice for Celebrity Bus Drivers

Based on his experience with clients including Lynyrd Skynyrd, Reba McEntire, Bret Michaels, LeAnn Rimes and Dwight Yoakam, celebrity coach driver Eric Smith lists the skills he considers indispensable for completing tours successfully.

Provide Five-Star Service. "Just like at fine hotels, you are the face at the front desk. Be the concierge if needed. Look up local restaurants and activities. Do a weather check. Stock the refrigerator. You're also the maid, making beds, cleaning toilets and taking out endless amounts of garbage. Do it with a smile. Don't ever make clients feel they're imposing on you."

Be Confident and Likable. "Trust in yourself and your skills, but don't seem arrogant or overly confident."

Be 'Vanilla.' "Study your clients and find out how to best fit in with their personalities. Be a chameleon. Learn to be whatever the job requires you to be."

Be Invisible. "The group or celebrity you're hauling probably needs 99.9 percent of the bus. No matter how much they tell you they love you and you're the best, this means 'Driver, go away!' Staying out of their way will win you points."

Make Everyone Feel Safe. "Get the clients where they're going without them realizing they ever moved. You want a reputation as a smooth driver. Do this and you'll get asked back again and again."

Park Closest to the Venue. "This only works if you're the headliner, of course. If you're the opening act, be prepared to move your bus quickly if asked."

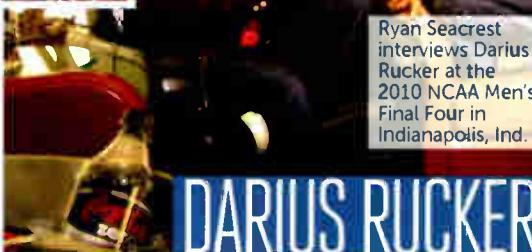
Be a Mechanical Genius. "Learn your equipment and how to operate every single device on the bus. Spend the day before you leave exploring the bus, organizing it, test-driving it and cleaning every square inch. Read the manuals or talk with a mechanic. Assume the worst: The satellite will go down. Be prepared so you don't end up trying to fix things on the side of the road with the artist breathing down your neck."

Adjust to Sleep Deprivation. "Sleep while everyone else is up and at the show. Don't be tempted to hang out at the venue for fun. Get to the hotel — and sleep."

Deal with Time Alone and Far from Home. "A driver's schedule can ruin relationships because tours can keep you away for a long time. If possible, choose clients you feel you can spend months on the road with and still like each other at the end."



Darius Rucker speaks with Jim Noble of TNT/NASCAR.com at the 52nd Annual Coke Zero 400 in Daytona, Fla., 2010.



Ryan Seacrest interviews Darius Rucker at the 2010 NCAA Men's Final Four in Indianapolis, Ind.

DARIUS RUCKER

Plays Ball with LongHorn Steakhouse and Coca-Cola

Sports lovers would call this a win-win proposition. And Darius Rucker is definitely a sports fan, so a plan that puts him at three major sports events with two household name brands is a slam dunk.

LongHorn Steakhouse, part of the Darden family of restaurants, and Coca-Cola partnered with Rucker and Capitol Records Nashville to create VIP experiences at the PGA Tour Championship, NCAA Men's Final Four and Coke Zero 400.

This promotion came together under the umbrella of "Live at LongHorn," an extension of the LongHorn brand that brings its guests and Country artists together. Using this platform, these three companies promoted products by bringing fans and Country Music stars together at top-notch sporting events. The high impact of Country helped seal the deal. "Country Music continues to grow in prominence and popularity," noted Rich Jeffers, spokesperson for LongHorn Steakhouse.

"Darius has broader reach than the average Country artist," added Laurie Birnbach, Director, National Sales, Coca-Cola North America Foodservice. "When we took Darius, LongHorn Steakhouse and Coke Zero, there was a match with the demographics and brand positioning of all three."

The campaign began with the PGA Tour Championship in 2009, a natural for Rucker, who has appeared at dozens of celebrity pro-am tournaments. He began with a visit to a music class at East Lake Charter School and a private performance at The World of Coca-Cola at Pemberton Place. "I'm excited to have the PGA Tour involved, as my fans know I love the game of golf," the 2009 CMA New Artist of the Year said.

LongHorn also launched a "Tee Off & Tunes" sweepstakes via scratch-off cards for customers who ordered any Coca-Cola beverage at its restaurants. Redeemable at MyCokeRewards.com, the winning card offered backstage access to a Rucker show as well as a VIP trip to Atlanta for the premier PGA event. Momentum continued in February and March 2010, as fans registered at LongHorn restaurants to become one of four winners of "An Exclusive Ticket" to the NCAA Men's Final Four in Indianapolis and enjoy Rucker's performance along with a VIP party and tickets to the Final Four at the "Coke Zero Countdown" concert.

The partnership intensified in July, at the 52nd Annual Coke Zero 400 at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona, Fla. While Rucker took part in a half-hour Q&A with Kyle Petty, introduced six Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, sang the national anthem and delivered a pre-race concert, David Reutimann competed in his 00 Aaron's Dream Machine Toyota Camry, whose "Come Back Song" decal referenced Rucker's newest single — which TNT featured twice during its broadcast of the race.

These initiatives resonated strongly enough for the Coca-Cola Darden Account Team to win the prestigious William B. Darden Distinguished Supplier Award. Rucker's record label also benefited. As noted by Dustin Eichten, Director of Marketing, Capitol Records Nashville, "Coke can take you places that a Country label or any label isn't going to be able to do."

DariusRucker.com; Coca-Cola.com; LiveAtLongHorn.com

by BRAD SCHMITT

MARTINA McBRIDE

Rises and Shines with SunnyD

For a while this year, you couldn't turn on the TV without hearing Martina McBride sing the "Shine On" jingle for SunnyD. She appeared in national print, retail and digital ads, while SunnyD had photo booths, iPod giveaways loaded with McBride music, beach balls, glow sticks and free bottles of SunnyD at each of her shows during the "SunnyD Shine All Night Tour." Branded trucks, tents and kiosks appeared at retail outlets, military commissaries and elsewhere, helping fans connect to the campaign. A contest, inviting visitors to "tell us how your kid shines," drew thousands to the SunnyD Web site.

"In my two and a half years with the brand, this is the largest holistic marketing effort the brand has ever done," said Mark Ozimek, Assistant Brand Manager, Sunny Delight.

"Shine" is the key word here. It was the title of McBride's most recent album, which dovetailed with SunnyD's launch of a "Time to Shine" "Kids' Shining Moments" campaign to spotlight children's accomplishments.

"SunnyD shares the same values as I do," McBride insisted. "And the partnership made sense. The message and campaign is something I believe in, and as a mom I thought it was great that SunnyD was putting the spotlight on kids and rewarding them for working hard and succeeding at their individual talents."

"Martina is a great fit," Ozimek said, noting that SunnyD's research identified many of its customers as Country fans. "First off, she's a mother of three girls, and she clearly wants the best for her children. And her ensuring message about optimism matches the brand's positioning."

Through its "Kids' Shining Moments" campaign, the company presented the grand prize winner with \$10,000 and a VIP trip to see McBride perform at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. All who entered received gifts that included three-month membership in McBride's fan club and access to exclusive behind-the-scenes footage from the "SunnyD Shine All Night Tour," thus expanding the artist's potential customer base. Monthly winners also received scholarships and/or other prizes to encourage kids to continue achieving.

Pictures and essays submitted for the contest were posted online at SunnyD.com/Martina-McBride-tour. They ranged from charming to deeply moving, such as one from the mother of a boy named Nathan: "My father became a quadriplegic three years ago in an accident. Nathan heard about the (YMCA) Kids Country Music Marathon the year after and asked if he could run for Papa, because 'Papa can't use his legs. I'll run for him.'"

"Consumers came to our site to not only tell us about their kids, they also read through these stories of others. They spent time reading about other kids. Any brand loves to see people coming and actively engaging in the message we have," said Ozimek, noting as well that his company's partnership with McBride has extended to include a SunnyD Book Spree to deliver books to school libraries, beginning in August.

SunnyD.com; MartinaMcBride.com

Music Industry Pros Convene at **BILLBOARD COUNTRY MUSIC SUMMIT** in Association with CMA

by FETT, RANDY RUDDER and BOB DOERSCHUK

As fans pulled into Nashville days before CMA Music Festival, music industry leaders gathered June 7 at the Hermitage Hotel for the first-ever *Billboard Country Music Summit* in association with CMA.

The two-day event offered panel discussions, networking, keynote Q&A sessions with Martina McBride and Tim McGraw and live music performances, all with the aim of informing and empowering attendees in times of unprecedented transition and possibility.

In his opening remarks, Bill Werde, Editorial Director, *Billboard*, described the conference as "an opportunity to get a bunch of the smartest folks in this business together — people who are tackling these challenges from many different perspectives and succeeding." CMA Board Chairman Steve Moore expanded on these remarks, noting that the accelerated pace of change in the music business made it "incumbent upon us to continue to have these forums, have these sessions, talk to one another and figure it out, because in chaos, there's opportunity."

The first panel, "Marketing & Branding for Country Music," balanced the challenges posed by declining CD sales against the expanding universe of marketing partnerships. The importance of innovation was emphasized, with Marcie Allen, President, MAC Presents, insisting that artist/corporate partners need to push past "just slapping a logo on the back of a T-shirt or putting up a banner onstage."

"Country On the Road," the day's second panel, addressed issues in the touring sector of the business, most notably in booking more acts to headliner status for large venues and helping newer, low-tier acts develop into headliners. Still, participants found plenty to celebrate in the robust state of the concert business, particularly among Country artists. John Huie, Partner, Creative Artists Agency, put it simply: "Any other genre would love to trade places with us right now."

Vigorous discussion ensued on the final panel, "The Changing Face of Country Radio: 2010 and Beyond." But though lines were drawn clearly on such issues as the broadcast performance royalty legislation pending in Congress, Bud Walters, President and Owner, The Cromwell Radio Group, spoke for all in observing that "Country is the easiest format to sell because advertisers can relate to it."

The ever-changing role of "Today's Country Music Manager" was the topic that opened proceedings on June 8. Again, there were spirited exchanges on controversial topics, including 360 deals between artists and record labels, as well as consensus in the ongoing importance of radio and peer-to-peer communication. "Sometimes the best publicity is still word of mouth," said Ken Levitan, Co-President, Vector Management.

Digital strategist and Belmont University Adjunct Professor Pinky Gonzales chaired "How to Make New Media Work," with a focus on the rising importance of mobile technology. Panelists agreed with Michael Schneider, CEO, Mobile Roadie, who stated, "When you are using an app, it's a much more intimate experience. Fans buy, they engage and they stay with an artist longer." Conversation branched from there into how to create effective mobile campaigns and the value of Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and other specific platforms.

Artist development was the theme in "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes?: How to Successfully Develop an Artist." Amidst conversation on conveying an artist's personality to the media and the importance of artists having built fan bases on their own, Big Kenny of Big & Rich reflected on the significance of involvement in social causes. "One of the greatest gifts we can give people is a pat on the back and some encouragement," he pointed out. "There are a lot of hurting people today."

The two remaining panels addressed the necessity of refashioning established business models. In "Publisher's Roundtable: The Country Song Business in the Digital Age," Tim DuBois, VP and Managing Executive, ASCAP Nashville, reflected on the value of effectively monitoring digital song distribution and revamping copyright laws. The name said it all in "Not Your Granddaddy's Record Label: Will the Last One to Abandon the Old Business Model Please Turn Out the Lights?" Panelists fielded questions from attendees directly and from a Twitter feed projected on an overhead screen. The give-and-take was emotional, but it reached a point of consensus. "We have to become entertainment companies that do more than just make records," insisted Scott Borchetta, President and CEO, Big Machine Label Group. "And if we're going to grow your value, we have to participate in that value."



CMA Board Chairman Steve Moore; Ray Waddell, Executive Director, Content and Programming for Touring and Live Entertainment, *Billboard*; Lisa Ryan Howard, Publisher, *Billboard*; Bill Werde, Editorial Director, *Billboard*; and Wade Jessen, Senior Chart Manager, *Billboard*. photo: Amanda Eckard



John Huie, Partner, Creative Artists Agency; Gary Allan; and Brian O'Connell, President, Country Division, Live Nation.



John Esposito, President and CEO, Warner Music Nashville; Charlie Anderson, CEO, Anderson Merchandisers; and Scott Borchetta, President and CEO, Big Machine Label Group.



Ken Levitan, Co-President, Vector Management; John Peets, Manager, Q Prime South; and T. K. Kimbrell, President, TKO Management.



Dominic Sandifer, President, Greenlight Marketing & Media; Laura Hufless, Sponsorship Agent, Creative Artists Agency; and Drew McGowan, Senior Group Manager for Sponsorships, Clorox Company.



Ray Waddell, Executive Director, Content and Programming for Touring and Live Entertainment, *Billboard*; and Tim McGraw.



Tracy Gershon, Senior VP, Warner/Chappell Music; and Tim DuBois, VP and Managing Executive, ASCAP Nashville.



Wade Jessen, Senior Chart Manager, *Billboard*; and Martina McBride.



Jamie Cheek, Partner, Flood, Bumstead, McCready & McCarthy; and Big Kenny, World Radio History



Blake Shelton

JIM FREE

**STANDS UP FOR
COUNTRY IN
WASHINGTON, D.C.**



Born and raised in Columbia, Tenn., seasoned in the ways of doing business in the corridors of power that thread through Washington, D.C., Jim Free has proven himself to be invaluable as an advocate for a high-powered list of clients, which he serves as President/CEO of the influential lobbying firm The Smith-Free Group, co-founded in 1995 with Jim Smith.

His contributions to CMA specifically and to Country Music in general are perhaps even more impressive, given that he makes himself available to these constituencies at considerably below his normal rate — in other words, true to his name as well as his passion, for free.

"I serve on the CMA Board out of love," the ex-officio CMA Board member insisted. "In the spirit of that great television series from years ago, working with the Board keeps me close to my roots."

It's hard to imagine anyone better situated to inform CMA's Board on how Congress, the White House and the nation's leaders see issues of importance to the music industry in general and Country in particular. Equally important, Free can draw from his extensive background in state and national politics to realistically assess the likelihood of legislation on those issues and offer suggestions on how each member can plan for and possibly influence its development. "I talk to CMA leadership frequently and report on the issues that affect all the players," he explained. "And I try to provide advice to the Board on how to sometimes interact with different players in public policy."

As an example, Free pointed to the CMA Board meeting held during March in Washington. Using his long-established contacts, he assembled a list of guest speakers that included Administration officials and leaders of both parties in Congress, each equipped with insight into topics of concern to CMA members. "At lunch, we had a preliminary briefing from Julius Genachowski, the Chairman of the FCC (Federal Communications

Commission), on the national broadband plan, a week before he would address



Jim Free introduces Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.)



Jim Free, President/CEO, The Smith-Free Group; Librarian of Congress Dr. James H. Billington; Bob Schieffer, Chief Washington Correspondent, CBS News; Victoria Shaw; Bob DiPiero; Rep. John Tanner (D-Tenn.); John Rich of Big & Rich; and Rep. Aaron Schock (R-Ill.).

these issues before the public," he noted. "We had Howard Berman (D-Calif.), Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives, talk to us about intellectual property rights worldwide — and then, in a broader discussion, he talked about Afghanistan and other hot spots. We also had Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), a younger member of the Senate who is becoming a leader in technology policy. You've got to keep learning, in any business you're in."

Free's commitment to CMA is fueled by his love for Country Music. "If you are my age and you grew up in Middle Tennessee, you had two radio stations you could listen to late at night. And now that I'm a grownup," he said, with a laugh, "my two favorite forms of music are Country Music and rhythm and blues, which were what I could hear back then on WSM and WLAC."

After earning his bachelor's degree in Economics and Political Science and a master's in Public Administration, both from Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tenn., Free worked at his alma mater until accepting a position as Administrative Assistant to Speaker of the Tennessee House Ned McWherter, who later served two terms as governor, and then as Chief Clerk and Executive Officer of the Tennessee House of Representatives. As Southern Regional Coordinator in Gov. Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign in 1976, he earned an appointment in 1977 as Special Assistant to the President for Congressional Affairs, which in turn led indirectly to his first contact with CMA.

When Carter opened the door toward normalizing diplomatic relations with China, the Chinese sent Chai Zemin as their representative in Washington. Somehow word leaked back to the White House that the Ambassador was fond of Country Music, which cued the President to present Free with an unusual request: Could he arrange a trip for the Ambassador to Nashville? He could and he did, with help from former CMA Executive Director Jo Walker-Meador and former BMI President and CEO Frances Preston.

"I SERVE ON THE CMA BOARD OUT OF LOVE."

- Jim Free, President/CEO, The Smith-Free Group

"The weekend ended with a brunch on Sunday, out at Dixie and Tom T. Hall's farm," Free remembered. "Some of our greatest legends were with us: Johnny and June Cash, Miss Minnie Pearl and the list goes on and on. We were getting ready for the meal, and this being Nashville, you gave a blessing. That was awkward for a second, but then from the back of the room Johnny and June started singing 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken.' I still get goose bumps when I think about that."

Cash's instincts for diplomatic outreach to the Ambassador were instructive in Free's subsequent work on behalf of CMA. "Nashville is such a harmonious town in the way its players get along," he said. "A lot of that is because of the Country Music Association. We can't ever lose that part of our mission, which is that the different commercial interests within the music industry leave their guns and swords at the door for the betterment of Country Music."



Songwriters perform at the Coolidge Auditorium in the Library of Congress. Victoria Shaw, Bob DiPiero, Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn, Lorrie Morgan, John Rich of Big & Rich, keyboardist Mark Oliverius and Randy Scruggs.

CMA AND THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF DOCUMENTING THE PAST

by BOB DOERSCHUK

Strange as it seems, the seeds of CMA's initiative to facilitate development of the Library of Congress' Country Music archive were planted on an airplane that carried a Congressional delegation on a visit to the Soviet Union in 1979.

Among those accompanying these dignitaries were Jim Free, at the time President Jimmy Carter's Special Assistant for Congressional Affairs, and Dr. James H. Billington, Director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and a distinguished expert in Russian history, culture and contemporary affairs.

During the flight, the two young Washingtonians began an acquaintance that would grow into a close friendship over the years to come. It wasn't until 2009, though, that an area of common interest inspired them to begin an historic joint initiative.

Since 1987, Billington had been the Librarian of Congress, the 13th individual to hold that high office since it was established in 1800. Free, meanwhile, had co-founded The Smith-Free Group in 1995 and served as President and CEO of the influential lobbying firm. Additionally, he had long volunteered his services as an *ex officio* member of the CMA Board of Directors, for which he played an invaluable role in educating and advising on issues of concern to the music industry.

When the Board resolved to hold its March 2010 meetings in Washington, D.C., Free began laying the groundwork, lining up speakers who were authorities in copyright law, radio regulations and other relevant issues. It was obviously important to make use of the resources at hand in the nation's capital, and he delivered on that challenge by confirming the participation of FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski, Marybeth Peters, Register of Copyrights at the Library of Congress, along with Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), John Thune (R-S.D.), Mark Warner (D-Va.) and Reps. Howard Berman (D-Calif.), Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.), Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) and Steny Hoyer (D-Md.).

Still, Free wondered whether something extra might be attempted. "I started thinking, 'What is something that the Board has never done? What is something that would be unique to Washington?'" he recalled. "And it struck me that the Library of Congress, which of course is our national archive, didn't have much pertaining to Country Music."

Free called his longtime friend Billington and arranged a meeting. "I said, 'You know, there are only two or three really indigenous American music forms,'" Free said. "One is the African-American art form — spirituals, rhythm and blues, jazz and so much of the

music that we all love. And the other came into the Appalachian region from Scots/Irish immigrants and has developed into what we call Country Music. I think we have a great opportunity to involve the Library of Congress more fully with Country Music.' Dr. Billington agreed, and we began to talk about whether, when the Board came up in March, we could get more involved with the Library and vice versa."

A second meeting was arranged for October 2009, involving Billington, Free, CMA Senior VP Bobette Dudley and members of the Library's Music Division staff and the CMA Board, including President-Elect Steve Buchanan, Senior VP of Media and Entertainment, Gaylord Entertainment. Over breakfast served in the Librarian's ceremonial office, attendees looked at items from the Library's archive, including copyright records for several classic Country songs. "That whetted our appetite," Free said. "But other than sheet music, scores and some historic recorded material, they didn't have much from our genre."

On this point, there was agreement and a determination to apply the resources of CMA to address this need. As a result, at the March Board meeting in Washington, Billington and CMA Board Chairman Steve Moore, Senior VP, AEG Live!, announced a project called "Story Tellers and Story Keepers: Creating and Preserving Country Music," dedicated to expanding the Library's acquisition and preservation of music collections, online presentations and educational outreach with regard to Country Music. The partnership began with Moore's presentation to the Library of a leather-bound DVD collection documenting four decades of CMA Awards broadcasts, anniversary television specials and CMA Music Festival broadcasts.

Additionally, Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn, Bob DiPiero, Lorrie Morgan, John Rich of Big & Rich, Randy Scruggs and Victoria Shaw demonstrated the magic of the CMA Songwriters Series through two hours of performance and reflection onstage at the Library's Coolidge Auditorium, with a musical and symbolic peak moment provided as Billington joined them for a performance of the Webb Pierce classic, "There Stands the Glass." Nearly 400 dignitaries attended the event, including legislative leaders, New Zealand Ambassador Roy Ferguson and many others. The program will return to the Coolidge Auditorium on Saturday, Dec. 4, for an audience of invited guests as well as members of the public.

Looking back at these events and forward toward the Library's growth as a resource for research in Country Music, Free noted, "As I told Steve Moore, I am proud to be involved in the beginning of a relationship that will benefit Country Music and CMA for a long, long time."



Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.)

Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.)

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.)

CMA Board President Steve Buchanan, Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and CMA Board Chairman Steve Moore

Sens. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.)

Rep. Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.)



Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

James Otto Goes

For most artists, finding a unique niche and an identifiable sound are the first hurdles toward establishing a career. For James Otto, it's "mission accomplished" on both fronts.

Otto, who records for Warner Bros. Records, has carved a place for himself as a leading purveyor of "Country Soul." He mined that sound with the No. 1 single "Just Got Started Lovin' You," from his *Sunset Man* album, which debuted at No. 3 on *Billboard's* all-genre Top 200 album chart and was the most played Country single of 2008, according to *Country Aircheck*.

On his new album, *Shake What God Gave Ya*, Otto expands on that brand, not only as a singer but also as co-writer of a number of tracks including "Lover Man," flavored by some Memphis-style funk guitar (written with Al Anderson and Jim Femino), as well as the slow gospel-flavored waltz "Let's Just Let Go" (Femino, Arlos Smith), the dramatic testimony of "Solders & Jesus" (Otto, Chris Wallin) and the album's first single, the easy-flowing yet sultry "Groovy Little Summer Song" (Anderson, Carson Chamberlain).

"I'm going to be unapologetic about it, certainly," said Otto. "We're definitely doing sexy love songs and sultry songs about one of many people's favorite subjects. The girls that love 'Just Got Started Lovin' You' are going to have a lot on this album to love because there's a lot of groovy, feel-good, soulful songs on here."

While that's not all that *Shake What God Gave Ya* has to offer, that Country/soul connection runs deep here, not just in the sound but also in the history of some of this music. Otto actually used a guitar that once belonged to Otis Redding to write "Your Good Thing's Gone Bad" years ago in Muscle Shoals, Ala. He was with co-writers James LeBlanc, Gary Nichols and Jon Nicholson at FAME Studios, in the office of studio co-founder and producer Rick Hall, when Otto spotted a guitar on the wall and a photo of Redding holding that same instrument. The legendary soul singer had played it on a demo of "You Left the Water Running," which Hall had co-written with Oscar Franck and Dan Penn.

"Instruments have a soul and carry it with them," Otto reflected. "Every guitar has a story to tell. I started playing that guitar part for 'Your Good Thing's Gone Bad' while thinking about that kind of stuff because I was trying to capture that kind of mojo anyway."

This song holds an honored place on Otto's new album for another reason: When playing it live, he and his band would morph in the middle into Ronnie Milsap's "Stranger in My House," which has a similar feel. That mash-up gave Otto the idea for Milsap to guest on "Your Good Thing's Gone Bad," which appears on the album without any segues to other tunes.

According to Otto, that track "is one of the things I'm most proud of on the record. To get to work with one of my heroes and hear that voice come out of that man is just incredible. It was an opportunity I'll always remember the rest of my life. I started listening again to some of the soulful influence of those Ronnie Milsap records and some of the sexier stuff by Conway Twitty."

Otto describes his genre-jumping sound to "a blending of all the things I loved as a kid and that I've loved through my life into one kind of music. I draw from multiple places — rock 'n' roll and classic soul — to try to make a sound that is appealing to me and also appealing to my audience. If I could be a Country Music Al Green, that would be exactly where I want to be. I love singing those kinds of songs. I love playing them and writing them."

That interplay of influences also shapes Otto's songwriting. "All the people I loved always had more than one element to the music they were making, like the guy who actually made me want to play Country Music in the first place — Hank Williams Jr.," he said. "He always talked about his daddy moaning the blues, but Hank Jr. specifically went further on to bring in R&B sounds and rock 'n' roll sounds and to incorporate real blues and boogie-woogie into Country Music. Those things influenced me very much."

"I look back on *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music*, a classic Ray Charles album, as a real primer for what I'm trying to do," Otto elaborated. "And that's to take the feel of some of those classic R&B songs and sing about things we all understand Country Music is — things from the heart, all the great Country themes of love and loss and heartache. If you can have pop Country and rock Country and all those things, you can certainly have Country Soul."

Country radio has taken note of Otto's distinct voice and presentation. Yet mixed with the support he has received from the on-air community, Otto is sometimes perceived as yet to reach his full creative stride. For instance, John Sebastian, PD, WWQM/Madison, Wis., described Otto's songwriting as "clever and contagious and sometimes amazingly insightful. He's unique because he really doesn't sound like anyone else in Country Music."

At the same time, Sebastian characterized Otto as "underdeveloped. He's not broken through like he deserves to do. He's one of the most talented of all our Country artists yet still waits for his big breakthrough."

Peter Strickland, Senior VP of Brand Management and Sales, Warner Music Nashville, aims to change that perception by working toward more "consistency at radio" for Otto. "If you don't have that, it's hard to put him on that pedestal of superstardom."

To put that process into gear, initial marketing for the new album included some unusual targeting of Country dance clubs for "Groovy Little Summer Song." The idea, according to Strickland, was to "build a familiarity at the clubs, so hopefully it will connect the dots at radio."

The record label also shifted its messaging around Otto from the previous "biggest voice in Country Music" to emphasizing the Country Soul concept. "We're leaning that way because the music is trending that way," Strickland noted. "That will be our strength in branding him."

Otto credits co-producing *Sunset Man* with John Rich for preparing him to share production responsibilities on his new album, this time with Paul Worley. And he benefitted as a songwriter too, from the recognition he'd earned for co-writing the Jamey



photo: Kristin Bushow

FOR THE SOUL

by PHYLLIS STARK



"IF I COULD BE A COUNTRY MUSIC AL GREEN, THAT WOULD BE EXACTLY WHERE I WANT TO BE." —James Otto

Johnson hit "In Color," with Johnson and Lee Thomas Miller, cited as Song of the Year at the CMA Awards in 2009.

"Working with Paul Worley this time around was a huge thing," Otto said. "He's been involved in my career at a lot of different points. He helped me get my original record deal on Mercury Records Nashville, and when I left Mercury he signed me to Warner Bros. We've always wanted to work together, and this time around it was the perfect opportunity to reach out to him and ask him to be a part of it. He's the consummate musician. He's also the consummate producer, so I can pick his brain. He also has trusted me to take the reins and gave me room to spread out a little bit and room to learn. It's great to have that kind of ear to work with."

"James is one of the best singers I've ever worked with, especially at delivering that soulful feeling," said Worley, who met Otto when he executive-produced the singer's debut, *Days of Our Lives*, in 2004. "So it made sense for us to gravitate toward that. James can sing anything, so he needed to find his focus. And that Country Soul focus spoke the most to him. I did push him a little outside of that, though, so at the end of the day we had an album with Country Soul at its core but other types of music that color that from out at the edges."

In contrast to some new artists who have rocketed seemingly overnight to the top of the charts, Otto's career has been a slower, steadier ascent. That suits him fine because, he insisted, it "keeps you more grounded. I feel like it's made me more humble but also wanting it more and really digging in. It's given me time to really focus in on who I think I am musically and try to deliver that every time. I might have had time to overthink it, but I keep hoping that it is going to work out for me and keep pushing forward and keep working. What it has given me a chance to do, mostly, is write a lot of songs. I would never have had an 'In Color' had I been on the road all the time instead of writing songs. The songwriting has really given me more confidence in my abilities than anything else."

And he appreciates what he calls "a lot of leeway" that Warner Bros. has given him to make the music he wants to make. "They just kind of handed the reins over and said, 'We love what you're doing. Keep doing it.' So I feel like the overall project is very representative of where I'm at musically and what my live show is — and that's just what I wanted."

JamesOtto.net



JOSHUA SCOTT JONES, MEGHAN LINSEY

DREAM DUET PARTNER JONES: "Cher." **LINSEY:** "Josh, of course — ha ha!" **SONG YOU'D LOVE TO COVER JONES:** "My Favorite Mistake," by Sheryl Crow." **LINSEY:** "Girls Just Want to Have Fun," by Cyndi Lauper." **PHRASE YOU SAY OVER AND OVER AGAIN JONES:** "Where are we going?" **LINSEY:** "Where's Josh?" **SOMETHING WE'D NEVER GUESS ABOUT YOU JONES:** "I have a huge appetite." **LINSEY:** "When I wake up, I look like a rooster. My hair literally sticks up in all directions. It's pretty hilarious!"

MySpace.com/SteelMagnoliaMusic

STEEL MAGNOLIA

Meghan Linsey came to Nashville from New Orleans, where by the time she was 15 she had already opened for Gary Allan, Brad Paisley, Blake Shelton and Travis Tritt, among other headliners. Her future partner Joshua Scott Jones had started writing and performing at 13 before leaving Charleston, Ill., for Los Angeles. He gigged at some of the city's top alternative venues, though not enough to escape a borderline homeless lifestyle. Eventually, he wound up in Nashville too.

Then, during karaoke night at a club in Printer's Alley in Downtown Nashville, they met and realized that their styles meshed. This was confirmed when they won top honors on the 2009 season of CMT's "Can You Duet" as Steel Magnolia. Their prize included a deal with Big Machine Records, who released the duo's debut five-song *Steel Magnolia EP* in February.

Written by Chris Stapleton and Trent Willmon, their first single, "Keep On Lovin' You" peaked at No. 4 and became the highest-charting debut single from a male/female Country duet on the *Billboard Hot Country Songs Chart*. A catchy guitar lick kicks it off, but the payoff is in the vocals: Jones takes the first verse with an approachable, almost conversational delivery; Linsey sparkles on the second, rising quickly from a honeyed intimacy into an explosive, soulful chorus.

There, as in the lines they trade and thread together on "Ooh La La" and in the buildup from a laconically humorous opening to the emotional finale of "The Edge of Goodbye," Jones and Linsey blend their vocals artfully without losing the characteristics that make each of them unique. Their writing shines too; in addition to penning these two songs, Jones and Linsey wrote or co-wrote seven of their debut album's 12 tracks.

Produced by Dann Huff and scheduled for release Sept. 21, this self-titled debut proves that Steel Magnolia can duet — and do it memorably.

BLACKBERRY SMOKE

The sound of Blackberry Smoke, as captured on the group's BamaJam album, *Little Piece of Dixie*, taps into the pride, defiance, heartbreak and joy of deep-fried Country and Southern rock.

That makes it all the more surprising that the group built its reputation as a killer live act in Wisconsin and Michigan before returning to its home ground in Atlanta.

That says a lot about the reach of their songs as well as their stage presence. Fronted by Alabama native Charlie Starr on lead vocals, guitar, pedal steel and banjo, guitarist and singer Paul Jackson from Florida, keyboardist Brandon Still from South Carolina and brothers Richard Turner on bass and vocals and Brit Turner on drums from Georgia, Blackberry Smoke echoes The Allman Brothers Band and Lynyrd Skynyrd but also draws from the song craft and blues roots of The Rolling Stones, the star-dusted croon of Gram Parsons, bluegrass and Hank Williams.

Produced by Dann Huff and Justin Niebank, *Little Piece of Dixie* makes this clear from the top. The first single, "Good One Comin' On," written by David Lee Murphy, Gary Nicholson and Lee Roy Parnell, lays out a workin' man's plan for a rowdy weekend over a snaky slide guitar line and a drum groove that saunters and slams. Starr drawls through the lyric, with references to "two six-packs of Shiner, 99-cent butane lighter, Lucky Strikes" and other delights, all of them adding up to the promise of "a good one comin' on."

With Starr weighing whether to deal with bills or finish his beer, "Bottom of This," written by Gene Kennedy and Lynyrd Skynyrd's Rickey Medlocke, broadcasts the central theme of these 12 tracks: Everyday concerns can be just as important as loftier issues. There are more reflective moments too, but these come up in the Willie Nelson tune "Yesterday's Wine" — and as Starr shares the mic with Jamey Johnson and George Jones, those reflections carry the grit of wisdom learned through living with neither compromise nor regret.



BRANDON STILL, RICHARD TURNER, CHARLIE STARR, BRIT TURNER, PAUL JACKSON

DREAM DUET PARTNER "Emmylou Harris." **SONG YOU WISH YOU'D WRITTEN** "Song for You," by Leon Russell." **FAVORITE FOOD ON THE ROAD** "Dunkin' Donuts coffee." **BOOK ON YOUR NIGHTSTAND** "Ava's Man," by Rick Bragg." **SONG YOU SING IN THE SHOWER** "Any song my wife hates. And I try to sing 'em all like Michael McDonald." (ANSWERS BY CHARLIE STARR)

BlackberrySmoke.com



MUSICAL HERO "Lefty Frizzell." **DREAM DUET PARTNER** "I would love to do something with Jamey Johnson and Randy Houser because we all started out together." **FAVORITE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION** "I'd rather drive, or ride a skateboard or Segway, than get on another airplane." **FAVORITE FOOD ON THE ROAD** "Being with a major label and having to take care of myself, I'd say I'm entitled to a carrot dangling over a treadmill." **MOMENT YOU WISH YOU COULD RELIVE** "Being at Times Square with my parents and my family, watching Garth Brooks singing 'Good Ride Cowboy' at the CMA Awards."

JerrodNiemannOfficial.com

BURNS & POE

Keith Burns built his chops through club gigs in his hometown of Atlanta before starting a six-year run on bass with Joe Diffie. He then stepped into the spotlight in 1996 as co-founder of Trick Pony, with whom he recorded and performed all the way to the group's breakup.

Born in Toledo, Ohio, and raised in Plantation, Fla., Michelle Poe learned the ropes as bassist in the family band, with her father on guitar, her mother on piano and a drum machine providing the beat. After high school graduation, she moved to Nashville and picked up band gigs on bass and harmony vocals with Dierks Bentley, Steve Holy and Hank Williams Jr.

Once introduced, they clicked as writing partners, to the extent that one or both were involved as writers on all but one of the tracks on their debut album. Produced by Burns & Poe and Mark Oliverius, released by Blue Steel Records, *Burns & Poe* shoots for the stars with a strong single, "Don't Get No Better Than That." Within that song, written by Burns and Oliverius, there's a stomping beat, a chiming guitar riff and a tongue-tripping rap from Burns on the verses and full harmonies, sung over a handclap groove reminiscent of John Mellencamp's "Hurts So Good," on the choruses. All of it celebrates the exhilaration of rolling the top down, pointing your car down the highway and being free to drive toward whatever lies beyond the horizon for no particular reason at all.

But for a clear picture of how their talents intersect, check out "It's Always a Woman." Written by Burns, Poe and Don Goodman, this ballad features Burns on the verses, recounting the story of a man's life lost to drink; his husky baritone is answered by Poe's pure contralto on the chorus, ruminating on the role of a woman in his downfall as well as the promise of his redemption. Each sings thoughtfully, never overdoing the lyric. Unlike their sad protagonist, these two seem to have found their perfect artistic match.

JERROD NIEMANN

Raised in Liberal, Kan., Jerrod Niemann left for Levelland, Texas, after graduating from high school. At South Plain College he studied music for two years; later, in Fort Worth he self-released an album, *Long Hard Road*, and learned to win over club crowds not known for being charitable to new artists.

Resettled to Nashville in 2000, Niemann made co-writer connections that led to his songs appearing on nearly 10 million albums sold by Garth Brooks, Jamey Johnson, Julie Roberts, Blake Shelton and other notables. However, a record label deal gone bad and a broken relationship sank Niemann into a depression, during which he lost his motivation as a songwriter.

Encouraged by his friend Johnson, Niemann emerged from nearly a year of inertia, regained his focus and came up with a blueprint unlike any recent Country album. Though packed with a pair of covers, nine co-writes and one solo-written song, *Judge Jerrod & The Hung Jury* present each selection as an element in an ambitious 20-track package. A melodramatic "movie-voice" intro, a string of "deep thoughts" muttered through heavy reverb to simulate introspective profundity, a late-night telephone enticement to romantic adventure, an irresistible request for Robert Earl Keen's "The Buckin' Song" — these are just a few of the humorous segues that turn Niemann's Sea Gayle/Arista Nashville release, produced by Niemann and Dave Brainard, into a reminder that albums remain a vital, creatively challenging format.

The real draw here, though, is Niemann. Whether kicking back in the tropics on "Down in Mexico," which Niemann wrote with Richie Brown and J.R. McCoy, fading into a hazy lounge ambience on the Niemann, Johnson and Dallas Davidson ballad "They Should Have Named You Cocaine" or layering nine vocal parts onto the single, "Lover, Lover," written by Dar Pritzker of Sonia Dada, Niemann proves he's well past the hard times.



KEITH BURNS, MICHELLE POE

DREAM DUET PARTNER BURNS: "Don Henley." POE: "Steve Wariner." **WORD OR PHRASE YOU SAY OVER AND OVER** BURNS: "Can't say — it's 'R' rated." POE: "Keith, watch your language!" **LUCKY CHARM** BURNS: "A cross." POE: "My two dogs." **FAVORITE FOOD ON THE ROAD** BOTH: "Beef jerky." **SOMETHING WE'D NEVER GUESS ABOUT YOU** BURNS: "I eat and write with my left hand and throw a ball and play guitar right-handed." POE: "I'm a substitute elementary school teacher."

BurnsandPoe.com

CMA Members Receive Discounted Admission to LEADERSHIP MUSIC DIGITAL SUMMIT and NEXT BIG NASHVILLE

by BOB DOERSCHUK

For CMA members, the annual Leadership Music Digital Summit in Nashville offers an excellent opportunity to learn about and stay ahead of emerging trends in the music industry.

This is especially true for this year's Summit, which is partnering for the first time with the Next Big Nashville music festival and conference to add a live music component to the event. The schedule includes daytime panels, interviews, discussion and networking Sept. 29 and 30, with nightly artist performances at a variety of venues Sept. 30 through Oct. 2.

The daily events will be divided into three "buckets" — touring, recorded music and music publishing, each of which will include its own keynote address and examinations of issues related to the broader topic. Among the confirmed highlights is a panel, moderated by Mitch Bainwol, CEO and Chairman of the Recording Industry Association of America, with participants including representatives from Cisco, Verizon and Arts+Labs, a coalition of creative and telecommunications members dedicated to preventing the Internet from becoming "a viral distribution mechanism that will choke off the Internet for consumers and future innovators and creators alike."

"The Digital Summit is a forward looking event" said Mark Montgomery, Entrepreneur-in-Residence, Claritas Capital and a member of the Leadership Music Board of Directors. "We're going to focus on what's working, and what's next. We'll look at issues from a 100,000-foot level first, then look at the major segments of the business and the issues and opportunities inside each of them at a very practical level. Great minds telling great stories of the new music business."

The Summit's live performances will include two shows dedicated to new Country Music, both at the Hard Rock Cafe, Oct. 1 and 2.

CMA members are invited to purchase their discounted tickets by visiting NBNSummit.Eventbrite.com and entering the discount code CMA2010. Admission for CMA members to the conference, breaks, evening parties and nighttime shows is \$179, as compared with the regular price of \$250. Check NBNSummit.com for the latest news and schedule updates.



WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 29 – SATURDAY, OCT. 2

NBNSummit.com

in memoriam

Country Music Hall of Fame Member

Jimmy Dean

1928-2010

by BOB DOERSCHUK

Jimmy Dean survived an impoverished Texas childhood, left school at 16, wound up stationed at Bolling Air Force Base near Washington, D.C., and one night subbed for an ailing fiddler at a local club. His friendly wit and relaxed personality connected with fans, led rapidly to a long and successful recording career.

Significantly, his first big hit as an artist was the self-composed "Big Bad John," which topped the charts in 1961. On this Grammy-winning single, Dean spoke his vocal, except for singing the three-word title at the end of every chorus. His accent was regional yet his delivery communicated universally, like a great actor's monologue. Laconic and understated yet driven by the rhythm, it planted a significant milestone on the journey of Country Music toward a wider mainstream acceptance.

Many of Dean's songs, released on 4 Star, Columbia and RCA Records, showcased his gift for recitation. These included "The Cajun Queen," a sequel to "Big Bad John;" "Dear Ivan," a reflective imaginary dialog between himself and a prototypical Soviet citizen as "two plain, ordinary human beings," spoken over muted strains of "John Brown's Body;" "To A Sleeping Beauty," a fatherly love letter to a dozing daughter; and in 1976 a hymn to motherhood, "I.O.U.," his final Top 10 single. Others were sung but followed similar sentimental or patriotic themes, as on the 1962 No. 1 hit "P.T. 109," an account of John F. Kennedy's heroics in World War II, backed by martial drums, jangling banjo and sturdy male chorus.

Though Dean possessed a pleasing baritone as a singer, his spoken performances made him accessible to non-Country audiences, who heard him not as a genre-branded regionalist but as an engaging conversationalist. This made it easier to accept him as a television host on two national incarnations of "The Jimmy Dean Show," first on CBS from 1957 to 1959 and then on ABC from 1963 through 1966. Through this forum Dean ushered Eddy Arnold, Homer & Jethro and many others into the spotlight, establishing him as a vital catalyst to the rise of Country in dual roles of media celebrity and artist.

Retired to his adopted state of Virginia in 2001, Dean died June 13, peacefully at home in Varina, on the James River banks, nearly four months after CMA announced his induction, along with those of Ferlin Husky, Billy Sherrill and Don Williams, into the Country Music Hall of Fame.



AUG. 3

Jason Sturgeon / That's Me / Toolpusher

AUG. 10

**Charlie Daniels Band / Land That I Love / Blue Hat/E1Music
Blake Shelton / All About Tonight (six pak) / Reprise
Winfield's Locket / Winfield's Locket / This Side Up**

AUG. 17

**Trace Adkins / Cowboy's Back in Town / Show Dog-Universal
Laura Cortese / Acoustic Project (EP) / Cortese Music
The McClymonts / Chaos and Bright Lights / Executive
John Mellencamp / No Better Than This / Rounder**

AUG. 24

**Little Big Town / The Reason Why / Capitol Records Nashville
Randy Rogers Band / Burning the Day / MCA Nashville
Ricky Skaggs / Mosaic / Skaggs Family
Marty Stuart / Ghost Train (The Studio B Sessions) / Sugar Hill
various artists / My Country-Smash Hits / Stadium Entertainment**

AUG. 31

**Rob Baird / Blue-Eyed Angels / Carnival
Ken Domash / Countrified / Thunder Mountain
Sandy Kastel / Indiana Rain / Silk and Satin
Sahara Smith / Myth of the Heart / Playing in Traffic
Nathan Stanley / My Kind of Country / HMG
Jonalee White / Sugar / Lick**

SEPT. 7

**Jerry Lee Lewis / Mean Old Man / Verve/Universal Music
Ryan Bingham & The Dead Horses / Junky Star / Lost Highway
The SteelDrivers / Reckless / Rounder
Thrift Store Cowboys / Light-Fighter / Indie**

SEPT. 14

**Levon Helm / Ramole at the Ryman (CD/DVD) / Vanguard
Joey + Rory / Album Number Two / Sugar Hill
Jamey Johnson / The Guitar Song (2-CD) / Mercury Nashville
Mollie O'Brien and Rich Moore / Saints and Sinners / Remington Road
James Otto / Shake What God Gave Ya / Warner Bros.
Robert Plant / Band of Joy / Rounder**

SEPT. 21

**Cerrito / Cerrito y Los Chicas de Country / Checo
Chris Hillman and Herb Pedersen / At Edwards Barn / Rounder**

Billy Currington / Enjoy Yourself / Mercury Nashville

**Darryl Holter / West Bank Gone / 213 Music
Randy Houser / They Call Me Cadillac / Show Dog-Universal
The Lucky Tomblin Band / Honky Tonk Merry Go Round / Texas World
Kyle Park / Fall 2010 (EP) / Kyle Park Music
Steel Magnolia / Steel Magnolia / Big Machine**

**Mel Tillis / You Ain't Gonna Believe This ... / Show Dog-Universal
various artists / The Mississippi Sheiks Tribute Concert - Live in Vancouver / Black Hen Music
Rhonda Vincent / Taken / Upper Management Music
Zac Brown Band / You Get What You Give / Atlantic/Southern Ground**

SEPT. 28

**Kenny Chesney / Hemingway's Whiskey / BNA
Raul Malo / Sinners and Saints / Fantasy/Concord Music
Hank Williams / Hank Williams Complete Mother Best Recordings... Plus! / Time Life**

OCT. 5

**Katie Armiger / Confessions of a Nice Girl / Cold River
The Band Perry / The Band Perry / Republic Nashville
Toby Keith / Bullets in the Gun / Show Dog-Universal
Troy Olsen / TBD / EMI Records Nashville
Point of Grace / Home for the Holidays / Word/Warner Bros.**

OCT. 12

**Indigo Girls / Holly Happydays / Vanguard
Shawn Mullins / Light You Up / Vanguard
Darius Rucker / Charleston, S.C. 1966 / Capitol Records Nashville**

OCT. 19

Sugarland / The Incredible Machine / Mercury Nashville

OCT. 26

**Julie Ingram / Always Remember / LongShot
Taylor Swift / Speak Now / Big Machine
various artists / Country Strong (soundtrack) / RCA Nashville
Darryl Worley / God & Country (EP) / Stroudavarious**

NOV. 9

**Reba McEntire / TBD / The Valory Music Co.
Elvis Presley / Viva Elvis The Album / Legacy**

NOV. 16

Rascal Flatts / Nothing Like This / Big Machine



GILL MAKES TIME WITH THE TIME

by TED DROZDOWSKI

News that Vince Gill had joined The Time Jumpers spread rapidly when it was announced in February. But in fact, the Country Music Hall of Fame member had actually been the group's "fifth Beatle" since 2007, when he began sitting in with the Western swing ensemble on some of its regular Monday night gigs at Nashville's Station Inn.

"I love what they do so much that when I had a Monday off, I would sneak down to the club to play a little guitar or mandolin with them," said Gill. "Then they started calling me whenever one of their guitar players couldn't make it. Now we've just kind of made it official."

Gill became a full-time Jumper just as the group, long respected by musicians and beloved by a sizable local following, was receiving some long overdue national attention. Released in 2007 by the Crosswind Corporation, their CD/DVD set *Jumpin' Time* earned two 2008 Grammy Awards nominations: The Mickey Newbury song "Sweet Memories," a smoldering *tour de force* for vocalist Dawn Sears that channels the spirit of Patsy Cline, got a nod for Best Country Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals, and "Fidoodlin'," a showcase for what was then their three-fiddle section, was in the running for Best Country Instrumental Performance.

Since then, The Time Jumpers' Monday shows have been consistent sellouts. They've also been playing at festivals and inspiring fans to write in from around the globe. An edited version of The Station Inn concert on the *Jumpin' Time* DVD was broadcast by 125 public television stations throughout the United States. The band has been featured as well on National Public Radio and on the Grand Ole Opry.

Not bad for a group that started a dozen years ago in a Nashville garage as a side project for a clutch of top session and touring side players as a way to blow off steam and get back to some of the roots of Country Music.

Their repertoire treats the jazz-influenced music that Bob Wills and Spade Cooley made in the 1930s and '40s as a starting point on myriad musical journeys. Destinations can include almost anything from Gene Autry to Ray Price, Hank Locklin to Nat "King" Cole and brand new tunes by the group's cast of ace musicians and songwriters. This diversity is hardly surprising, given that these players and singers have done sessions and shows for artists that range far beyond the borders of Country, from Megadeth to Barbra Streisand.

(Their lineup has changed over the years but currently includes bassist Dennis Crouch, steel guitarist Paul Franklin, fiddler Larry Franklin, rhythm guitarist and lead vocalist "Ranger Doug" Green from Riders in The Sky, lead electric guitarist Andy Reiss, lead harmony vocalist Dawn Sears, her husband Kenny Sears on fiddle and lead vocals, fiddler

and harmony vocalist Joe Spivey, accordionist and harmony vocalist Jeff Taylor and drummer Rick Vanaugh.)

"If you'd asked me if I'd ever join another band, I'd have said you're crazy," said Gill, an 18-time CMA Awards winner. "But what they do is so much fun. I grew up in Oklahoma, where Bob Wills was king, so the basis of their sound is in my blood. Really, it's jazz with a Country accent, like Count Basie with fiddles and a steel guitar.

"In The Time Jumpers, I can play differently than on my own records, using a fatter-sounding hollow-body guitar instead of a (Fender) Telecaster and taking solos that are closer to bebop than the chicken pickin' or string bending I might do on my own songs," he elaborated. "Plus, being part of the band's guitar lineup with Paul, Andy and Ranger Doug is just amazing.

"The bottom line is, it's fun," Gill continued. "Every single member of The Time Jumpers is a great player who can easily hold their own on any stage. And so many of them are my close friends that becoming a full-time member of the group was more like getting together with my family than joining a band."

Gill does share a long history with several of his band mates. Dawn Sears has sung backup and toured with him for 12 years. Paul Franklin has also recorded and played live with Gill, as has another new member of the band, Texas fiddle whiz Larry Franklin — no relation to Paul.

But Gill's strongest and oldest connection to The Time Jumpers was charter member John Hughey — like Paul Franklin, a member of the Steel Guitar Hall of Fame, and for a dozen years a member of Gill's band before retiring from the road. "John really helped me define the sound of my music, including some big hits like 'Look at Us,'" Gill said. "To tell the truth, my favorite instrument has always been the pedal steel, and sitting next to John and playing guitar while I watched him play at a little place like The Station Inn on a Monday night was an honor for me."

Hughey was 73 when he died in 2007; a plaque bearing his photo now hangs on The Station Inn's wall, to the right of the stage. On a Monday night in April, with that image over his shoulder, Gill sang lead as The Time Jumpers performed "Buttermilk John," a tribute he'd recently written to his late friend.

Drawing on Dawn Sears' powerful harmony and the

JUMPERS



The Time Jumpers gather outside The Station Inn. (back row) Kenny Sears, Paul Franklin, Vince Gill, Rick Vanaugh and Andy Reiss. (front row) Jerry Krahn, substituting for "Ranger Doug" Green; Joe Spivey; Dawn Sears; and David Smith, substituting for Dennis Crouch. (not pictured: Larry Franklin and Jeff Taylor)

beauty of his own clarion tenor, Gill sang the story of Hughey's humble upbringing and the magical sounds the master of the "crying steel" style coaxed from his instrument's assembly of wires, rods, pedals, levers and strings. With the fiddle section providing an angelic chorus, Paul Franklin gently rolled a bar over his own pedal steel and plucked, evoking Hughey's graceful tones. Gill has recorded this tune with The Time Jumpers for his next solo album.

After an emotional hush followed by a round of robust applause, the band swung hard into Bob Wills' "Roly Poly," with Gill swapping licks and smiles with Paul Franklin and Reiss and burning out a fervid solo reminiscent of Charlie Christian's fiery jazz.

"There are a lot of new musical possibilities for the band with Vince in the fold," said Paul Franklin. "Besides having another great songwriter, Vince is a great harmony singer and guitar and mandolin player. So we can explore the tradition of the electric mandolin in Texas swing more. Johnny Gimble, who played with Bob Wills, used to swap his guitar for an electric mandolin. Andy, Vince and I are talking about working up three-part guitar harmonies, which I've done on sessions but you never really hear live. And between Vince, Dawn, Jeff Taylor, Ranger Doug and Kenny Sears, we can have five-part vocal harmonies if we want."

Band manager Terry Choate, President of the Crosswind Corporation,

said that Gill's presence "will shine a bright light on the rest of The Time Jumpers, but they're all capable of holding the spotlight on their own." Choate, a music industry veteran who has served as Director, A&R, Capitol Records Nashville, now produces albums and partners with Larry Gatlin as owners of The Magnet Music Group. He had put up his own money as Executive Producer to make 2007's *Jumpin' Time*.

Gill's commitment is just as serious. "I absolutely plan to be back for every Monday at The Station Inn that I can and look forward to getting on the bus with the band," he vowed. "I'm probably not the norm for people who have 'made it,' but I've always been pretty easy about spreading myself around to work on other people's projects. And I've got so much musician in me that when the opportunity to play with great people like this every week came up, well, an opportunity like this is hard to turn down."

VinceGill.com; TheTimeJumpers.com

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"IT'S JAZZ WITH A COUNTRY ACCENT, LIKE COUNT BASIE WITH FIDDLES AND A STEEL GUITAR."

-Vince Gill

CMA Close Up

cma events

AUGUST

MONDAY, AUG. 9

CMA membership renewal payment due at CMA to vote on second and final CMA Awards online ballots.

TUESDAY, AUG. 10

Second CMA Awards online ballot notice e-mailed to eligible CMA voting members.

MONDAY, AUG. 16

CMA Industry InSite Webisode 16 posted at My.CMAworld.com.

THURSDAY, AUG. 19

CMA Awards tickets on sale to eligible CMA Individual Sterling and Organizational Members at My.CMAworld.com.

MONDAY, AUG. 23

Second CMA Awards online ballot voting closes at 5 PM/CT.

2011 CMA Music Festival Tickets on sale nationwide | 1-800-CMA-FEST, CMAfest.com, Ticketmaster.com, 1-800-745-3000

SEPTEMBER

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 1

"CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock" | 8-11 PM/ET | ABC

"The 44th Annual CMA Awards" Nominees Announcement | "Good Morning America" ABC

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 8

CMA Songwriters Series | Joe's Pub New York | 6:30 and 9PM | Buddy Cannon, Bob DiPiero, Jamey Johnson and Bobby Pinson | Tickets: JoesPub.com

MONDAY, SEPT. 20

CMA Industry InSite Webisode 17 posted at My.CMAworld.com.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 29 – THURSDAY, SEPT. 30

Leadership Music Digital Summit

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 29 – SATURDAY, OCT. 2

Next Big Nashville Music Festival Nashville | Special \$179 CMA member registration discount. | NBNSummit.com

OCTOBER

TUESDAY, OCT. 5 – THURSDAY, OCT. 7

CMA Board of Directors Meetings | Nashville

FRIDAY, OCT. 15

Final CMA Awards online ballot notice e-mailed to eligible CMA voting members.



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