

CMA Close Up

JUNE | JULY 2012

CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Big Changes, More Excitement

LEE BRICE

Shares His Life

KICKSTARTER

The Crowdfund Revolution

GENE WATSON

Recuts His Classics

EPK AND VNR

New Promo Horizons

EARL SCROGGS

Remembering the Master

NATIONAL

ANTHEM TIPS

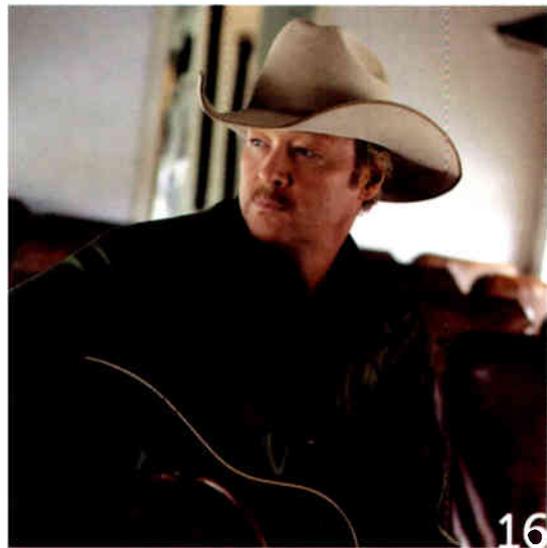
O Say Can You Sing?

ROY ROGERS

Happy Trails Roll On

CMA AWARDS ONLINE VOTING
FIRST BALLOT
JUNE 25 - JULY 9
SECOND BALLOT
AUGUST 9 - AUGUST 21

ALAN JACKSON
TAKES IT FROM THE TOP



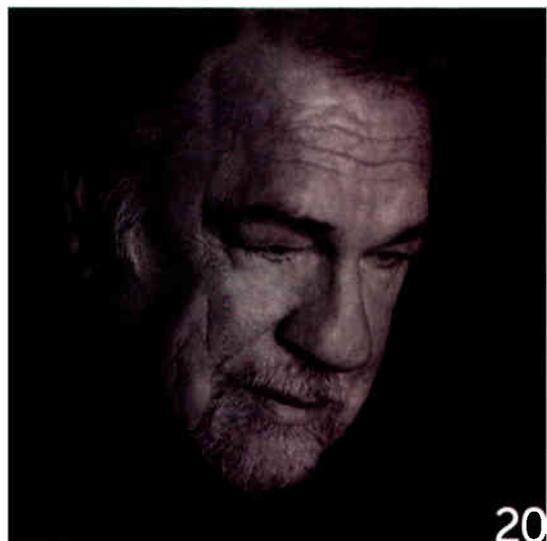
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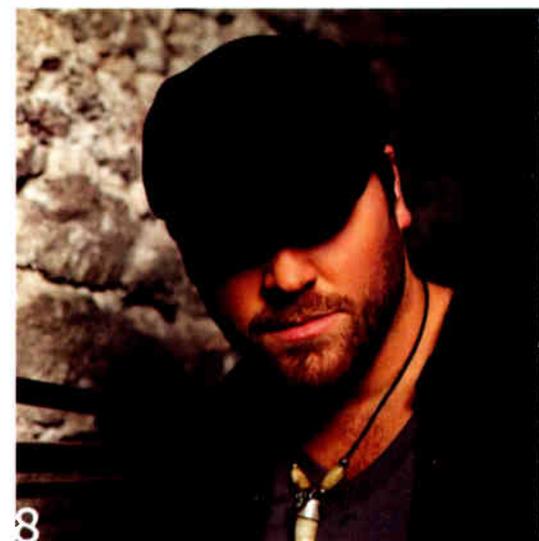
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cma close up

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THREE MAGIC LETTERS

For people involved in the touring industry, "Standing Room Only" is the equivalent of, say, a No. 1 party for songwriters, publishers and record labels. And just as we've honored achievements in other facets of the business through our Triple Play Awards, Broadcast Awards and of course the CMA Awards themselves, we're affirming our support for our brothers and sisters of the road by bringing back our SRO Awards after a 14-year hiatus.

SRO Award recipients in 14 categories will be announced in October as part of CMA's celebration of Country Music Month. Those categories include: Business Manager of the Year, Coach/Truck Driver of the Year, FOH (Front of House) Engineer of the Year, Lighting Director of the Year, Manager of the Year, Monitor Engineer of the Year, Production Manager of the Year, Publicist of the Year, Talent Agent of the Year, Tour Caterer of the Year, Tour Manager of the Year, Touring Musician of the Year, Venue of the Year and Video Director of the Year.

Clearly, most of these folks work outside of the spotlight, not necessarily known to the public but respected by those who know first-hand how important their contributions are. For this reason, recipients of each SRO Award will be chosen by the CMA members who know them best — specifically, those in our Affiliated, Artist, Entertainment Services, Musician, Personal Manager, Publicist, Record Label, Talent Agent, Talent Buyer/Promoter, TV/Video/Media and Venue categories.

If you are among these eligible voters, you should have received and hopefully submitted the first of two ballots by now. Voting for the second and final round is underway now, with a deadline of June 11 to submit your selections from among a list of final nominees. (If you misplaced, deleted or lost your PIN number or are otherwise having trouble voting, contact the CMA Help Desk CMAhelp@ElectionServicesCorp.com or call toll-free (866) 720-4357. International members can call (516) 688-7013.)

Election Services Corporation is overseeing the voting process. Results will be tabulated by Deloitte & Touche, LLP, with results announced in October as part of our Country Music Month celebration. So let your voice be heard! Support the behind-the-scenes heroes that keep the tour wheels rolling by casting your ballot today!

BOB DOERSCHUK
Editor, *CMA Close Up*



photo: courtesy of Food Network

COUNTRY CUPCAKES

What could be better than the CMA Awards and an array of delicious cupcakes? Nothing, really, which is why Food Network recruited Deana Carter to join judges Florian Bellanger, Candace Nelson and Justin Willman in a four-finalist bake-off last year, which aired this year on April 29. The winner, Bill Jones of Jones Bros. Cupcakes in Omaha, showed his wares at the CMA Awards Post Party in November.

CMA Close Up® welcomes your letters and feedback. 615.244.2840 | Fax: 615.242.4783 or e-mail CloseUp@CMAworld.com

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CMA Music Festival Schedule

THURSDAY, June 7

AT&T U-VERSE* WITH CISCO* TECHNOLOGY FAN FAIR HALL Autograph signings, exhibits

BIC* SOLEIL* BELLA BEACH STAGE Mockingbird Sun, HER & Kings County, Lindsay Lawler, Rachel Holder, Blackjack Billy, Jason Cassidy, Bush Hawg, Sunny Sweeney

BMI TAILGATE PARTY Brent Cobb, Peach Pickers (Rhett Akins and Dallas Davidson)
South of LP Field

THE BUCKLE Carl Black Chevrolet Booth
Autograph Signings

THE BUCKLE STAGE Hannah Dasher, Emily Lynch, JJ Lawhorn, Summerlin Road, Kalisa Ewing, Brent Wesley, Channing Wilson

BUD LIGHT* STAGE AT BRIDGESTONE ARENA Jeff Bates, Greg Bates, Julie Roberts, Tyler Farr, Classic Country Show (Moe Bandy, Janie Fricke, T. Graham Brown, Gene Watson), Trent Tomlinson, Miss Willie Brown, Cledus T. Judd

CELEBRITY TOTAL OUTDOORSMAN CHALLENGE
Location TBD

CHEVROLET RIVERFRONT STAGE Mignon Grabois and Charley Woods (national anthem), Montgomery Gentry, Randy Rogers Band, Craig Morgan, Josh Thompson, Jerrod Niemann, Lee Brice, Neal McCoy, Dustin Lynch, Uncle Kracker, Colt Ford, Tracy Lawrence

CHEVROLET ROADHOUSE STAGE AT FAN ALLEY
The Roys, Rachele Lynae, Adam Gregory, Chase Rice

DURANGO ACOUSTIC CORNER Gene Watson, Georgette Jones, Lulu Roman, Riders In The Sky, Bryan White, Jesse Keith Whitley, James Wesley, Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver, Black Lillies, Billy Dean

FAN ALLEY Hunt Brothers Pizza Sampling, The Lodge, Ultimate Air Dogs

HARD ROCK ACOUSTIC STAGE Hank Grant, Erin Sylvester, O'Shea, Madeleine Slate, Riverbilly, Clayton Anderson, Levi Lowery, Coy Taylor, Aaron Kelly, Tyler Reeve, Nik & Sam

LP FIELD Nashville School of the Arts Madrigal Singers (national anthem), Glen Campbell, Miranda Lambert, Jason Aldean, Lady Antebellum, Zac Brown Band, Brad Paisley; Acoustic Performers: Kellie Pickler, Lauren Alaina

FRIDAY, June 8

AT&T U-VERSE* WITH CISCO* TECHNOLOGY FAN FAIR HALL ABC-TV "Nashville" screenings, autograph signings, exhibits

BIC* SOLEIL* BELLA BEACH STAGE Kristy Lee Cook, Matt Gary, Lighter Ray, Tim Dugger, Aaron Parker, Michael Ray, Morgan Frazier, Parmalee, Rachel Farley, Drew Smith

BMI TAILGATE PARTY Chuck Mead, Trent Summar and the New Row Mob, Kristen Kelly
South of LP Field

THE BUCKLE Carl Black Chevrolet Booth
Autograph Signings, Random House Children's Books Characters

THE BUCKLE STAGE ABC Summer Block Party

BUD LIGHT* STAGE AT BRIDGESTONE ARENA Eric Paslay, Rose Falcon, Katie Armiger, Exile, The McClymonts, Frankie Ballard, Big Smo, Drake White, Blackberry Smoke

CHEVROLET RIVERFRONT STAGE Phil Vassar, James Wesley, Oak Ridge Boys, Thomas Rhett, Jo Dee Messina, Gloria, David Nail, Craig Campbell, THE FARM, Sawyer Brown

CHEVROLET ROADHOUSE STAGE AT FAN ALLEY
Amber Hayes, Weston Burt, High Valley, Matt Stillwell

DURANGO ACOUSTIC CORNER The Roys, Bucky Covington, Janie Fricke, Gwen Sebastian, Buddy Jewell, T. Graham Brown, Carter's Chord, Jimmy Fortune, Marty Raybon, Con Hunley

FAN ALLEY Hunt Brothers Pizza Sampling, The Lodge, Ultimate Air Dogs

HARD ROCK ACOUSTIC STAGE Julianne, Pearl Heart, David Bradley, Pearl Clarkin, Cheryl LuQuire, Jesse Lee, Meagan Michaelis, Ella Mae Bowen, Cross Country Junction, Matt Stillwell, The Mantz Brothers

LP FIELD Oak Ridge Boys (national anthem), Ronnie Milsap, Brantley Gilbert, Jake Owen, The Band Perry, Blake Shelton, Carrie Underwood; Acoustic Performers: Gwen Sebastian, Randy Houser

TOTAL OUTDOORSMAN CHALLENGE QUALIFIERS
Location TBD

SATURDAY, June 9

AT&T U-VERSE* WITH CISCO* TECHNOLOGY FAN FAIR HALL Wrangler Fashion Show, ABC-TV "Nashville" screenings, autograph signings, exhibits

BIC* SOLEIL* BELLA BEACH STAGE Lacey Brown, Russell, Dickerson, Lyndsey Highlander, Maggie Rose, Levi Lowery, Donny Fallgatter, The Henningsens, Chris Janson, Dean Alexander, Connor Christian & Southern Gothic

BMI TAILGATE PARTY Mo Pitney, Chancie Neal, Florida Georgia Line
South of LP Field

THE BUCKLE Carl Black Chevrolet Booth
Autograph Signings, Random House Children's Books Characters

THE BUCKLE STAGE ABC Summer Block Party

BUD LIGHT* STAGE AT BRIDGESTONE ARENA Josh Gracin, Trailer Choir, Sonia Leigh, Randy Montana, The Cleverlys, Canaan Smith, Jaida Dreyer, Bucky Covington

CHEVROLET RIVERFRONT STAGE Love and Theft, Kip Moore, Lonestar, Casey James, Heidi Newfield, James Otto, Corey Smith, Edens Edge, Mel Tillis, Laura Bell Bundy

CHEVROLET ROADHOUSE STAGE AT FAN ALLEY
Imaj, Josh Mullins, Jason Thomas, Gary Quinn

DURANGO ACOUSTIC CORNER Dana Romanello, Jason Michael Carroll, Lonesome River Band, Doug Stone, Mark Wills, Lynn Anderson, Teea Goans, Chase Rice, Joanna Smith

FAN ALLEY Hunt Brothers Pizza Sampling, The Lodge, Ultimate Air Dogs

GREER STADIUM City of Hope Celebrity Softball Challenge

HARD ROCK ACOUSTIC STAGE Mia Bergmann, Zach Lockwood, Hannah Aldridge, Adam Craig Band, Brandy Clark, Ayla Brown, Abigail Rose, Julianne Irwin, JJ Lawhorn, Payton Rae, Mika Combs

CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL FAN SOCIAL PRESENTED BY CMT (secret location) Kix Brooks, Casey James, Aaron Lewis, Love and Theft, Kip Moore, Sunny Sweeney

LP FIELD Julie Roberts (national anthem), Kenny Rogers, Hunter Hayes, Little Big Town, Eric Church, Luke Bryan, Faith Hill; Acoustic Performers: Love and Theft, Kip Moore

TOTAL OUTDOORSMAN CHALLENGE QUALIFIERS
Location TBD

SUNDAY, June 10

AT&T U-VERSE* WITH CISCO* TECHNOLOGY FAN FAIR HALL Autograph signings, exhibits

BIC* SOLEIL* BELLA BEACH STAGE Brother Trouble, The Stickers, Craig Morrison, Marlee Scott, Frank Ortega, BrazillBilly, Stephanie Quayle, Mustang Sally Band, Eric Lee Beddingfield

BMI TAILGATE PARTY Hogslop String Band, Kenny Vaughan, World Famous Headliners (Big Al Anderson, Shawn Camp and Pat McLaughlin)
South of LP Field

THE BUCKLE Carl Black Chevrolet Booth
Autograph Signings

THE BUCKLE STAGE YWCA Celebrity Auction

BUD LIGHT* STAGE AT BRIDGESTONE ARENA Mark Wills, Jon Pardi, Jason Michael Carroll, Mandy Barnett, Joanna Smith, Charlie Worsham, Robin Meade, The Hummingbirds

CHEVROLET RIVERFRONT STAGE JT Hodges, Sunny Sweeney, Steve Holy, Larry Gatlin & the Gatlin Brothers, LoCash Cowboys, Jana Kramer, Darryl Worley, Brett Eldredge, Wade Bowen, Lorrie Morgan

CHEVROLET ROADHOUSE STAGE AT FAN ALLEY
Due West, Zack Lockwood, Flynnville Train, Erin Enderlin

DURANGO ACOUSTIC CORNER Donna Ulisse & The Poor Mountain Boys, Sarah Darling, The Grascals, Due West, The McClymonts, Lesley McDaniel, Russell Moore & Illrd Tyme Out

FAN ALLEY Hunt Brothers Pizza Sampling, The Lodge, Ultimate Air Dogs

HARD ROCK ACOUSTIC STAGE Erin Enderlin, Brinn Black, Smithfield, Payton Taylor, Jason Miller, Lauren Elise, Adam Sanders, Caroline Kole, Walker Hayes

LP FIELD Sarah Darling (national anthem), The Mavericks, Scotty McCreery, Dierks Bentley, Rascal Flatts, Alan Jackson, Martina McBride; Acoustic Performers: Steel Magnolia, Bill Anderson

Check CMAfest.com for times, updates, partner information as well as artists, celebrities, hosts appearing and much more!



SUPERSTARS, CELEBRATIONS AND SURPRISES The Party's On at CMA Music Festival!

Fans are already packing their bags and getting ready to fly, drive and walk if necessary to Nashville for the biggest four days and nights on their calendars – CMA Music Festival. Thousands who've made the trek before will once again seek opportunities to meet and collect autographs from their favorite performers, gain exposure to some of the most exciting up-and-comers of Country Music and thrill to four epic nighttime concerts at LP Field.

As always, the fun begins the day before, Wednesday, June 6, as the **CMA Music Festival Kick-Off Parade** winds from Broadway and 10th Avenue into Downtown Nashville. With Country Music Hall of Fame member Glen Campbell leading the way as Grand Marshal, the procession will include Country Music artists and celebrities in Chevrolet vehicles, the Keep the Music Playing All-Stars Marching Band featuring students from Metro Nashville high schools, Operation Troop Aid, the Travel Channel's Destination Summer Tour Bus, the Nashville Rollergirls and much more. The parade ends at the Chevrolet Riverfront Stage, where Little Big Town opens an evening of high-voltage entertainment with its current single, "Pontoon."

Chevrolet's involvement began earlier, on June 1, as its annual Ride 'n' Drive invited visitors to get behind the wheel of some of its most popular vehicles; each test drive earned a donation from the company to CMA's Keep the Music Playing initiative for public school music education. The longtime Festival sponsor also comes onboard as a host for live music performances at the Chevrolet Roadhouse Stage at Fan Alley and as a provider of free transportation via its Catch a Chevy service for attendees. The CMA Fan Social presented by CMT returns after luring fans closer to a "secret" afternoon of music, games and celebrity spotting through online and emailed clues.

These and other partners and friends have become integral to the CMA Music Festival. But this year, a variety of changes, new activities and highlights guarantee to make this a year to remember.

Visitors will notice that the Festival grounds are divided into new "neighborhoods." Signs point the way toward live music, games, a misting tent, cell phone chargers, a volleyball court, a green-screen photo stage and more at **BIC® Soleil Bella® Beach**, in the Walk of Fame Park. Product samples, contests, a performance stage and more will fill four blocks of Lower Broadway, aka **The Buckle**. Then there's **Fan Alley**, next to the Schermerhorn Symphony Center, where the fun includes the Chevrolet Ride 'n' Drive and the always-popular Ultimate Air Dogs.

One beloved perennial is the **AT&T U-verse® with Cisco® Technology Fan Fair Hall**, home base for autograph collectors and photo opportunists. The stars will be there as usual this year, but there are also some significant and positive changes. Concerns over fairness, safety and a better overall experience prompted CMA to introduce a new system for CMA Music Festival visitors to secure autographs in Fan Fair Hall. Fans could register online at **CMAfest.com** in prior to the Festival for a drawing to meet their favorite artists. A random drawing allocated tickets in advance, with results confirmed and instructions for picking up those tickets emailed to participants on June 1. Now, rather than spend the night on the pavement outside the Nashville Convention Center and then race hundreds of others to line up for tickets when the venue opens, fans can enjoy all the great areas and activities during the Festival.

Visitors will also see that the **Durango Acoustic Corner** has moved into Fan Fair Hall, where larger gatherings can sit comfortably as artists offer intimate acoustic performances, all of it broadcast and streamed live by Nashville's 650 WSM-AM. A new Fan Fair Hall Red Carpet allows fans to witness and photograph artists and celebrities as they arrive at the Hall. Another first-time addition, Saturday afternoon's Wrangler Fashion Show, hosted by GAC's Suzanne Alexander, will showcase a variety of outfits including an item embellished by the renowned designer Manuel, to be auctioned with the winning bids donated to Keep the Music Playing. A Budweiser exhibit will document the company's support of the families of fallen soldiers through the Folds of Honor Foundation.

Of course, live music is the heartbeat of CMA Music Festival. Catch the action from more than 40 performers on the **Chevrolet Riverfront Stage**. The Budweiser Clydesdales will be near the **Bud Light Stage at Bridgestone Arena Plaza**, adding visual enhancement to the concert atmosphere. Plenty of sizzling music will pump from the **Hard Rock Acoustic Stage**. Then, at 4:30 each afternoon, the adventure crosses the Cumberland to the **BMI Tailgate Party** on the South Lawn of LP Field, where more live acts help segue to the high point of each CMA Music Festival — the all-star shows at **LP Field**.

There's more — lots more: the eagerly anticipated and the unexpected, the personal and the spectacular. But that's what CMA Music Festival has always provided. This year is no different — except even more so than ever before.



Performing Rights Organizations Join the Festival Family

CMA's strong support of songwriters manifests at CMA Music Festival this year as ASCAP and BMI spotlight some of their gifted members on two brand-new stages. On Thursday, June 7, from 11 AM to 4 PM, **The Buckle Acoustic Stage** will feature performances by Hannah Dasher, Kalisa Ewing, Channing Wilson and other ASCAP talent. And at 4:30 PM each day of the Festival, the **BMI Tailgate Party** will begin just south of LP Field, with highlights including Chuck Mead and His Grassy Knoll Boys, Kristen Kelly, Kenny Vaughan and a trio set with Big Al Anderson, Shawn Camp and Pat McLaughlin.



It's a Country World After All

As always, CMA Music Festival Week begins with an international flavor. On Monday, June 4, from 6 to 10:45 PM, The Stage on Broadway hosts **Chevrolet Presents the CMA Global Artist Party**, an annual showcase of Country performers from around the globe. With Australian husband and wife duo O'Shea acting as emcees, the lineup includes artists from Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the U.K., backed by an all-star assembly of Nashville musicians.

Highlights will include a duet featuring Ireland's Lisa McHugh and the legendary Gene Watson, plus a closing set by Emerson Drive. The following day, a more intimate experience is offered from 12:30 to 3:45 PM at The Second Fiddle, where Australia's Adam Harvey hosts "**CMA Presents the Aristo Global Show**," with Australia, Canada, Ireland and the U.K. represented. Both shows are free and will be streamed live at **CMAworld.com** and other sites.

above: Former CMA Global Country Artist Award winner Adam Harvey hosts "CMA Presents the Aristo Global Show." photo: courtesy of AristoMedia

CMA Fan Research Expands During Festival

More than just the high point on every Country Music fan's calendar, CMA Music Festival is a unique opportunity to expand insights into the fan demographic. This year, CMA will engage with attendees in a variety of ways. During the **Kick-Off Parade** on Wednesday, June 6, CMA will invite onlookers to participate in a mobile-based dialogue throughout the Festival; info on what they most looked forward to each day, what they most enjoyed and other subjects will help better the Festival experience in years to come. Volunteers will invite attendees to sign up for the **CMA Insider Fan Panel** at kiosks set up throughout the Festival grounds; new members will be entered into a sweepstakes to win a customized CMA Awards guitar, autographed by Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood. Fans will also be recruited for focus groups on all four days, addressing music discovery and purchase patterns among other industry-oriented topics. And post-Festival research will develop deeper understanding of ticket buyers for 2013. Taken together, these different levels of outreach will help answer industry needs and make the Festival an even greater event to remember.

Radio Deejays Emcee on Daytime Stages

To mark 2012 as the Year of Country Radio, CMA has credentialed more than 40 member stations to cover the Festival directly for their audiences back home. Each personality is also invited to the CMA Industry Suite during each night's concert at LP Field. And fans will be able to enjoy the deejays live, as the daytime stages will feature radio hosts as emcees. Two or three per day will introduce artists and entertain audiences at each stage.

Among those scheduled to appear are Big D and Bubba of "Big D & Bubba", Blair Garner of "After Midnight with Blair Garner" and Lon Helton of "CMT Country Countdown USA" on the **Chevrolet Riverfront Stage**; Cody Clark of WQDR-FM Raleigh, N.C., Bill Cody of WSM-AM Nashville and Clay Moden of WYRK/Buffalo, N.Y. on the **Bud Light Stage at Bridgestone Arena Plaza**; and Billy Block of "The Billy Block Show," Jeff Roper of KCYY/San Antonio, Texas, and Myla Thomas of WBVR/Bowling Green, Ky., at the **BIC Soleil Bella Beach Stage**.

Fine Arts for Festival Ticketholders

Just a short walk east from Downtown Nashville to 909 Broadway, the **Frist Center for the Visual Arts** offers a feast for the eyes — and CMA Music Festival ticketholders will be admitted free June 3-10. Current exhibits include the world-famous quilts of Gee's Bend and the folk art of Bill Traylor. For opening and closing times and other information, visit **FristCenter.org**.

Mary Lee Randolph's "Housetop" variation, 1998
Bill Traylor's "Untitled," c. 1939-42

images: courtesy of The Frist Center for the Visual Arts



CMA Unveils New Festival Merchandise

Four unisex T-shirts, including the "Rough Country" and "Edgy" designs shown at right, are among the brand-new CMA Music Festival items available now on **CMAMusicFestStore.com**. Created by Music City Merchandise, this year's selections also include two ladies' and four unisex T-shirts, hats, accessories, a hooded sweatshirt and more. CMA members can receive a 20 percent discount for all items purchased on this site by following the steps outlined in their May 2012 member newsletter.



ERNEST TUBB RECORD SHOPS

MARK 65th ANNIVERSARY DURING CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL

by BOB DOERSCHUK

It was a typical afternoon in March at the Ernest Tubb Record Shop in Downtown Nashville. Browsers thumbed through CDs and vinyl rarities, arranged neatly in the middle of the room. Books lined the east and west walls — biographies, songbooks, cookbooks, histories — as well as coffee cups, T-shirts, bumper stickers and more, all tied to the theme of Country Music.

At the back, where Sissy Spacek performed in a scene from the Loretta Lynn biopic *Coal Miner's Daughter*, Ketch Secor of Old Crow Medicine Show was broadcasting his radio show, "Old Time Hour with Ketch Secor," aired live once a month over WSM. A dozen or so visitors sat on folding chairs as he introduced his guest, Ken Berryhill, as "the world's oldest living DJ." They batted a few creaky jokes back and forth, with Berryhill observing, "It's nice to be back in Nastyville ... I mean Nashville," before spinning a Carter Family track.

Listening from his office a few steps behind the stage, Rick Lunningham, GM, Ernest Tubb Record Shops, reflected on the importance of live music at the store. When Country Music Hall of Fame member Ernest Tubb opened it in 1947, he launched the "Midnite Jamboree" as a means of promoting it. The live program aired every Saturday night, just after the Grand Ole Opry over WSM Nashville.

"I used to listen to the 'Midnite Jamboree' as a kid," he recalled. "I got to see it for the first time in 1973, on this stage right out here. In fact, ET (Tubb) was here that night. I was hanging around this hallway and he came by. I didn't bother him because so many people were grabbing at him and calling him ET like they were old friends. And then, all of a sudden, they moved all the racks on me, and my brother and I were trapped backstage. Boy, what a thrill! I was backstage at the Jamboree!"

Since then, that hallway and that stage have become a second home for Lunningham. He was here when the store celebrated its 60th anniversary. "The year before, during Fan Fair, Eddie Stubbs was interviewing David McCormick, our CEO, out here on the stage. He said, 'David, you've got your 60th anniversary coming up. Are you going to have a big deal?' Well, we're gonna try. 'When are you going to start planning it?' And David said, 'We probably better start next week!'"

Whatever they do schedule to mark this year's milestone, it'll be happening right in the thick of CMA Music Festival, at 417 Broadway. Even on non-anniversary years, Ernest Tubb Record Shop does its best business during those four days. "That's our holiday," said Stephen Bowen, Manager of the Downtown location. (Other branches operate at Opryland, in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., and in Fort Worth, Texas.) "Just today, we had a bit of a line at the door, about 10 or 15 deep. I told a new employee, 'See that line? Now, come Fan Fair, start it at 9 AM and it'll stay that long until midnight!'"

During the Festival, live music usually starts in the early afternoon at the Downtown store and lasts until around 10:30 PM. At the Opryland location (2416 Music Valley Drive, Suite 110), the music happens next door at the Texas Troubadour Theatre, from where the "Midnite Jamboree" and the Sunday morning "Nashville Cowboy Church" now broadcast. In 2010, though, the "Jamboree" moved to Robert's Western World in Downtown Nashville during CMA Music Festival, where fans filled the venue to hear Rhonda Vincent and the Rage along with other performers.

Lunningham admits to not remembering any particular highlights during recent CMA Festivals, though not for any lack of great music. "Quite honestly, the employees here don't have a lot of time to pay attention to what's going on with the show because we have a lot of customers in the store," he said. "We really don't know what's happening onstage."

During those four days and nights, the staff runs full speed on all cylinders. "We have around 20 to 25 employees, part-time and full-time," Lunningham estimated. "We have maybe another eight out of shop and at least another eight in the Troubadour Theatre. And during that week, everybody doubles up. Even when I was in mail order, I was usually here seven days that week. In fact, there's an unwritten rule: Nobody cashes in their days off during Fan Fair."

The good thing is that it'll be just as hectic — and memorable — each year to come. "In fact, David and I were talking the other day about how we'd probably better get ready to start working on the 75th anniversary, if he and I are still around by then," Lunningham said, as both men laughed. "It'll be here before we know it!"

ETRecordShop.com



“THERE'S AN UNWRITTEN RULE: NOBODY CASHES IN THEIR DAYS OFF DURING FAN FAIR.”

— Rick Lunningham,
GM, Ernest Tubb Record Shops



by ERIN DUVALL

It's no secret that Lee Brice knows how to write strong, successful songs. In 2007, Garth Brooks' "More than a Memory," written by Brice, Kyle Jacobs and Billy Montana, became the first song ever to debut at the top spot of the *Billboard* Country chart. More recently, the Eli Young Band achieved its first No. 1 with Brice's and Liz Rose's "Crazy Girl." Other Brice songs have been cut by Jason Aldean, Kenny Chesney, Tim McGraw and Blake Shelton.

As an artist, though, Brice hadn't yet ridden any of his own tunes to No. 1, when he reflected on the prospects for his sophomore album, *Hard 2 Love*, released April 24 by Curb Records.

"There are a billion different reasons why 'Love Like Crazy' went to No. 3," he said, referencing the song that became his first career Top 5 single when released in 2010. "There is so much involved in getting a No. 1 record. It's not necessarily about the song at all. It's extremely hard for a new artist to slip through the cracks and go up the charts. You have to beat out every superstar to have a No. 1 record."

Written by Tim James and Doug Johnson, the single and title cut from Brice's first album broke the record for most weeks spent on the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs chart and was rated by *Billboard* the most-played Country song of 2010. "Even though that wasn't a No. 1, that's what broke Lee Brice," said Adrian Michaels, VP, Promotions, Curb Records. "That was a huge accomplishment to take an unknown act and get the most played song of the year."

"I want a No. 1, but 'Love Like Crazy' did so much for me," Brice agreed. "My career changed just as it would have if it was a No. 1."

LEE BRICE



SHARES HIS
LIFE IN SONG

What, if any, barriers had to be overcome for Brice to make it to the summit? According to Michaels, the artist's reputation as a hit-making songwriter can hinder as much as help his progress. "Some program directors come and say, 'Lee needs to decide whether he's a writer or a performer,' and I get crazy," he said. "Is that like how the Beatles had to either write or play? Or Keith Urban? Is Brad Paisley a writer or a player? It baffles me. Lee Brice will put on a show like Bruce Springsteen, dripping with sweat and giving his heart and soul as a performer. And at the same time, he's a writer. Lee is a full artist, as most great artists are."

With *Hard 2 Love*, Brice believes he's found 13 songs that represent himself and his life accurately. Five of them he didn't write, but these played a key role in what he sees as the album's likely success.

"I was able to make a really honest record," he explained. "I write a lot of songs. The best song wins. I don't care how good you are, but I think anyone is a fool who doesn't go around Nashville and listen to songs. There are brilliant songwriters in this town. I found five songs that I thought fit this record better than all the other ones I'd written."

Unlike his debut album, *Hard 2 Love* was assembled from tracks that connected deeply with the artist. For *Love Like Crazy*, the strategy was for Brice to keep bringing in potential singles and not finalizing the selection until everyone felt confident that they had a Top 20 single on the list.

"I had an album that was discombobulated," he admitted. "For the new one, I wanted to change some things musically, so not only did I work with Doug Johnson, the producer I've always worked with, who I love, but I also branched out and ended up cutting the rest of the record with two of my best friends — Kyle Jacobs and Jon Stone."

For Brice, the first single, 'A Woman Like You' (written by Johnny Bulford, Phil Barton and Stone), was a no-brainer from the first time he heard it. "I heard that song, went straight into my little home studio and put an acoustic vocal of me singing it down," he said. "It was like magic. I played it for the label and they flipped out. We had a lot of options, but I knew that it was a song that every girl wanted to hear and that every guy wanted to say. I felt like we couldn't lose with it."

"Lee actually sent me a text that I saved on my phone that read, 'Trust me, Adrian. This is the song that's going to blow my career up. Please believe in me and trust me and help me get this song as our single,'" said Michaels.

"He campaigned for it and we couldn't agree more."

Good thing, too: "A Woman Like You" gave Brice his first No. 1 single and, in mid April, was certified Gold.

Like that first single, the opening and title track doesn't include Brice among its writer credits. Still, Michaels insists, "Hard to Love" fits, to me, what is the Lee Brice magic: a lyric a woman wants to hear, sung strong enough that a guy doesn't mind hearing it."

Billy Montana, John Ozier and Ben Glover wrote "Hard to Love" as if they were subconsciously tailoring it to fit Brice. "We were on a writing retreat," Brice recalled. "Ben and Billy, both really great friends of mine, and John Ozier were writing in a group without me. They really were channeling me! It's an almost autobiographical song. It's very true. As soon as I heard it, I was like, 'I'm cutting that.'"

Structured as an admission from the singer that he recognizes the sacrifices of the person who loves him as he lists his shortcomings, "Hard to Love" is obviously directed toward his longtime girlfriend Sara Reeveley, to whom he proposed in January. The presence of his family can be sensed in much of this album, including that of their son Takoda, whom the performer calls "the biggest part of my heart."

"Sara and Takoda changed my life completely — even musically," Brice insisted. "My priorities have changed. My life is music. This isn't just a job. It takes over your whole life. Now, I've got to be able to do both. A lot of things are changing. I'm happier now than I've ever been. I'm in a good place."

This integration of the personal and professional is best heard on the final track, "One More Day" (Brice and Reg Smith), a love song to fiancée and son. "I was a single man out rocking," Brice said. "I felt more comfortable on the bus; if I came home, I'd get stir-crazy. But now I've got my little boy at home, growing up too fast. And for Sara, it's me saying, 'I do understand how hard this is on you. I know how much you sacrifice. I'm coming home soon, baby.'"

This song of longing ends with a special appearance by Takoda, asking when Daddy is coming home. "I didn't care what made the album, that was going to be on it, even if I had to fight tooth and nail," Brice said. "I can't hardly listen to it without choking up."

Sara's influence permeates several of the romantic songs on *Hard 2 Love*, but her actual voice appears on "See About a Girl" (Brice, Phillip Lammonds and Jacobs). The song tells the tale of a man who ends boys' night out early to get home to his "girl." It ends with a real-life phone call to the soon-to-be Mrs. Brice.

All these elements add up to a clear picture of who Brice is nowadays. Equally important in some quarters, it also makes it easier for his promotions staff to do its job. "It makes your path so much clearer," Michaels affirmed. "With Lee, we can see the next 24 months of how things should flow and what we should do. It's a wonderful sight. Before it was like, 'We hope this works. If it does, maybe this next one might.' Or, 'If this one doesn't work, maybe they'll give me something else.' We're looking at a body of work that I've never been more proud of. It is an amazing piece of work, not just singles."

"There's still a way to go on Lee," he acknowledged. "We've got him his No. 1, that's for sure. I honestly feel that from the day he handed in this record, the next two years of his life got a whole lot easier."

LeeBrice.com; @LeeBrice

Erin Duvall is a contributing journalist and editor for AOL Music's Country website, The Boot.

"My life is music. This isn't just a job. It takes over your whole life."

— Lee Brice

on **HARD 2 LOVE**



The 2012 CMA Board Officers at the Museum of Musical Instruments in Phoenix, Ariz.
 President Troy Tomlinson, President/CEO, Sony/ATV Music Publishing; Secretary/Treasurer Jessie Schmidt, President, Schmidt Relations; President-Elect Ed Hardy, President, GAC; and Chairman Gary Overton, Chairman/CEO, Sony Music Entertainment Nashville.

JESSIE SCHMIDT

ENTERS HER SECOND YEAR AS
 CMA BOARD SECRETARY/TREASURER

by BOB DOERSCHUK

Like most members of the CMA Board, Jessie Schmidt is prominent in Nashville's music community. As President of Schmidt Relations, she oversees publicity for some of Country Music's most popular performers, including Luke Bryan, Easton Corbin, Alan Jackson, Brad Paisley, Rascal Flatts and Carrie Underwood, as well as the Grand Ole Opry. Yet she also devotes a significant amount of her time to CMA, especially since her appointment in 2011 to the post of Board Secretary/Treasurer.

When Steve Buchanan, who was at that time Chairman of the CMA Board, asked me if I would be interested in being on the Board, I did have a little concern with my travel schedule," Schmidt said. "I wasn't sure I'd be able to fulfill the time requirements. But I've taken it a week at a time, a month at a time. And it has worked out."

As Secretary/Treasurer, Schmidt works with Amy Smartt, CMA Senior VP of Finance and Administration, to prepare budget proposals for the Board to review. These proposals are vetted initially by the Finance and Audit Committee, of which Schmidt is a member. Those that are approved pass along to the Executive Committee, where, as an officer, she also sits. The Board as a whole then votes on those submissions that have been green-lighted up to that point. At each of these stages, Schmidt makes revisions as required and presents the proposal personally.

"I've been a CMA member for many years. And when I was an independent publicist for CMA, I worked very closely with Wendy (Pearl, VP, Corporate Communications) and Scott (Stem, Director, Media Relations) on publicity for the Music Festival and the Awards show," she recalled. "So I've had some insight for a long time about what CMA offers its members. But it has been very enlightening to be on the Finance and Audit Committee and the Executive Committee. It's helped me understand how decisions are made because I'm part of that process."

For one thing, Schmidt has come to know firsthand how Board members address issues on their agenda. "The Board is rather large, so you give better service to the topics through committees than in front of a very large group of people," she observed. "A lot of times, we will present the other side of an issue, even if it's not presented as part of the topic. It's like, 'OK, let's play devil's advocate here. Are we sure that these or those instances won't happen?' That way, we really vet it through the process toward making the final decision."

Flexibility is also built into the process, even after annual budgets have been approved. "You know from your own personal life that a lot of times budgets don't quite meet what comes up," Schmidt said. "When that happens, the Finance and Audit Committee is going to meet for approval of those extended items. An example would be that we're in Awards show season, right against the time for the show, and in pre-production they realize they want to bring in a brand-new camera. These are discussed in the appropriate committee, which in this instance would be the TV Committee. The original budget expenses for the show would have to be brought back to the Finance Committee; if they approve, it goes to the Executive Committee. So there are lots of checks and balances."

One important aspect of CMA finances has been streamlined with the creation of the CMA Foundation, on whose Board Schmidt also sits. "The ongoing effort for the Keep the Music Playing initiative is now done through the Foundation," she said. "It's also the forum to distribute money to other charitable causes. A lot of people on the Board have plenty on their plates, so this will help with putting the monies raised through the Music Festival to good use as well as to find opportunities to support causes that are important to the music community."

The more Schmidt has gotten involved with the Board, the more she is reminded of the priority assigned to being accessible to member concerns. "If you have a brainstorm or even just a question, you can go to someone you have a working relationship with that you know is on the Board," she said. "And if that Board member is not on a committee that can vet your idea or question, they can have that conversation with someone on that appropriate committee. Or you could find out who chairs that committee and get their email address. There are absolutely ways to let your voice be heard. The Board works for its members, so it's important for members to remember that."

photo: Amanda Eckard

OH, SAY CAN YOU SING?

COUNTRY STARS SHARE TIPS FOR PERFORMING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

by NANCY MORAN

AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, ALMOST EVERY COUNTRY VOCALIST SINGS THE NATIONAL ANTHEM AT ONE OR MORE EVENTS. SETTINGS COULD RANGE FROM A COUNTY FAIR TO THE SUPER BOWL, BUT EACH PERFORMANCE HAS ONE THING IN COMMON: ALL ARE CHALLENGED BY ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT AND MEANINGFUL SONGS ANYWHERE IN THE AMERICAN REPERTOIRE.

Here's what five artists — Burns & Poe, (Keith Burns and Michelle Poe) Edens Edge (Dean Berner, Hannah Blaylock and Cherrill Green), Brett Eldredge, Matt Gary and Neal McCoy — have to share about tackling the song's technical and lyrical hurdles.

GETTING STARTED

Eldredge "When I was 6 years old or so, I went to a neighbor's house and got paid to sing the national anthem in this manly voice because I was trying to sound like an older guy. My whole body shook when I did it, but I sang all the way through and got my \$5. That was my introduction to show business."

HONOR THE SONG

McCoy "One of my pet peeves is singers taking liberties with the melody of the national anthem. Don't mess with it. Don't screw it up by changing the tempo and some of the melody. Take pride that everybody in the place is singing one song, they're singing it together and you're leading."

Poe "I've seen so many people go off the melody and sing every lick they know and then forget the words because they're concentrating on what they are doing."

FIND YOUR KEY

Gary "I was so afraid of making sure I started off the right note. I had it on my iPhone so I could listen to it. And when they called me up on the stage, I just tried to hum it and keep it in my head until they said 'Go!'"

Berner "When you're singing in a group, the melody voice is the one that you pay the most attention to. So we made sure Hannah felt comfortable in the upper parts of the song. With our group, we all fit together like little pieces, as far as our ranges. So when a key works for Hannah, generally it works well for me and Cherrill too."

Burns "Sometimes, when it's a bigger production, like the Predators or the Lady Vols game where there are 14,000 people in the stands, I'll strum my guitar to get the right key. When we do it *a cappella*, I hit the high note in my head before we walk out to the microphone because I know I start an octave down from it."

FLYOVERS, ECHOES AND OTHER DISTRACTIONS

McCoy "The most difficult part is the slap-back echo you hear. If I ever worry, it's about that. I don't wear ear monitors, so you just concentrate on listening to yourself and not wait for the note to come back over the loudspeakers."

Blaylock "Ear monitors are your best friend for sure."

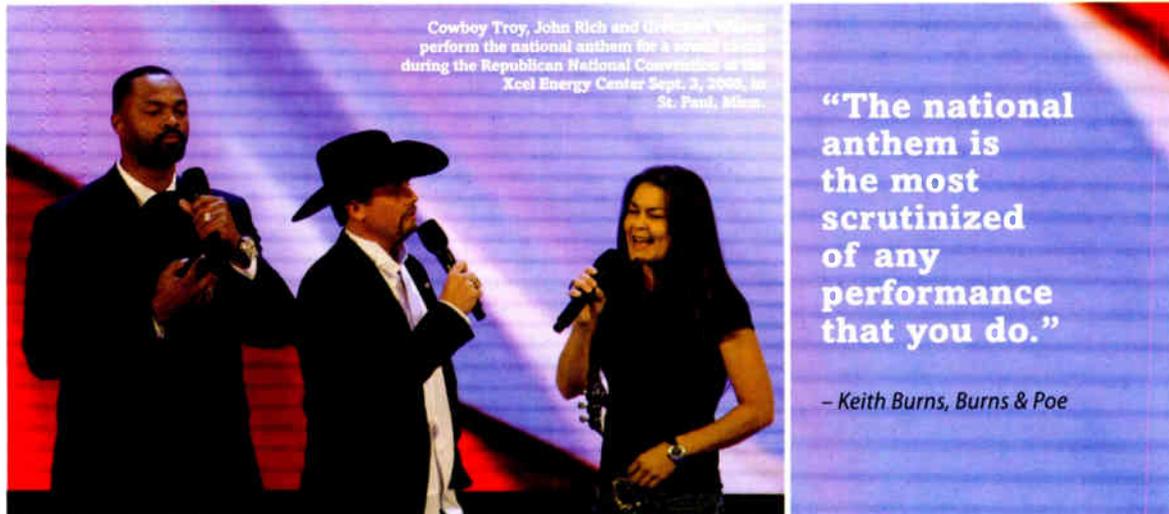
Berner "One time we sang at a NASCAR race and they shot off a lot of fireworks at the end of the song. We had no idea what was happening. We just heard this loud boom behind us. You just have to stay focused and really in tune with each other."

Gary "Right before I went on the stage, a guy from the crew said, 'We have these A-10 bombers and they're not the fastest planes. We can't speed them up real quick, but just watch me and I'll give you this motion if I need you to speed it up and that motion if I need to slow down to help with the timing of the planes.'"

REMEMBER THE WORDS

Burns "The biggest fear for me is the words. I just sing them over and over, pretty much all day. And I never do it on any other song I perform or any other thing I do. I never worry if I mess up a word that's just part of the show; I'll make a joke about it. But the national anthem is the most scrutinized of any performance that you do."

Gary "I don't worry about it, but you never know. Sometimes your brain just forgets. If I miss a note, they're not going to remember that."



If I forget the words, I'm going to be on a really short list of people who have forgotten the words. And I haven't forgotten them yet!"

FINAL THOUGHTS

Eldredge "People are so passionate about the song, because it's our anthem. That's America completely. Remember that the people in the crowd want you to do well, and they're going to be singing along with you. So just do it like you were singing in your living room and knock it out."

McCoy "Just relax. There'll be plenty of places for you to show your voice off. This is not it."

Gary "Practice. Take a deep breath. Know it's going to be OK and just enjoy it. I did. I loved it."

Burns "And don't forget to take your hat off!"

BurnsAndPoe.com. EdensEdge.com; @edensedge. BrettEldredge.com; @BrettEldredge. MattGary.com. NealMcCoy.com; @NealMcCoy

Nancy Moran is an independent singer/songwriter, recording artist and artist development coach at Azalea Music Group in Nashville.

When Chuck Mead set out to make *Back at the Quonset Hut*, an album of classic Country songs, he wanted to kick the project up a notch.

What is Kickstarter? We're the world's largest funding platform for creative projects. [Learn more!](#)

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Back At The Quonset Hut

A Music project in Nashville, TN by Chuck Mead · [send message](#)

PROJECT HOME UPDATES 7 BACKERS 178 COMMENTS 15

178 BACKERS
\$10,971
 PLEDGED OF \$10,000 GOAL
 0 SECONDS TO GO

FUNDING SUCCESSFUL
 This project successfully raised its funding goal on December 9.

PLEDGE \$10 OR MORE
 5 BACKERS

Chuck's undying gratitude in the form of a nice "Thank You" note.

Like 563 people like this. Tweet EMBED http://kck.st/u2HuKw

He was recording at the Quonset Hut, the recently reactivated studio erected by Harold and Owen Bradley on 16th Avenue, where Patsy Cline, George Jones, Loretta Lynn, Roger Miller, Ray Price, Marty Robbins, Tammy Wynette and many others recorded some of Country's most enduring hits.

With such a rich history, Mead wanted to include a film about the making of his album and about the Quonset Hut itself, as part of a CD/DVD package. The only problem was the added cost of producing it — about \$10,000.

So Mead turned to Kickstarter, an online funding platform that allows fans to "invest" in creative and business projects. Within 30 days after posting his request at [Kickstarter.com](#), he had reached his goal — and then some — to help pay the costs of producing, mixing, mastering and editing the music and film, and then packaging the CD and documentary together.

The money came from 178 friends, fans and other backers who pledged at levels beginning at \$10, for which they received a handwritten note from Mead. One person pledged at the maximum \$1,000 level and received a free house concert by Mead as thanks. Most backers pledged from \$25 to \$50 and received an advance signed copy of the package.

"It's a great record and a beautiful package. It's really culturally compelling," said Theresa Kereakes, a Nashville photographer who contributed to Mead's project and several others related to music and film.

In fact, Kereakes is planning her own Kickstarter campaign to produce a book of her touring photography exhibit, "Unguarded Moments: Backstage and Beyond." "On Kickstarter, you reach 100 percent of your interested audience," she said. "That's the new patronage in this economy. You can't plan on having a corporation underwrite your

efforts. What the corporations used to do, people are now doing on their own individual level."

Kickstarter is just one of a number of "crowdfunding" sites that artists, writers, filmmakers and startup businesses can tap to find funding for creative projects without turning to record labels, film companies or banks. Those seeking money make the pitch on their sites, and interested parties invest at varying incentive levels, which can range from \$1 to upwards of \$10,000. Incentives can be anything from a song download and signed CD to backstage passes, a personal concert or dinner and a recording session with the artist.

If projects do not reach their funding goals by deadline, which is usually a month, the money is not collected, so there is no risk to the backers.

When a project is funded, Kickstarter gets a 5 percent commission of the total, and Amazon receives an additional 3 to 5 percent for processing payments.

Texas Country artists Bruce Robison and Kelly Willis are using the money they raised on Kickstarter to make an album together for the first time. The couple exceeded their goal of \$35,000 by nearly \$10,000 and got 563 backers, lured by incentives from an advance download of a song plus streaming rough mixes from the studio for small pledges of up to \$10, to a personal concert from the artists. Those who pledged \$25 received advance downloads of songs from the album and a signed CD. Larger pledges were rewarded with concert tickets, handwritten lyrics, limited edition posters, photos and T-shirts, as well as copies of the artists' album catalog.

One backer who gave \$1,250 will get to sit in on a recording session with Robison and Willis and receive a credit on the album. Another gave \$5,000 and will have a song written for him or her by Robison. Yet another pledged \$10,000 in exchange for a house concert.

the **KICKSTARTER** revolution

Financing Careers and Building Fan Bases through Crowdfunding **by JEANNIE NAUJECK**

The money gave the couple time to write songs without the pressure of label recording constraints. "This model gives us the most freedom to manage our music and career," they said. "This new album will truly be made with and for our fans."

Some 20,000 projects have met their funding goals thus far on **Kickstarter.com**, the largest of the crowdfunding sites. Others include **Indiegogo.com**, on which independent artist Mike Block raised \$48,001 to help with medical bills after being hit by a taxi; **RocketHub.com**, which also focuses on creative and artistic projects; **Microgiving.com**, a fundraising site for various causes; and **Quirky.com**, specializing in finding support for new product development.

Kickstarter's biggest success to date has been the Pebble, a wristwatch that provides email and social media alerts, caller ID, a customizable face and a variety of apps. Within two hours of posting the request, the partners made \$100,000. Overnight, they raised \$1 million. Also, indie artist Amanda Palmer raised more than \$250,000 in the first day of her Kickstarter campaign to make her first album since leaving a major label as well as fund an art book and tour. Though her original goal was \$100,000, she had raised nearly \$600,000 from 11,000 backers in just one week.

Not every artist has a fan base the size of Palmer's or the buzz of a watch tied to the iPhone. But many have exceeded more modest goals. In November 2010, singer Mike Farris raised \$14,500, more than double his goal of \$6,000, to complete the first phase of his album *Already Alright!*. One backer pledged \$1,000 and got to spend the day with Farris, touring his favorite places around Nashville.

Nashville producer Phil Madeira asked for \$5,000 in his Kickstarter bid — and got it on the first day of his campaign. By the second day, he'd raised \$10,000. Within a week, he had gotten \$20,000 in pledges. Madeira ended the campaign with \$37,205 from 706 backers — plus another \$5,000 from people who contributed to him directly instead of going through the site.

Madeira used the money to create *Mercyland: Hymns for the Rest of Us*, a compilation of songs with spiritual themes, featuring The Carolina Chocolate Drops, The Civil Wars, Emmylou Harris, Buddy Miller, Shawn Mullins, The North Mississippi Allstars and other artists.

"I was knocked out," Madeira said. "It blew my mind. I said, 'If I get \$5,000, that will more or less cover my CD manufacturing bill.'"

Madeira let people know about the Kickstarter campaign by emailing friends and posting information about it on his Facebook pages. These contacts then passed along links to their friends, creating a viral promotional effect. That, plus near-daily interaction with backers and fans on **Kickstarter.com**, further facilitated the campaign's success.

"It was really a great way to promote and publicize the record," Madeira said. "I had a dialogue going with all these people. That kind of activity begets more activity."

Three of his backers pledged at least \$2,500 and got the opportunity

to write and record a song with Madeira. Three others took up his offer of a two-hour songwriting session in person or via Skype. And another three who pledged \$2,000 or more will get a personal house concert.

"I'm a fan of several artists on the album, but I thought the project itself, the way it was described and the theme, was really admirable," said Will Jennings, a lecturer at the University of Iowa who pledged \$100 and received a CD, a digital download and a watercolor painting of the album art. "I couldn't be more thrilled with how the whole project turned out. It's on heavy rotation in our household. And when you have a good experience, you want to tell other people, 'Hey, check out this CD!'"

Jennings peruses Kickstarter for worthy projects and so far has backed 16 of them, including a new album and film by Canadian

"On Kickstarter, you reach 100 percent of your interested audience. That's the new patronage in this economy."

— Theresa Kereakes, photographer

singer/songwriter Rose Cousins, an iPad amplifier and the Pebble watch. He has also pledged money to a project to winterize a farmer's market building and turn an old jail into a grain mill, both in Maine.

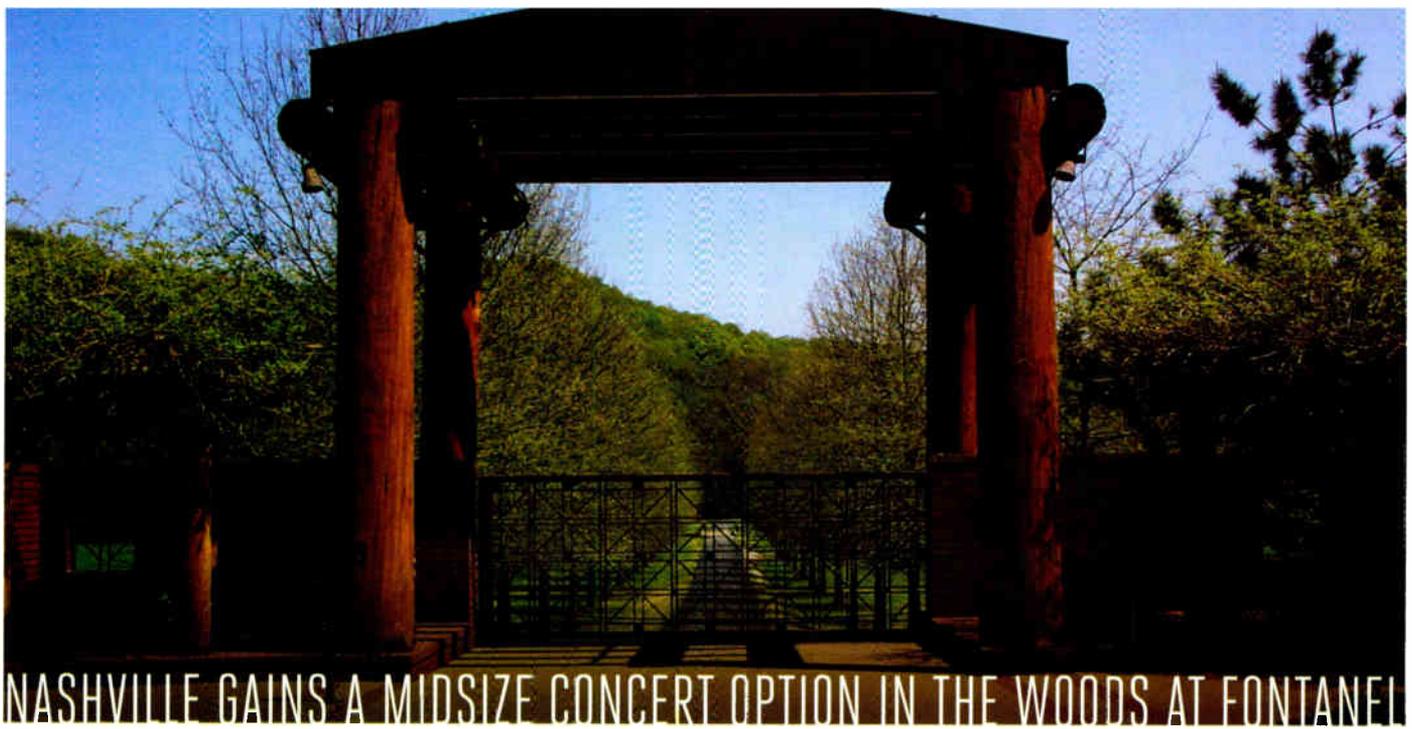
"I'm a believer in micro-financing or common financing," said Jennings, who played in a band for 16 years. "I like the idea of spreading the risk out among an array of people who are willing to lend their support. Why not let people put their money where their mouth is?"

Madeira used the excess money to pay his support team and further promote the album, which was released April 24. Since then, he's been busy fulfilling his promises to backers, including mailing out CDs and participating in songwriting sessions.

"The first order of business is making sure these people are treated well," he said. "I have at least 500 things to mail out. That's hard to do yourself. But it's been fun."

Madeira hopes to fund his next project, a solo album, by tapping the backers who funded *Mercyland*. "I don't anticipate the kind of income that *Mercyland* brought in because I won't have Emmylou Harris; I won't have this cast of real stars," he admitted. "But now I've got this network of 700 contacts who did say 'yes'. And out of those, I'll bet half of them will support a solo record. We'll see."

Jeannie Naujeck is a Nashville-based writer who is working on her first novel.



by LORIE HOLLABAUGH

When Dale Morris, Joe Galante and Clint Higham purchased Barbara Mandrell's and her husband Ken Dudney's beautiful, sprawling mansion Fontanel in 2002, they had no specific plans for the 136 acres in Whites Creek, just minutes from Downtown Nashville. For several years, it was used for parties, events and artist accommodations. (Big Kenny lived on the property in the days before Big & Rich took off.)

But when Morris' partner Marc Oswald bought Galante's and Higham's stakes in the property, talk turned to doing something interesting — and nine years later The Woods Amphitheater at Fontanel was born. Already it's become familiar not only to local audiences but also to fans throughout the country who have seen it in the film "Country Strong" and the TV special "A Toby Keith Classic Christmas."

The complex includes an outdoor amphitheater set in the mansion's front yard, restaurant, pub, microbrewery, box office, gift shop and showcase theater, all of which sprang from the initial idea of creating an outdoor venue similar in vibe to Atlanta's Chastain Park Amphitheatre or Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts near Washington, D.C.

"I talked to Tony Conway (President, Conway Entertainment Group) about the capacity, and he told us about a study that said that 80 percent of acts that tour want 5,000 seats," said Oswald. "I went to my brother Greg (Oswald, Co-Head of the Nashville Office, WME), who is a touring expert. He told me I needed to put in production for an arena show instead of a midsized venue because this is Music City and there are major artists who want to play it because it's so beautiful. He said, 'Wouldn't it just break your heart if an act like Rasca! Flatts would want to do something wonderful out there for a charity and you couldn't do it because their show wouldn't fit?' That's why our stage is so big (5,200 square feet); it's about the scale of production so eight semis can roll in and unload their gear. We spent a lot of money to create that production capability."

This commitment to ease and quality doesn't escape artists' notice. "The night we played The Woods, it poured down rain the entire show," said Troy Gentry of Montgomery Gentry. "But it sounded great onstage. That says a lot about a venue when you have that much rain and no electrical problems. The way the stage is situated, we could back our trucks right up to the stage

to unload, which is always nice for the crew guys. The less distance you have to carry a case from the truck to the stage, the better. There's also plenty of room for buses, which makes it easy on our drivers."

The mansion itself is an amenity, offering a unique green room experience for artists and VIPs. "It's a one-of-a-kind place," said Gary Weinberger, Owner of Red Mountain Entertainment, which specializes in venue promotion. "There's nothing else like it anywhere. Artists have an opportunity to go up there and relax or go into the game room or just hang out and have some of their own private time. It gives them a great diversion from being on the road for a time."

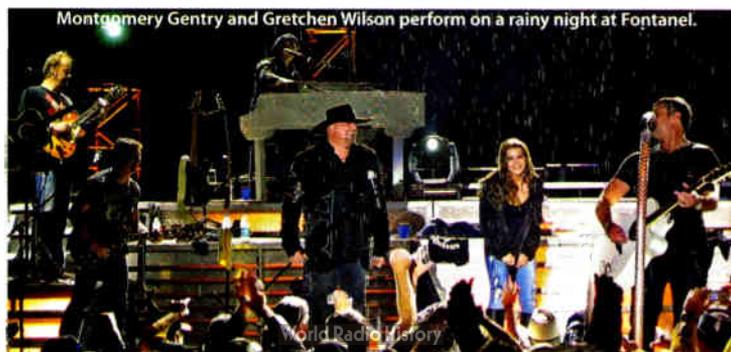
"The mansion is amazing," Gentry agreed. "I could definitely spend some time in there. It's probably not good for pre-show, though, because you could get lost in there!"

"Few venues in America just have an undeniable vibe," said Oswald. "Chastain Park, Wolf Trap, the Hollywood Bowl, Red Rocks and this have it. We weren't going to duplicate any of those, but we were trying to create something that would be spoken of in the same sentences where the vibe enhances the experience for the fan and the artist on an extreme level. We just want the ultimate consumer experience: Drive straight in, park without being hassled, come over to one of our restaurants, have a beer or a glass of wine or cocktail where we have music outside, and then go into the concert. In the mansion, you can grab stuff and touch it. You can pull a Buck Owens guitar off the wall and strum it. If it breaks, we'll fix it. And you can't do that anywhere else. We love having music

in here, and I know it makes Barbara Mandrell and her whole family feel good to know that this is a place of music."

FontanelMansion.com

Lorie Hollabaugh writes for American Profile, Country Weekly and other publications.



CAROL LEE COOPER'S HARMONIC CONVERGENCE

by BOB DOERSCHUK

It sounds like a singer's worst nightmare. You're on national live radio and television. Just before walking onstage from the wings, Garth Brooks turns and asks you and your group to join him. You've had no rehearsal and just a few seconds' warning, but you figure you can handle it since you know most of his material.

Then, as you're standing on the edge of the spotlight, he announces that he's introducing a song no one has ever heard before from his upcoming album, counts the tempo — and you're off!

For Carol Lee Cooper, though, that experience wasn't scary at all. From 1973 until March of this year, she and her group, the Carol Lee Singers, backed thousands of artists at the Grand Ole Opry, mostly without any arrangement or even discussion with the performer. But whether tearing it up on an old mountain tune with Grandpa Jones, purring smooth pads behind a Countryopolitan veteran or riffing with James Brown or Stevie Wonder, the quartet sounded as if they'd been born singing that song together.

Still, that night onstage with Brooks was one of the more memorable in her 38-year run. "It was just Garth and his guitar, so if we made one mistake, the world would hear it," she recalled. "So I told the group, 'We're gonna do *oohs* and *aahs* on the first verse and chorus. *Listen* for the words. *Listen* for the last line of each verse and the first and last lines of the chorus so we can plug them in the second time.' Then as he started playing, I listened to the runs he made — Garth knows how to make runs that are really pretty on a guitar. That led me to know that he was going to a 2 minor. I could take the 6 of it, indicating it with the little finger on my right hand, and then the alto would know to fill it in by singing the 4 while the tenor sang the 1. I'd give a different number for the bass; if I wanted him to sing the 5, I'd show five fingers on my left hand while I was on the 6 of the 4 chord. That would make it what we call in the studio, a 4 over 5."

Amazingly — or maybe typically, considering the Carol Lee Singers' track record — the performance came off seamlessly. Was Brooks impressed? "I don't know if he even realized what we were doing," Cooper answered, laughing. "He was always so good to us when he was out there working, but I never wanted him to know it was ever tough because I always wanted him to call on us."

Cooper's grasp of harmony and self-assurance onstage stem partly from her family background. Her parents, Opry icons Stoney and Wilma Lee Cooper, welcomed their daughter as a third harmony voice when she was just 2 years old. At 14, Carol Lee became a member of the Opry — the second youngest in its history. By that time, she was augmenting her natural gifts through diligent study of what she heard on records and on the radio. She was already playing guitar when she decided she wanted to learn piano too.

"We were on the road, so I didn't have time to stop and take lessons," she said. "But (artist/songwriter) Ted Daffan said, 'I can show you how to *build* chords. He gave me a chart and numbered it, one to eight, C being one, D being two and eight being the higher C. Then he gave me another set of numbers for chords, so C would be 1, 3 and 5. Then it was

augmented: 1, 3 and 5-sharp. That's how I learned to build chords in my mind. I'd have the radio on in the car and I'd think, 'OK, I want to practice the alto part today.' Then I'd do the tenor part, because I wanted to know how every part worked so I could communicate it to people if I had to."

These fundamentals of the now established Nashville Number System of notation fed into Cooper's feel for playing parts against one another and cuing her singers in real time. "If I wanted to sing a 3 on the 1 chord, I'd do this," she said, holding up three fingers. "Then the girl would know to

be on the one underneath and the guy knew to be on the five." Other hand signals would indicate major or minor voicings, syllables, no vibrato and other details.



"I wanted to know how every part worked so I could communicate it to people if I had to."

— Carol Lee Cooper

Forced to leave the group while recovering from a back injury and undergoing vocal rehabilitation, Cooper is now steeped in other projects, including a book, a possible compilation of interviews she conducted while hosting "Nashville Nights with Carol Lee" on WSM and her debut album as a solo vocalist. Meanwhile, she is happy to share advice with new artists who want to emphasize harmonies in their material.

"Study!" she emphasized. "Know what you're listening to. Identify each part and say, 'OK, that's a 5, 3 and 7, with a 2 in the bass.' Learn to sing without vibrato. And if the solo singer is flat, sing with him instead of the band. Remember, the band has its own thing; you are there to support the singer."

CarolLeeCooper.com



TAKES IT FROM THE TOP

by DEBORAH EVANS PRICE

Since his debut single in 1989, Alan Jackson has become one of the most dependable hitmakers in the Country format. Consistency has been a cornerstone in his personal and professional life, but in the past two years the soft-spoken Georgia native has weathered major changes — one of his own choosing and another that no one ever wants to face.

After weathering the devastating news in late 2010 that his wife, Denise, had cancer, Jackson is pleased to report that she's healthy and life has returned to normal. He's back at work and excited about his new album, *Thirty Miles West*, his first since his departure from Sony Music Nashville's Arista roster.

Jackson's new home is EMI Records Nashville, which released *Thirty Miles West* jointly with ACR, Alan's Country Records. "They are the hottest label in town. Mike Dungan and I go back to the beginning," said Jackson, referring to the former Capitol Records Nashville chief and now Chairman/CEO of Universal Music Nashville. "He was with Arista when I first started. It was like a little family. Everybody seemed happy and was loving their job and passionate about the music. We just had a really good feeling."

"WRITING SONGS, FINDING THEM, GOING IN THERE AND SINGING, MAKING A RECORD. THAT'S ALWAYS THE BEST PART." — Alan Jackson

While shopping for a new label, Jackson felt that Dungan had replicated that atmosphere at Capitol Nashville. "He was in charge, but he wasn't like a stuffy executive," Jackson said. "Everybody loves him and the staff seems happy. It seemed like a comfortable place, a warm environment, and everybody is excited about the music. It felt like an early Arista. I couldn't imagine going anywhere else."

Of course, since Jackson joined that roster, Dungan has moved over to UMG Nashville. Not to worry, though: "I feel like we'll all end up on the same family tree eventually," Jackson said, with a sly smile.

Signing with EMI has also reunited Jackson with Cindy Mabe, Senior VP, Marketing, Capitol Records Nashville. Mabe, who had previously worked with him at Sony, has high expectations for *Thirty Miles West*. "We have an incredible roster of artists, some of the most unique, pure artistic people in the genre. But we didn't have what Alan represents. Alan has always been about the music and at times has connected with this country like no other musician has. He has been the voice of the little man, has spoken about a movement of changing times in

our format, has stood up for his heroes along the way and has kept us laughing, loving and remembering."

The new album mixes the heart-searing ballads and lively uptempos that have populated Jackson's career. He wrote six of its 13 tracks by himself, with Shawn Camp, Guy Clark, Terry McBride and Chris Stapleton among the others who landed songs on the project.

"I still write pretty much the same type of things that I've always written about, the things you go through, having daughters, watching them grow up — things that have changed in your life like that," he said. "There's always something you can write about."

His daughters — Mattie, Alexandra and Dani — inspired the new upbeat tune "Her Life's a Song." "They've got their iPods and they'll be blasting through the speakers out by the swimming pool. One minute it will be some old Country thing; they might even play one of my songs every now and then," he said, with a smile. "And next it will be some rap thing and then some pop thing. They just listen to all that stuff. That's pretty much the way a lot of the young people are.

"It's no different than us coming along," he reflected. "We listened to Southern rock, pop, Country and all different things too — jazz, R&B. 'Her Life's a Song' is just me writing about what I see in them and their music."

Jackson's own musical history includes 13 studio albums, three greatest-hits collections, two holiday albums and a multi-Platinum gospel album, *Precious Memories*, released in 2006 and recently reissued. His combined sales are nearly 60 million albums worldwide, which have included 60 Top 40 tunes on the Country chart. Among those, 51 have hit the Top 10, 48 have climbed to the Top 5 and 35 went all the way to the summit. He has earned 16 CMA Awards and been inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Even with all he has achieved, Jackson maintains his place in the front ranks of contemporary Country headliners. His recent single, "So You Don't Have to Love Me Anymore," resonated with radio and fans. Written by Jackson's nephew Adam Wright and Jay Knowles, the poignant ballad whetted appetites for fans anxious to hear the new album. Other standout tracks include the beautiful love song "Everything but the Wings" (written by Jackson) and the Southern anthem "Dixie Highway" (Jackson), which inspired the album's title as Jackson grew up 30 miles west of the Dixie Highway in Newnan, Ga.

"I started writing about growing up in the South, and of course Zac (Brown Band) and I did 'As She's Walking Away' (Zac Brown and Wyatt Durrette III)," Jackson noted. "And he said he'd do another one with me. So I called him, sent him that song, he came in and sang on it. It has, like, eight verses and a bunch of picking in there. Of course, you couldn't put it out that long as a single. We'd have to get it down to four minutes or something, which is not a problem."



photo: Russ Harrington

The most personal song on the album, "When I Saw You Leaving," stemmed from his wife's bout with cancer. "We were down in Florida and we found out on our anniversary," he said of the staggering phone call that came on their 31st wedding anniversary, Dec. 15, 2010. "She's been going back for scans and all that stuff. Everything is clear and looking good. That chemotherapy is pretty rough on you, but she's doing good now. Vanderbilt (University Medical Center) did a good job."

The recording session for "When I Saw You Leaving" was tough. "It was the hardest thing we've ever recorded in the studio, because the pickers knew what it was about," Jackson said. "The first time or two we ran through it, I couldn't hardly sing the second half, and then they'd get tore up and I couldn't sing listening to them. Everybody was just wrung out by the time we got through with it."

Jackson recorded *Thirty Miles West* at Castle Recording Studios with Keith Stegall again at the helm. Aside from *Like Red on a Rose*, which Alison Krauss produced in 2006, all of Jackson's albums have had Stegall at the helm. "This is the longest relationship I ever had with an artist, and it's been a wonderful one," said Stegall, whose credits also include George Jones, Randy Travis, Zac Brown Band and many other artists. "We've shared a lot of good times together. It's very comfortable and still so gratifying."

Was there any extra pressure with this being Jackson's first EMI album? "No, not really," Stegall replied. "There's always a little bit of pressure and concern with what you're doing, but this was just turning the page into another chapter, continuing to do what we do. It felt natural and we both felt good about everything. It wasn't like we were contemplating whether it would work or not work. It was, 'Let's go back and do what we always do because it's worked before.' The past is truly the key to the present."

"We signed Alan because he still has music to be heard that connects in exactly the same way it always had," Mabe added. "In fact, we are seeing a whole new generation discover and connect with him because he is as real as it gets. That's the ultimate music translator. Alan can continue to both write and find the songs that will set their own standard of quality and change and grow this format."

Jackson is grateful for the past, confident in the present and always looking toward the future. Retirement is not an option. "I don't play enough on the road to really wear me out," he said. "The road does get old sometimes, but as far as making the albums, that's always fun. That's not a job. Writing songs, finding them, going in there and singing, making a record, that's always the best part."

AlanJackson.com

Deborah Evans Price is a freelance journalist based in Nashville. For 17 years, she has been published regularly in Billboard.

NEW FRONTIERS OPEN

As the means for delivering and consuming music continue to grow more sophisticated (and more digital), so do the choices for promoting that music and the artists who create it. Such is the case with electronic press kits (EPKs) and video news releases (VNRs), tools that share the same basic goals of their non-digital predecessors: getting airplay, inspiring reviews and other media coverage, facilitating bookings and winning the attention of music consumers.

The overriding goal is to “create awareness for people to review the single and take a closer look at the artist,” said Carson James, Senior VP, Promotion, Broken Bow Records/Stoney Creek Records.

Veteran booking agent David Kiswiney, VP at Buddy Lee Attractions, believes that artists must stay current with technology and give their agents what they need for effective promotion. “We used to send things out: paperwork and pictures and bios, maybe a CD,” he said. “But now we just link people to whatever the artist has set up for a press page, maybe with a password if they want to download pictures and media and high-resolution things. We’re relying on the artist to make us pretty much paperless as far as their promo goes.”

EPKs are hardly new; the first one, created by online music pioneer Andre Gray, premiered live on the Web in 1995. But they are becoming increasingly indispensable. A typical artist website, in fact, is an EPK, containing a bio, live footage, interview footage, media coverage, awards, music, promotional videos and/or photos.

VNRs have a more limited aim. As the digital equivalents of a press release, they focus attention on a specific event or cause and often mimic news reports. CMA was pleased with the increased viewership it saw in response to VNRs placed on its FTP (File Transfer Protocol) site to promote the CMA Awards live broadcast in November and two broadcasts of “CMA Country Christmas” in December.

“With budgets being cut across the board at radio clusters, at television stations and in newsrooms, the easier you can make it to disseminate the news, the better your chance of getting the news placed,” said publicist Kirt Webster, head of Webster & Associates. “With superstar clients, there isn’t enough time in the day to accommodate every request. Many outlets will use a ‘canned’ interview in place of a one-on-one, as they typically are only looking for sound bites.”

It’s All About Content

Whatever the medium — website, CD, DVD, emailed link, USB flash drive — content is king. For Robert Gallagher, that means music is the key universal ingredient. As Entertainment Director at Billy Bob’s Texas, he is flooded with submissions from bands vying to play at the Fort Worth nightclub, which bills itself as “the world’s largest honky-tonk.”

If the studio demo isn’t good, Gallagher said, “There’s no reason to look any further.” As for other content, “Just keep it simple: the actual sound, the look, their experience and where they play.”

Keep it short too. “You can only make these press kits so long before you lose someone’s attention,” James advised. “So there has to be pop and sizzle to it.”

And look for new ways to use the technology. Broken Bow and Stoney Creek create lyric videos for their singles and post them on YouTube and VEVO; links can be sent to “radio or whatever medium we’re trying to impress,” James noted.

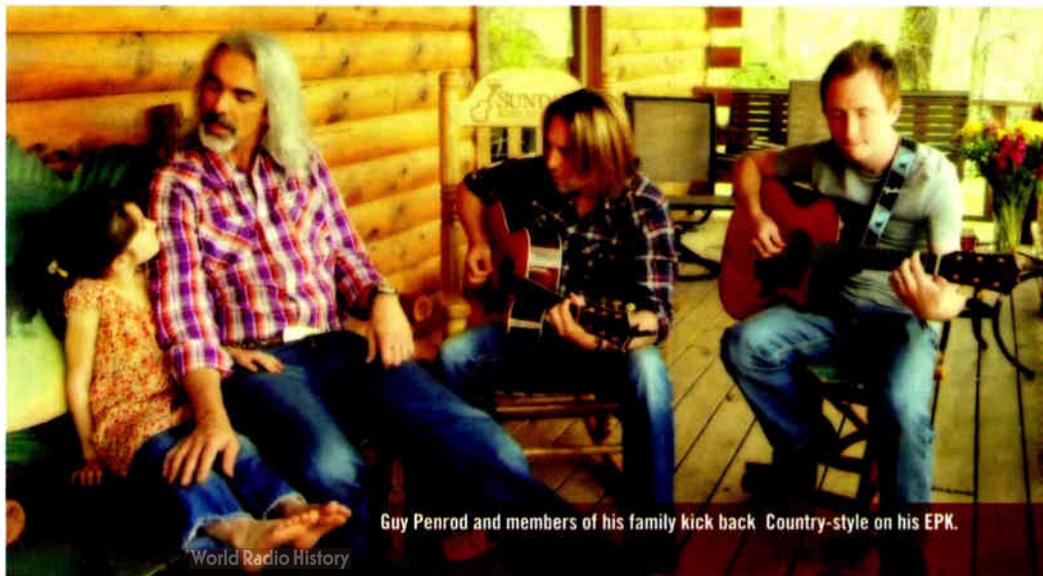
On an EPK promoting new Broken Bow artist Dustin Lynch, “We focused on him as a person, as a singer, as a songwriter — and we never interviewed him,” James said. “We just interviewed people around town to get their view. That seemed to be pretty successful. We used that on our radio tour setup, and it was probably four-and-a-half, five minutes. Before he even played, people were able to see what some of the biggest songwriters in town — Tim Nichols, Brett Beavers, Luke Wooten, who co-produced the album — thought of him.”

The format helped publicist Martha Moore, President/Founder, so much MOORE Media, present Christian music superstar Guy Penrod in a new role with his solo Country debut, *Breathe Deep*. Essentially, she let the pictures speak for themselves, as producer/director Marcel shot footage of Penrod and his family on their rural spread south of Nashville. “We sent it extensively to Country radio and Country media,” she said. “He’s got a pickup truck, horses and a rustic home. The EPK was the perfect vehicle to show people that Guy really is all about Country.”

Putting It All Together

Reid Long, who heads Reid Long Productions, has created EPKs for Trace Adkins, Jason Aldean, Dierks Bentley, Eric Church and Little Big Town, among others. While some artists have plenty of content to work with, such as television appearances, that is usually not the case.

“The vast majority of artists don’t have that content, so it’s a matter of creating it and putting it together,” Long said. “One of the first steps is to shoot an interview. Live and studio footage may also be needed to provide a glimpse into the music and performance style.”



Guy Penrod and members of his family kick back. Country-style on his EPK.

photo: Penrod — Marcel; Lynch — courtesy of Broken Bow Records

Cost can vary greatly, depending on the amount of shooting and the sophistication of the package. "They can be anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000," James estimated.

"For something very basic, it would probably start in the \$2,000 range," Long said. "For something heavy with graphics and even a DVD menu, it could cost more than \$10,000. Realistically, about \$5,000 would be on the upper end, including all the shooting, editing, graphic design and even a voice-over."

James and other Broken Bow/Stoney Creek executives, including Jon Loba, Senior VP, and Lynette Garbonola, Director of New Media, are directly involved in the content of their artists' EPKs. "We bring in outside sources to film it, put it together and all those things," James said. "We have two or three videographers and editors in town that have done stellar jobs for us. We feel our EPK-type product is very high quality."

Online sites, including **ReverbNation.com** and **Sonicbids.com**, offer free or budget-priced press kits. But these sites provide only a platform for assembling the content, which the artist's camp must provide.

Everyone Can Benefit

EPKs can be useful to artists at any level of their careers. "Certainly they can be important to artists who are breaking, just to get their names out and get their personalities across in a couple of minutes," Long said. "And for artists who are further along in their career, it can be helpful to get them on a late-night television show or to pitch a specific album."

James suggested that newer acts might have more to gain from an EPK than their well-known counterparts. Broken Bow's Jason Aldean has numerous avenues to create awareness, including playing to 15,000 or 20,000 seats a night on tour and having ample opportunity for TV exposure. On the other hand, he said, "We've got an act in Thompson Square that had the most-played record last year. They were nominated for two Grammys, they worked with Jason last year, and they're on tour with Lady A this year. There's a lot of buzz about them. But we still run across people who, when we play 'Are You Gonna Kiss Me or Not,' they're familiar with the song but not with Thompson Square."

"We probably think an act is broken a lot more than it really is," he concluded.

How Do You Want It?

It can be useful to offer your content in multiple formats. Although electronic delivery is the general rule, DVD still has its usefulness. On a recent promotional tour with Dustin Lynch, Broken Bow used his EPK on DVD to better control the viewing environment and filter out possibilities for distraction.

Another appeal for this format is that DVDs have collectible value. "We call it a sizzle reel," said Kiswiney of Buddy Lee Attractions. "Some live footage, a little interview, a little talk, a little history, some songs and where to contact the artist or the artist's agent: That sizzle reel will sell it, and a lot of corporate buyers file and collect those things."

At Billy Bob's Texas, band submissions come in a range of formats: ReverbNation links, EPKs on DVD, old-school press kits — "even bands that cut and paste their own and make color copies," said Gallagher. "I still probably get as many physical packages as I do EPKs."

Even so, Gallagher, who has been booking shows for 30 years and currently books concerts and house bands for Billy Bob's, favors links above all other formats. "Then it's not something stacking up."

Because having to download a press release can be a hassle and CDs can pile up, Cindy Watts, who covers Country Music for *The Tennessean*, prefers having easy online access to promotional material. "I would rather somebody just email me the press information," she said. "When they put it all on a website, it's better for me because I don't have to keep up with it."

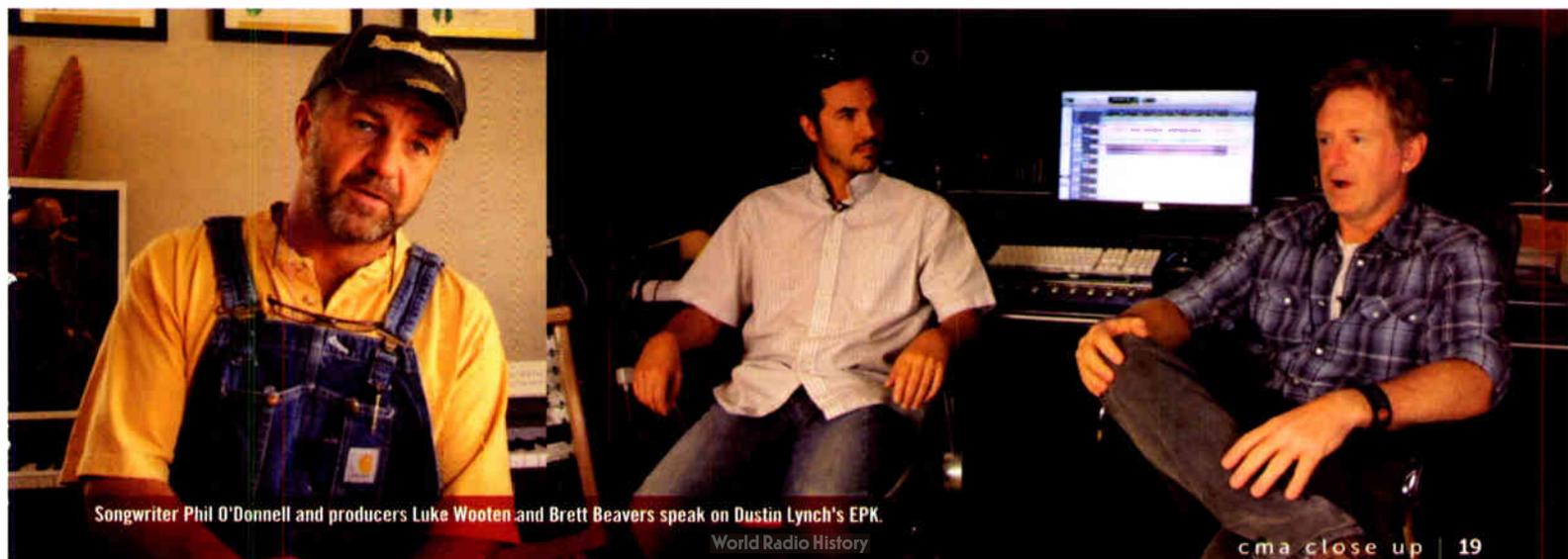
The Same Message in Different Packaging

Whatever the format or medium, it's clear that new avenues for creative promotion have been opened thanks to the advent of less expensive, more accessible tools.

Jeff Walter's books include The Insider's Guide to Nashville and The Insider's Guide to Greater Lexington and the Kentucky Bluegrass.

**"The easier you can make it
to disseminate the news,
the better your chance
of getting the news placed."**

— Kirt Webster, Webster & Associates



Songwriter Phil O'Donnell and producers Luke Wooten and Brett Beavers speak on Dustin Lynch's EPK.

Honky-tonk legend Gene Watson is celebrating his 50th anniversary as a recording artist with a flurry of activity that has made him gladly busy.

by **ROBERT K. OERMANN**

He's extremely happy right now," reported his manager, John Lytle, President, Lytle Management Group. "He is so dedicated to what he's doing. This seemed like the perfect time to remind the industry what this guy has accomplished and all the great songs he's sung. We'd been talking about re-recording his greatest hits for several years. And it occurred to us that doing that and celebrating the 50th anniversary at the same time would be a good idea."

Two hurdles on the path toward this goal stood right at the start. One of the curiosities of the record business is that artists who record for a major label pay for their own recording sessions, yet the label owns the finished recordings. In addition, Watson's big hits of 1975 through 1990 were recorded for several different corporations.

To address both situations, Watson re-recorded his classics for his own label on a 25-song collection called *The Best of the Best*. Session players recreated the original arrangements, almost note for note. Watson's voice has not aged. As a result, these performances sound precisely like the originals — and Watson finally "owns" his hits himself.

"I wanted these to sound as close to the originals as could be done," he said. "I just thank the good Lord above that he's let me keep my voice intact. In fact, I probably hit the notes better now than I could back then."

The album's Music Director, Dirk Johnson, went out of his way to hire players who had participated in the original sessions or, if they weren't available, those who understood and loved those recordings. Their familiarity with the music made everyone's job easier, especially since Johnson had isolated key parts on the older recordings on Avid Pro Tools, so they could be immediately cued and played back for quick reference.

He also worked to update sound quality while retaining the feel of each tune. "Everyone played through amps in the studio back then," Johnson said. "Because more people record direct now, I'd take those parts and run them back into amps that were used in that period of time. There was an entire week where it sounded like there was one player in my room, doing the same part over and over again, but those were the new parts for this album, blowing through that amp into a mic."

Among the more than 50 charted singles and 21 Top 10 blockbusters on the new collection are "Farewell Party" (written by Lawton Williams), "Got No Reason Now for Goin' Home" (Johnny Russell), "Fourteen Carat Mind" (Dallas Frazier and Larry Lee), "Love in the Hot Afternoon" (Vince Matthews and Kent Westberry), "Memories to Burn" (Dave Kirby and Warren Robb), "Paper Rosie" (Dallas Harms), "Sometimes I Get Lucky and Forget" (Bobby Lee House and Ernie Rowell) and "Speak Softly (You're Talking to My Heart)" (Jessie Mendenhall and Steve Spurgin).

In April, Watson celebrated his new album with a concert at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and performed twice on the Grand Ole Opry, where he presented each member of the show's cast with a copy of *The Best of the Best*. RFD-TV dedicated an edition of "Larry's Country Diner" to Watson. And just prior to the album's release in February, Sirius/XM satellite radio recorded a concert and three-hour interview with him.

"It was so great listening to him," said Lytle. "Gene doesn't even know how interesting his stories are or how fascinating his life has been. It's fascinating to work with somebody who has his kind of history."

Watson accepts his remarkable vocal talent as a matter of course. All seven Watson children sang, as did his parents. "I can remember singing before I can remember talking," he said. "Even when I was a kid, if I heard a song twice, I knew it."

Born in Palestine, Texas, in 1943, Gary Gene Watson was singing in holiness churches with his family at an early age. His father played blues harmonica and guitar alongside African-American field laborers. Both

parents were church singers and guitarists. Watson grew up loving blues, classic gospel and the Country stars of the 1950s.

Even amid the toughest hard-luck stories of Country Music, Watson's stood out. His family drifted from shack to shack as his itinerant father took logging and crop-picking jobs. He worked with his parents and siblings in the fields. There was no place to call "home" until his father customized an old school bus for living quarters and transportation.

"Yeah, we were poor," the singer remembered. "Today, people live in motor homes. Ours was yellow. We traveled to Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas until one day my dad decided we were going to Phoenix, Ariz. We didn't have any money to go to Phoenix, so we worked our way out there. We would cut spinach. We would pull radishes. We would pick potatoes. We would pick cotton. Whatever it took, we did it. That's the only life I knew."

His earliest public performance came when he was 12 years old. It was a duet with one of his sisters in a Pentecostal church. His Country career began when he formed a duo with brother Jessie, when he was 15 and Jessie was 12.

Watson dropped out of school in the ninth grade to help support his family. He learned to do auto body repair — so by day he worked on cars and at night he worked in bars. To this day, he relaxes by repairing cars at his "Toy Shop" garage at home in Houston, Texas. Through local gigs Watson built a strong area following, leading to his first single release in 1962.

"My first recording ever was on a little old independent label, Sun Valley Records," he said. "Maybe I thought I could sell them at my shows or something. It was 'If It Was That Easy' and 'If You Can't Come, Just Call.' It was not any good, but, boy, I thought that was something. I had my own record.

"But doing music professionally was never a goal of mine," Watson noted. "I always wanted to work on cars. I always say I never did go looking for music. Music found me. I played music for enjoyment. I liked the ice-cold beer and the passing of the hat and the \$15 a night. I didn't expect that much to come out of it."

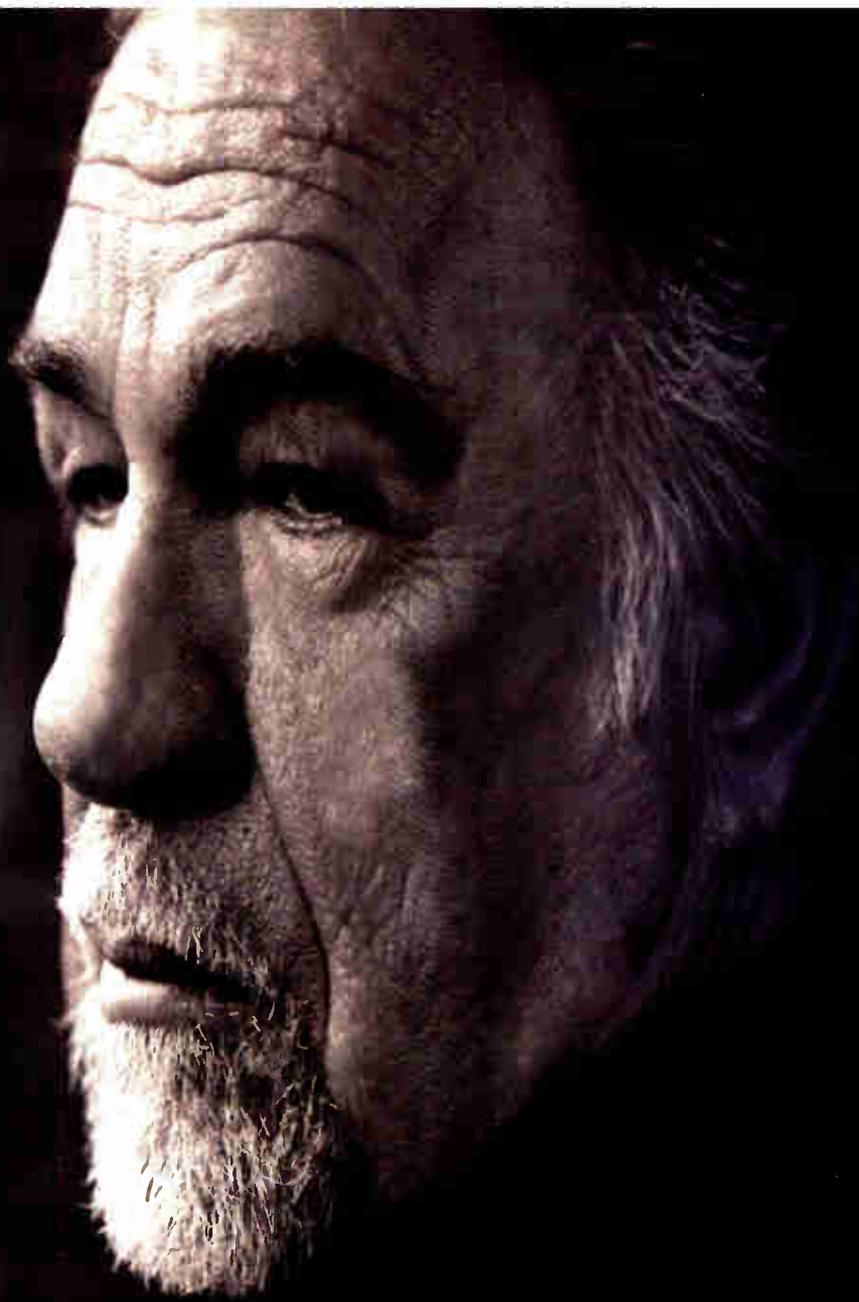
**"I NEVER DID GO
LOOKING FOR MUSIC.
MUSIC FOUND ME."** — Gene Watson

That changed after The Wilburn Brothers came to town one night in 1964 and heard Watson at one of his nightclub shows. "They said they'd like for me to go with them and do a couple of shows," he said. "So I came up to Nashville and traveled to North Carolina with them. They got me on the Grand Ole Opry, and I got a standing ovation and an encore singing 'It Is No Secret What God Can Do' and the Hank Williams song, 'I Can't Help It If I'm Still in Love with You.' After that, they carried me down to the Ernest Tubbs Record Shop, and I got onstage and broadcast on 'The Midnite Jamboree.' That was my first experience with the big time. I was 21."

Still, Watson wasn't quite ready to move up to Music City. Back home in Houston, his singing attracted local financial backers for several recordings. Singles for little labels such as Resco and Wide World, and a self-titled album for Stoneway Records in 1972, gradually built his reputation. Watson first made the national charts with his Resco hit "Bad Water" in 1975. Its follow-up was the sultry, provocative "Love in the Hot Afternoon." Capitol Records picked it up for national distribution, launching Watson as a hitmaker.

"It all happened so fast that I really didn't have anything planned," he admitted. "It's really been a step-by-step process with me. I'm talking

GENE WATSON



RECREATES HIS CLASSICS NOTE-FOR-NOTE ON *THE BEST OF THE BEST*

from the ground level up. I had no knowledge of what I was doing."

After five years and 13 hits with Capitol, Watson spent three years at MCA Records. Following a dozen hits with that company, he stopped briefly at Curb Records before signing with the Epic label in 1985. His next stop was Warner Bros. Records, where he landed in the 1990s.

By this time, an entire generation of Country vocalists was enthralled with this "singer's singer." Clint Black, Tracy Byrd, Tracy Lawrence, Doug Stone and George Strait all proclaimed themselves fans. Tim Mensy once wrote to him, "Gene, thanks for teaching us how to sing."

Watson became notable for preferring to record live with the studio musicians. He often sings a song perfectly on the first take. When he performs on the Opry, other stars gather in the wings to watch his artistry in action.

He is also known as a "man of the people." Humility and personal dignity are his hallmarks: Gene Watson is exactly the same person whether in the spotlight or at home. Despite the acclaim, admiration and widespread respect, he remains a plain-spoken soul.

Since 1993, Watson has been recording prolifically for independent

labels. He issued new CDs in 1993 (*Uncharted Mind*), 1996 (*The Good Ole Days*) and 1997 (*Jesus Is All I Need* and *A Way to Survive*).

Diagnosed with cancer, Watson underwent surgery and endured successful chemotherapy in 2000 and 2001. Remarkably, he kept singing through it all, issuing new collections in 2001 (*From the Heart*), 2005 (*Then & Now*), 2007 (*In a Perfect World*, featuring guest vocalists Mark Chesnutt, Vince Gill, Joe Nichols, Connie Smith, Rhonda Vincent and Lee Ann Womack) and 2009 (*A Taste of the Truth*). In 2011, he and Vincent collaborated on the all-duet collection *Your Money and My Good Looks*.

"Gene is a timeless artist," observed Rowan. "He sings from a deep well, a spiritual place. Most of the icons of our business are no longer at the top of their game, musically. But he is."

"All I can say is I try to do my job to the best of my ability," Watson summed up. "I think a whole lot of my success has to do with honesty and truthfulness. I don't blow no smoke. I tell it like it is."

GeneWatsonMusic.com; @GeneWatsonMusic

Robert K. Oermann is the author of eight books about Country Music.



CMA CEO Steve Moore; Jeff Walker, President/CEO, AristoMedia Group; and 2010 CMA Global Country Artist Award winner Tommy Emmanuel after the 2011 Global Artist Party.

JEFF WALKER

Even before joining CMA, Jeff Walker had an insider's view of the organization. His father, Bill Walker, began a 14-year run as Music Director for the CMA Awards in 1975. Around that time, Jeff flew in from his hometown of Sydney, Australia, for a visit. Shortly after that, he settled in Nashville, got involved in a small indie label named Coa Brio Records and applied for CMA membership.

So I was an early believer and an early advocate for CMA," said Walker, whose many contributions were recognized in 1996 by CMA with its President's Award. "I honestly believe that the Country Music industry wouldn't be where it is today without the Country Music Association."

Since his first election to the CMA Board in the 1990s, Walker has been a catalyst in mapping out strategies and taking action to help pursue CMA's goals. In particular, he is an advocate in the campaign to spread awareness of Country Music throughout the world. When CMA centralized these efforts by creating its Global Markets Task Force in 1990, Walker was appointed to lead it. Its accomplishments included an expansion of CMA membership abroad, appearances by Country artists in select foreign markets and two ongoing showcases for international Country artists before each CMA Music Festival: Chevy Presents the CMA Global Artist Party (held June 4 this year at The Stage on Broadway) and CMA Presents the Aristo Global Show (June 5 at The Second Fiddle).

"A lot of artists look to Nashville as the Mecca of their universe," he said. "Giving these artists opportunities to put on their résumés the fact that they've played in Nashville really helps us to spread word of the genre worldwide. And while they're here, I help them make industry connections and interface with other artists whenever I can. I benefit from knowing that these people are going back having had a positive experience."

In early 1980, he founded the AristoMedia Group. As its President and now CEO, he helped invigorate the music video industry in Nashville and offered clients services that included public relations, new media, video marketing and promotion for records and dance club venues.

His service to CMA has grown with time, from being at the forefront of bringing CMA Music Festival into the Downtown district to monitoring its Riverfront and daytime shows from 2005 to 2009. "One of the best things that CMA does is the Keep the Music Playing All Stars event every year at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center," Walker said. "Being involved with that is, to me, like a shot of adrenaline to keep me motivated, to keep working hard and conscientiously for CMA when I see them doing such good things for the community."

"I don't look at it as work," he added. "I look at it as having a great time and helping other people. I can't imagine just working 40 hours a week and then saying, 'That's it!' There are so many things to do, but everything I've given, I've gotten back in other ways. I always try to be there to raise my hand if I think something needs attention."

AristoMedia.com



Shelley Calabrese with a painting created by a homeless visitor at Nashville's Room In The Inn.

SHELLEY CALABRESE

During her eight years with DS Management, Shelley Calabrese helped clients focus on what they did best while she handled their business needs. Working independently now, she has built a client list that has included JD Souther, Jana Stanfield, Third Day, Robin Crow and Dan Tyminski. She's busy, but not to the point that she can't also apply her skills *pro bono* to various worthy causes.

"I am extremely practical," she said, with an infectious laugh. "I am extremely non-creative. With anything I do, whether it's philanthropy or work or even personal, I'm very methodical. That's why it's worked so well with some of the individuals, because they're creative and I'm linear. We meet in the middle and get stuff done."

Some of the best stuff Calabrese has done has involved Room In The Inn, a shelter and learning facility dedicated to serving Nashville's homeless community, veterans, recovering addicts and others in need. Musicians and artists volunteer there often as teachers. But it takes organization to make their contributions matter in the long run. That's why Denise Stiff, head of DS Management, asked for a favor one day in 2005.

"Denise had a longtime relationship with them," Calabrese recalled. "Room In The Inn has an art- and recovery-related program, and this wonderful, amazing, quirky artwork was stacking up to the point that they had to paint over the canvases to start something fresh. So they formulated this idea to have an art show and sell some of it to raise money for the program. Denise asked if I would get involved and make it come to fruition, so I did. I've been with them ever since."

Along with serving on the organization's women's advisory board, Calabrese makes sure that its monthly email newsletter goes out on time and with minimal errors. "I'll put in a few hours a day, usually in the first week or two of the month, communicating with them to figure out what items they want to focus on in these e-blasts, crafting it and sending it out. I can do it from home any time from 9 o'clock in the morning to 9 o'clock at night, so it's really very easy."

Calabrese has organized her time so well, in fact, that she is also involved with other charities, including Compassion International, for which she sponsored a child from 1997 until he graduated out from the program recently, and Amelia's Attic, founded by her mother, Becky Leonard, to assist poor families in Russia. "Whether you're left-brain or right-brain, there are always ways to be involved," she said. "If you have a friend doing a walkathon to raise funds for cancer research, you could sponsor that person. If you can't, then go to the walkathon and support them from the sidelines. If nothing else, repost it and help them spread the word. If everybody could get involved just a small bit, what a difference it could make."

Compassion.com; RoomInTheInn.org

Each CMA Member of the Month will be recognized in CMA Close Up and online at **CMAworld.com** for reaching significant career milestones, performing charitable acts and otherwise honorably representing Country Music through their deeds and words. To nominate any CMA member for this distinction, visit **CMAworld.com/News/CMA-Close-Up**, email **CloseUp@CMAworld.com**, or send information to CMA Member of the Month, One Music Circle South, Nashville, TN 37203.



Country Music Hall of Fame Member

Earl Scruggs

1924-2012

by BOB DOERSCHUK

In all of American popular music, Earl Scruggs stands as one of the very few musicians who singularly changed performance practice on their instruments and in the process birthed an entirely new genre. Without him, bluegrass music as we know it would almost certainly never have happened. And countless young players might never have chosen the banjo as their vehicle for creativity.

Prior to Scruggs, the banjo was played through variations of a strumming technique. From the guitar pick approach of New Orleans jazz pioneer Johnny St. Cyr and the clawhammer and frailing patterns of David "Stringbean" Akeman and Uncle Dave Macon, going all the way back to players from before the Civil War whose names are long forgotten, it was treated as a rhythm device mainly to accompany vocals.

That started to change around 1928, when 4-year-old Earl Eugene Scruggs began listening to his brother Junie play banjo at home on the family farm in Flint Hill, N.C. Mother Maybelle Carter soon caught his attention with her "Carter scratch" style, in which she articulated melodies on the low strings of her guitar with her thumb while chording with the rest of her right-hand fingers. This was the seed of what the world now knows as Scruggs' "three-finger" approach: Rather than strum or frail, he would pluck the strings, often in syncopated arpeggios, which enabled him to expand the instrument's rhythmic range as well as explore its potential as a solo voice.

People began to notice this new sound when Scruggs joined the Morris Brothers in 1939, taking the place of Don Reno. He left the farm and went full-time into music in 1945 with Lost John Miller and the Allied Kentuckians. They played mainly over WNOX in Knoxville, Tenn., as well as on a weekly program at WSM in Nashville. Jim Shumate heard him on the latter gig and didn't hesitate to recommend him to Bill Monroe after Stringbean had decided to leave the Blue Grass Boys.

With Monroe from December 1945 through early 1948, Scruggs played the key role in defining the parameters of bluegrass music. His bandmate

Lester Flatt tendered his resignation a few weeks later after Scruggs left, and they joined with bassist Howard Watts, aka Cedric Rainwater, to form the first incarnation of the Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys. Named after the Carter Family song "Foggy Mountain Top," they debuted in January 1948 on WDVA in Danville, Va. By the time they dissolved the group in February 1969, they had made household names of themselves as Flatt & Scruggs and brought the music they'd helped create to fans throughout the world.

Milestones were many during their long run. In 1960, they performed at the Newport Folk Festival and for the second time live on the CBS television special "The Revlon Revue: Folk Sound, USA." Two years later, they headlined at Carnegie Hall and recorded "The Ballad of Jed Clampett" as the theme for "The Beverly Hillbillies," which became the first bluegrass single to peak at No. 1 and was nominated for a Grammy. Later, in 1968, they would win a Grammy for Best Country Performance, Duo or Group — Vocal or Instrumental, for their rendition of "Foggy Mountain Breakdown."

As time passed, creative differences emerged between the longtime partners. Where Flatt adhered to the traditions of bluegrass music and its antecedents, Scruggs stayed open to new possibilities. Shortly after their split, the Earl Scruggs Revue was formed, featuring Earl's sons Gary and Randy, along with pianist Bob Wilson, drummer Jody Maphis and, later on, a third son, Steve, and fiddler Vassar Clements. Their repertoire embraced contemporary tunes by Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Michael Nesmith, and ingeniously blended elements of bluegrass, Country and rock. Its members joined Arlo Guthrie, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Linda Ronstadt and others on Scruggs' 1972 album *I Saw the Light with a Little Help from My Friends*, which is credited with inspiring the all-star, genre-hopping series of *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* albums. He even opened the door in Nashville to female executives by choosing his wife, Louise Certain Scruggs, to manage him in 1956.

Scruggs took home three Grammys, for Best Country Collaboration with Vocals ("Same Old Train," from the compilation album *A Tribute to Tradition*, 1998), Best Country Instrumental Performance ("Foggy Mountain Breakdown," from *Earl Scruggs and Friends*, 2001) and Best Country Instrumental Performance ("Earl's Breakdown," 2004). He was inducted into CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame along with Lester Flatt in 1985 and was honored separately with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2003. And in 2008, he received the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.

Hailed by *The New York Times* as "the Paganini of the five-string banjo," Scruggs died peacefully in Nashville on March 28.

EarlScruggs.com; Flatt-and-Scruggs.com

CMA SONGWRITERS SERIES TARGETS NEW MARKETS

by CRYSTAL CAVINESS

On a crisp night in March, close to 200 Country Music fans sat quietly and respectfully as Victoria Shaw, sitting at the keyboard, sang, "The River." Within a few notes, the fans recognized the tune from its days as a No. 1 hit, the fifth and final single from Garth Brooks' 1991 album *Ropin' the Wind*. What many in the audience may not have known about until that moment was Shaw's participation with Brooks as co-writer of the song.

A similar epiphany followed, as Bob DiPiero, guitar in hand, strummed and sang the words to the George Strait hit "Blue Clear Sky."

This scene is familiar to veterans of Nashville's music scene. "In the round" is the usual term indicating a group of maybe four or five songwriters sitting in a circle, playing acoustic instruments and singing songs known primarily from their days as radio hits. In fact, this format got its start in Nashville, where the importance of the songwriter is well-known and appreciated throughout the music community. In these intimate settings, the songwriters pay homage to songs they created

and, usually, others made famous. Often, before their "unplugged" performances, the songwriter tells the audience about the song's origin and what inspired it, shares the story behind its lyrics and otherwise reveals details that are often left untold.

You can still attend such sessions throughout Music City, but thanks to CMA's Songwriters Series, audiences far from Music Row have had a look behind the curtain too. So it was that night in March at Joe's Pub on Lafayette Street in New York City, as DiPiero, Shaw, Jim Photoglo (who wrote the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's "Fishin' in the Dark") and Lee Thomas Miller (Joe Nichols' "The Impossible") shared the stage, traded stories and shined the spotlight on Country Music.

What started as a way to include Nashville's Country Music songwriters in the festivities associated with the CMA Awards moving to New York City's Madison Square Garden in 2005 has spread to a growing number of venues throughout the United States. Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., have hosted the series. And recently, the Songwriters Series went international, with appearances in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Dublin, Ireland, and London, England.

"The coolest aspect of the whole thing is seeing the songwriters play off of each other and tell their stories," said Chris Crawford, Senior Director of Live Events and Special Projects at CMA. "It's important for fans in the audience to see how these songs were written and for them to sit back and think, 'I've heard that song my entire life and now I get to hear the story behind it.'"

Those fans have indicated their approval by selling out shows in less than an hour and packing the house each time the Songwriters Series comes to town. "It's really one of the most anticipated events of the year for us," said Ed Warm, co-owner of the 1,000-seat live venue Joe's Bar in Chicago. "And it's so cool to present to the fans the art of a song. Now you get to hear how the song was constructed and hear the story behind the song. Country fans, out of any genre of music, are the most passionate about their music, and this kind of series even increases that bond. There's probably nothing else that I've seen where somebody can hear and meet the people that wrote the hits behind Carrie Underwood, Brad Paisley and Kenny Chesney."

That experience will spread even further in 2012, as CMA takes the Songwriters Series into new territories. Fourteen events are being planned, including returns to Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York, where the Series has already established a strong presence. But this year's calendar also includes 10 dates in untapped markets, among them Detroit, Houston, Orlando, Fla., the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, Ariz., Pittsburgh and Seattle.

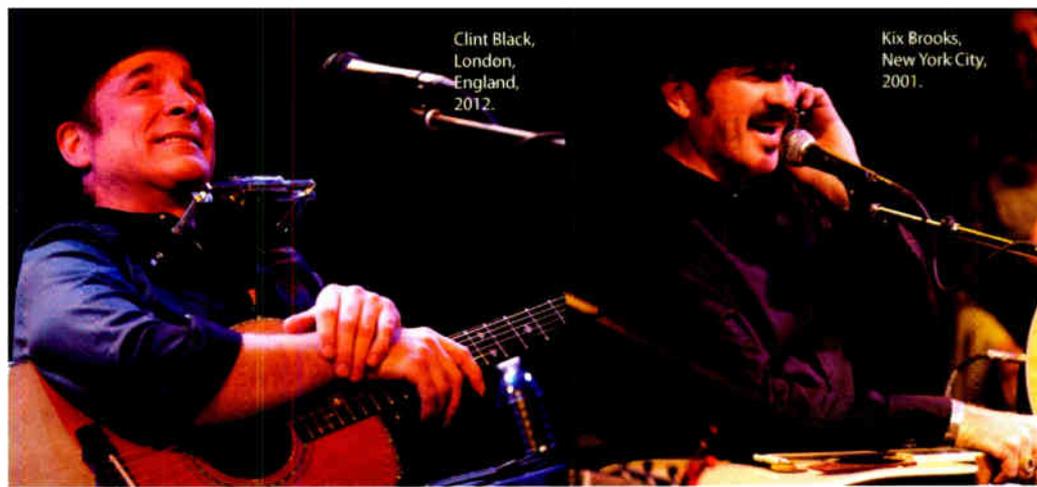
Fan appeal is a strong motivator in this expansion. But it's also a means to establish or strengthen partnerships with CMA members and Country radio in new host cities. "It's about CMA member outreach in areas outside of Nashville, radio involvement in those markets where there are strong listeners and also to reinforce the presence of Country Music overall," said Crawford. "We've also selected cities where we want to increase our market

Kenny Chesney,
Boston 2011.

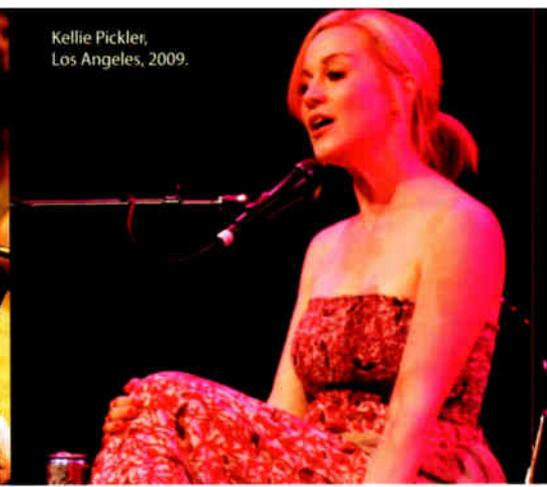
Bob DiPiero, Clint Black, Patty Loveless, guitarist
Todd Lombardo and Tim Nichols, Washington, D.C., 2011.

"Whisperin"
Bill Anderson,
Dublin, Ireland,
2012.





Clint Black,
London,
England,
2012.



Kellie Pickler,
Los Angeles, 2009.

share in terms of Country Music viewership for top TV markets."

CMA's 10-year partnership with ABC factored into these plans as well, with an aim to look strategically at ABC markets where the visibility and popularity of Country Music can be reinforced. "It's also about bringing local affiliates onboard," Crawford explained.

What is now close to becoming an international live music staple started in 2005 with a songwriter who didn't want his peers to be left out when CMA took its Awards event to New York City. "We were having the CMA Awards in New York City that year, and I felt the songwriting community needed some sort of presence and to be part of the whole New York City/CMA impact," said DiPiero, member of the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame and author of a vast number of hits, including Tim McGraw's "Southern Voice" and Montgomery Gentry's "If You Ever Stop Loving Me."

His fellow members of the CMA Board approved DiPiero's idea of organizing a Nashville-style songwriters' circle at Joe's Pub the night before the Awards. "We did what we thought was a one-off show," he remembered. "It went so well that Joe's Pub asked if we would consider doing another show, which we did. And it was a success. We found a connection between Country Music and the folks who live and work in New York City."

That connection has endured and grown. Joe's Pub continues to book at least half a dozen Songwriters Series each year, and most of those shows sell out in less than 30 minutes. Given that New York City has no Country-formatted radio stations, the reaction surprised and definitely pleased the shows' supporters.

"What happened at Joe's Pub, with the shows continuing to grow and never having a downturn, gave us impetus to go nationwide," said DiPiero, who books the Series and has acted as emcee at almost all of its installments. "It's evolved way beyond my original scope. I just wanted to have a voice for the songwriting

community within CMA, but the positive response has been phenomenal. I think we reached the tipping point somewhere around the second year. Most people don't know what a songwriting show is. Most people don't even know what a songwriter is. It's an educational thing too."

Country fans always constitute a big part of the audience at each of these shows, but equally important is the presence of people who might not have described themselves as fans or even professed familiarity with the format. This demographic can be elusive, but the novelty of the "in the round" idea often draws the curious and drives them to learn more about what they're hearing.

"What I have found is that songs and performances and the story behind the song become very universal, so people who are not fans of Country Music or who are new to Country Music see something that's just *good*," said DiPiero. "I say we're out there spreading the hillbilly gospel. People have said, 'I don't like Country Music, but I really like this!'"

Fans aren't the only ones getting in on the action. All facets of Music Row, from management to licensing agencies and record labels, have recognized that CMA's Songwriters Series is a strong platform for gaining high-credibility exposure for their artists. Some of Country Music's brightest lights have taken part, including: Rodney Atkins, The Band Perry, Dierks Bentley, Kenny Chesney, Billy Currington, Little Big Town, Patty Loveless, Craig Morgan, Josh Turner, Lee Ann Womack and Chris Young, among many others. There's an amusing twist to this, in that the Series has raised awareness of the importance of songwriters to the point that even major artists who also write can benefit from their involvement.

"I put together the best group of performers, songwriters and artists that will generate the best show," DiPiero said. "In that respect, it's universal if we use, for example, David Lee Murphy or Craig Wiseman or Tim Nichols or

Brett James. It's all different versions of the best we have to offer. When we put the best we have to offer onstage, it's always a win. I don't think it matters if we're in New York or Orlando or Chicago; it's different versions of the best the songwriter community has to offer."

"There's probably nothing else that I've seen where somebody can hear and meet the people that wrote the hits behind Carrie Underwood, Brad Paisley and Kenny Chesney."

— Ed Warm, Co-Owner, Joe's Bar

When each show is over, DiPiero hopes that it has accomplished his overriding goal, which is to make at least one new Country Music fan. "We get a lot of what I call converts," he said. "The true Country fans are there at these events, and they bring their friends. For CMA, that helps expand the base of our fans, the people who love this music and this lifestyle. That's what these shows do — make one fan at a time."

Crystal Caviness' articles have been published in GRAMMY Magazine, The Hollywood Reporter, The Washington Times and other publications.



DREAM DUET PARTNER "Dolly;" **FAVORITE FOOD ON THE ROAD** "Waffle House;" **WHAT YOU'D BE IF NOT AN ARTIST** "Governor of Georgia;" **MOMENT YOU'D LIKE TO RELIVE** "The opening night of Wild Bill's — there were 5,000 people there!" **FIRST GIG** "My fifth-grade talent show. I took second place. Dang baton twirler!" **SOMETHING WE'D NEVER GUESS ABOUT YOU** "I am a clean freak."

BillGentryNation.com, @BillGentry

BILL GENTRY

Rather than flow in one direction, similar to a storyline in a single song, Bill Gentry's life has veered in a dozen directions. The son of a minister who died when he was 2, Gentry won the state 4-H performance contest, got kicked out of his high school band, was kidnapped along with two of his colleagues in a rock band, served as president of his junior college class, ran for city council, launched a successful data-compiling company, interned for Sen. Sam Nunn in Washington, was told lovingly by his sister that she never wants to sing with him again and most recently founded and ran Wild Bill's, the huge and successful Country venue near Atlanta.

In that last incarnation, Gentry's staff booked many of the biggest acts in the business. Though he'd never stopped doing shows, being witness on occasion to great shows at Wild Bill's rekindled Gentry's determination to aim for his own place in the spotlight too.

He does so on *Baptized in Temptation*. Produced by Chad Carlson, it's all rough edges and live feel. The first single, "That Kinda Life" (written by Matthew T. Ramsey, Trevor Rosen and Josh Osborne), spins an everyman's tale of surviving hard knocks and coming up tougher and wiser; Gentry lays it out with a nimble, almost rap-like vocal as the band pumps out a slammin' groove. On "High and Dry" (Jamey Johnson and George Teren), his raw but tuneful style mirrors the ironic twist in the lyric with deadpan perfection. And on his co-write "Wild Bill's Rock n Roll Revival" (Greg Barnhill, Tim Jackson and Gentry), he preaches a party-down sermon that just might have made his father proud.

MARLEE SCOTT

An honor student in St. Albert, Alberta, Canada, Marlee Scott enjoyed junior high school, loved riding horses and showed promise in music. But while her mother thought it fitting for her to study flute, her daughter had other plans: She wanted an electric guitar and was determined to cut her first album at 15.

She missed that deadline, perhaps all for the better. One day when she was 16, Scott switched the car radio to a Country station and heard Alabama's "Mountain Music." Metaphorically, she hasn't turned the dial since. With Rascal Flatts and Keith Urban among her models, she combined smooth timbre, interpretive sensitivity and a flair for emotional connection into a distinctive singing style. After hearing her Canadian debut, *Souvenir*, in 2007, Gerry Leiske signed on as her manager and oversaw the release of a self-titled second album the following year in Canada and Australia.

With *Beautiful Maybe*, produced by David Kalmusky, Scott breaks into the U.S. market on Leiske's Big Ride Records. The title cut (written by Tania Hancheroff, Marcus Hummon and Tia Sillers) portrays different stages of life, each warmed by hope and energized by Scott's soaring delivery. "Train Wreck" (Hummon, Sarah Buxton and Jedd Hughes) offers a more humorous take on a woman whose character reflects perfectly in the title. On the power ballad "Let It Rain" (Kristen Hall), Scott rides each dynamic surge without over-singing even as strings swell and cymbals crash. And on "Kiss of Coming Home" (Scott, Hummon and Laura Veltz), one of the two tracks that she co-wrote, she adorns the melody with ornamental phrases that connect unfailingly with the wistfulness of the tune.



SONG YOU'D LOVE TO COVER "'I'm Too Sexy' by Right Said Fred would make for a very interesting cover — especially for a female Country artist!" **PET PEEVE** "I absolutely hate it when someone tells you they are going to call you right back and they don't." **SONG YOU WISH YOU'D WRITTEN** "'Into the Mystic' by Van Morrison." **FAVORITE FOOD ON THE ROAD** "York Peppermint Patties." **SOMETHING WE'D NEVER GUESS ABOUT YOU** "I am constantly rescuing bugs, even though they scare me."

MarleeScott.com; @MarleeScott



BETH CAYHALL

There's a noble lineage in Country Music composed of singers who are short in stature but towering in talent. From Brenda Lee to Little Jimmy Dickens, this group is often overlooked (so to speak) — an injustice that Beth Cayhall is determined to rectify.

Raised in Ocean View, Del., she first made her presence known at age 4 by soloing on "Dear Mr. Jesus" at her church. Growing up, she drew inspiration from Garth Brooks, Patsy Cline, Dolly Parton, Martina McBride, Reba, Shania Twain and other Country stalwarts. Other influences enriched her development, most notably Otis Redding; elements of his intensity, along with other soul music icons, flavor her performances.

Country, though, is Cayhall's cornerstone. That's what her paternal grandfather and his siblings featured in their band. Her parents were musicians too, as were two brothers and her sisters. Like the spray of the nearby Atlantic, playing and singing were in the air around her; this may explain the confidence she exudes during each moment of her debut album on Go Time Records, *Worth Fighting For*.

Produced by Kent Wells, these eight tracks include six Cayhall co-writes. Her current single, "Boys Eat Your Hearts Out" (Cayhall, Dave Robbins and Lonnie Wilson), is a swaggering anthem. The slamming backbeat, strutting tempo, greasy slide guitar, saucy fiddle riff and especially Cayhall's teasing vocals paint a vivid picture of a girls' night out. And from her evocation of seasonal celebration on "Summer Me" (Cayhall and Bryan Edwards) to the introspective ballad "Life's What Happens (When You're Busy Making Plans)" (Cayhall and Karen Staley), her ability to build songs on solid musical structure and expressive lyrics stands tall.

BOOKS ON YOUR NIGHTSTAND "Streams in the Desert, a daily devotional by L.B. Cowman, and *The Women of Faith Daily Devotional.*" **FAVORITE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION** "Boat: I love to be near or in water." **ACTRESS TO PORTRAY YOU IN A BIOPIC** "Whoever is the shortest. Ha! I'm only 5 feet tall." **FAVORITE FOOD ON THE ROAD** "I love looking for new restaurants that are known for a specialty." **SOMETHING WE'D NEVER GUESS ABOUT YOU** "I have practically zero hand-eye coordination and can be extremely clumsy."

BethCayhall.com; @BethCayhall

KRISTEN KELLY

Kristen Kelly doesn't just sing — she preaches. Her gospel-tinged delivery raises the spirits within each lyric along with the eyebrows of audiences unaccustomed to this type of testimony in down-home Country Music.

Despite traces of Ray Charles, Bonnie Raitt, Bob Seger and other soul-stirring influences, Kristen Kelly is as Country as they come. Raised on 10 rural acres near the small town of Lorena, Texas, she listened to and still owns recordings by her grandfather Sterling Kelly's Country band. Her father's love for classic rock toughened her sound as she began singing in talent shows and high school choir. By 2001, when she sat in one night with a cover band at the club where she bartended, Kelly rocked hard enough to get hired for a three-year run.

Just before earning her music degree at McLennan Community College in Waco, Texas, in 2004, Kelly helped found and began singing lead with Modern Day Drifters. Renamed Kristen Kelly & The Modern Day Drifters four years later, they enjoyed statewide success and airplay. More importantly, they served as a springboard for her solo career.

Kelly's upcoming Arista Nashville debut album, co-produced by Tony Brown and Paul Overstreet, showcases her ability to balance power with sensitivity while compromising neither. Her first single, "Ex-Old Man," which she wrote with Overstreet, recounts a relationship gone bad, but instead of heartbreak, she emanates strength, insight and humor over an infectious, dance-friendly groove. A raw feel pulses over the fist-pump, power-chord beat of "Turn and Face Memphis" (Tom Douglas, Steve Robson and Allen Shamblin). That intensity grows when the tempo slows to a swaying 6/8 on "He Loves to Make Me Cry" (Kelly, Overstreet and Even Stevens). The channel from Kelly's voice to her heart is wide open on this one. It's churchy, bluesy and, yes, Country, all at the same time.



MUSICAL HERO/DREAM DUET PARTNER "Merle Haggard." **SONG YOU'D LOVE TO COVER** "I'm actually working on a Conway Twitty song." **SONG YOU WISH YOU'D WRITTEN** "The House That Built Me. That song kills me." **PET PEEVE** "Folks rushing off an airplane before their turn only to walk slowly down the hallway because they're on their phone. Really?" **FAVORITE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION** "Bus — someone else is driving and I can watch sports, listen to music or sleep."

KristenKelly.com; @KristenKelly

Debut Spotlight compiled by BOB DOERSCHUK



LADY ANTEBELLUM

Lipton hits the spot for Charles Kelley, Hillary Scott and Dave Haywood of Lady Antebellum.

SWEETENS THE DEAL FOR LIPTON TEA

In just a few years, Lady Antebellum has earned its place in the entertainment spotlight. So their new partnership with Lipton isn't so much about expanding their fan base as reinforcing the qualities that they've come to epitomize.

"In this time and culture, there's never enough reminder about who an artist is," insisted Gary Borman, Owner, Borman Entertainment and manager of Lady Antebellum. "Given the band's solid relationship with the Country Music fan and their mainstream success, their name is out there. People know who they are. But it never hurts to remind the people exactly what they look like, what they sound like and what they represent."

Lipton was about to introduce two products, Lipton Tea & Honey iced tea mixes and Lipton 100% Natural ready-to-drink bottled iced tea, with their biggest campaign of the year. So they called branding expert and Chief Strategist at Access Brand Strategies, Paul Jankowski. "The campaign is called 'Drink Positive,'" Jankowski said. "And they reached out to us to help find the act that would personify the positioning and bring it to life. It was very clear that Lady A was the best option."

It was a perfect match for several reasons, one of which was the buyers Lipton hoped to reach. "We specialize in helping brands 'speak American' to what I call the New Heartland," Jankowski explained. "The New Heartland is home to about 60 percent of U.S. consumers who live in the Midwest, the Southwest and the Southeast. With that being a big part of Lipton's target, we were able to provide the campaign with a New Heartland perspective."

Part of that involved just letting Dave Haywood, Charles Kelley and Hillary Scott be themselves. "Bringing the personality of the band to light throughout the creative was an over-arching element," Jankowski said. "It was pretty much across the board, from the television spots to the Web series: It all exudes their personalities, which goes back to the whole reason Lipton wanted to partner with them."

Both sides worked together to define how 'Drink Positive' would present itself. "Lipton drove the creative," said Borman. "But they were open to discussing their ideas. It was very collaborative, even through the shooting, editing and final editing processes. They were very sensitive to us and that made us all the more sensitive to their needs. That's the beauty of this particular relationship."

Beyond the appeal of Lady A specifically, Jankowski believes that Country Music generally offers unique access for brands to his New Heartland market. "We help brands create culturally relevant consumer engagement platforms," he said. "To me, Country Music is one of the key things that bring that relevance to life."

LadyAntebellum.com; LiptonTea.com
@LadyAntebellum



EDENS EDGE

Cherrill Green, Hannah Blaylock and Dean Berner support Patagonia's green campaign.

JOINS THE PATAGONIA MUSIC COLLECTIVE

It's no secret that Country artists are ideal ambassadors for companies that want to impact a specific buyer demographic. But more brands than ever are becoming aware that the appeal of Country transcends its perceived fan base and speaks to a wider consumer profile.

Consider Patagonia, purveyor of outdoor apparel and gear. Its focus on mountain climbing, fly fishing, surfing, trail running and similar activities goes hand-in-hand with its advocacy on environmental preservation and improvement. And its latest campaign to mobilize the public behind these concerns is the Patagonia Music Collective, which enlists musical artists to sell exclusive downloads and donate the proceeds to an environmental cause of their choice.

"It's our goal as an agency to do positive social work in the marketing and brand spaces," said Geoff Stanfield, Founder, GIST Lab, which created the program for Patagonia. "We thought that if there could be a great partnership between the music community and a brand that does great social work, that brand would be Patagonia."

Launched in March 2011, the Collective has released three digital albums featuring music licensed for one year to Patagonia by jazz artist Esperanza Spalding, avant-jazz innovators Medeski, Martin & Wood, folk-rock icons David Crosby and Graham Nash and some outstanding Country artists too. The most recent compilation, *Volume 3*, became available on iTunes in February.

"My colleague Megan Sykes was aware that Patagonia was launching a music program," said Laura Hutfless, a music sponsorship agent at Creative Artists Agency (CAA). "She proactively reached out and learned that the program was dedicated to environmental fundraising and they were looking for talented artists, established or emerging, who were either eco-friendly or had a connection to an environmental cause. We identified Edens Edge as an ideal fit because of their passion for promoting environmental awareness."

Edens Edge — Hannah Blaylock, Dean Berner and Cherrill Green — released an exclusive live version of "Amen" via the Patagonia Music Collective. Its earnings were donated to Urban Farming, whose aim is to create an abundance of food for people in need through planting seeds as well as knowledge in communities around the globe.

Other involved Country artists include Ryan Bingham and Sugarland, who support the Surfrider Foundation, the Civil Wars, who also supported Urban Farming, and Zac Brown Band, who gave to the Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition. Patagonia is also giving an additional \$5,000 to each charity designated by artists involved in the campaign.

"It's not just jam bands and granola," Stanfield summed up. "These issues are everybody's. We felt it important that we have Country Music and its fans represented because they have environmental concerns just as much as the next guy."

EdensEdge.com; Patagonia.com; @EdensEdge

JUNE 1

Chuck Hancock / *On a Personal Note* / Double C Records

JUNE 5

Lisa Biales / *Just Like Honey* / Big Song Music
Charlie Daniels Band / *Live at Rockpalast* / MiG (download only)
Rodney Crowell / *KIN: The Songs of Mary Karr and Rodney Crowell* / Vanguard Records
Tiffany Houghton / *Tiffany Houghton* / self-released
Alan Jackson / *Thirty Miles West* / ACR/EMI Records Nashville
Waylon Jennings / *Live from Austin TX* / New West
Jana Kramer / *Jana Kramer* / Elektra Nashville
Marley's Ghost / *Jubilee* / Sage Arts
Leah Seawright / *Leah Seawright* / Atta Baby Entertainment
B.J. Thomas / *The Complete Sceptor Singles* / Real Gone Music
various artists / *Foggy Mountain Special: A Bluegrass Tribute to Earl Scruggs* / Rounder Records
various artists / *Pa's Fiddle: Charles Ingalls, American Fiddler* / Pa's Fiddle Recordings

JUNE 12

Mary Chapin Carpenter / *Ashes and Roses* / Zoe/Rounder
Edens Edge / *Edens Edge* / Big Machine/Universal
Josh Turner / *Punching Bag* / UMG Nashville
Seth Walker / *Time Can Change* / Roe Records
Darryl Worley / *One Time Around* / Tenacity

JUNE 19

Big Smo / *Grass Roots* / Warner Music Nashville (EP)
Audie Blaylock & Redline / *Hard Country* / Rural Rhythm Records
Kenny Chesney / *Welcome to the Fishbowl* / Sony Music Nashville
Ruby Jane / *Celebrity (empire of emptiness)* / Vinyl Records
Marlee Scott / *Beautiful Maybe* / Big Ride Entertainment
Seth Walker / *Time Can Change* / Roe Records

Don Williams / *And So It Goes* / Sugar Hill

JUNE 26

Chris Cagle / *Back in the Saddle* / Bigger Picture
Davidson Hart Kingsbery / *2 Horses* / Fin Records
Jerry Douglas / *Traveler* / eONE Music
Todd Fritsch / *Up Here in the Saddle* / Saddle Up Records
Mindy Smith / *TBD* / Giant Leap Records

JULY 10

Hank Williams Jr. / *Old School ... New Rules* / Bocephus/Blaster
Zac Brown Band / *Uncaged* / Atlantic/Home Grown/Bigger Picture

JULY 17

Marc Berger / *Ride* / Real Records
THE FARM / *THE FARM* / All-In Records/Elektra Nashville
Billy Joe Shaver / *Live at Billy Bob's Texas* / Smith Music

JULY 24

Love and Theft / *Love and Theft* / RCA

JULY 31

Colt Ford / *Declaration of Independence* / Average Joe's Entertainment
Gloriana / *Thousand Miles Left Behind* / Warner Bros. Records

AUG. 7

Aaron Lewis / *The Road* / Blaster

AUG. 14

Radney Foster / *Del Rio, TX Revisited: Unplugged and Lonesome* / self-released

SEPT. 11

Waylon Jennings / *Goin' Down Rockin': The Last Recordings* / Saguaro Road Records
Kathy Mattea / *TBD* / Sugar Hill



New CD Releases compiled by BOB DOERSCHUK



HAPPY TRAILS FOR ALL DURING THE
Roy Rogers
CENTENNIAL

by EILEEN SISK

Few entertainers have become as much a *tour de force* in popular culture and Country Music as Roy Rogers. Last year, he was honored at several centennial celebrations. On screen, Rogers was a “Mr. Nice Guy” who outsmarted villains, treated ladies well and kissed his horse but never his girl. Onstage, he dressed sharp and put his music first. Offstage, he valued his fans, faith and family while triumphing over adversity and tragedy.

“I think Roy Rogers is the original antidote to the outlaw,” said “Ranger Doug” Green of Riders In The Sky, which embraces the tradition set by Rogers’ last group, The Sons of the Pioneers. Green said Rogers influenced him “gigantically” and described him as “the good guy who solves problems with a song and sweet reason.”

“He’s thoroughly American in so many ways,” observed John Rumble, Senior Historian, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. “He works hard. He rises from the lower rung on the economic ladder to wealth, to fame, and he doesn’t have to compromise himself.”

Not to mention, the dapper actor/singer epitomized cowboy cool to baby boomers who grew up watching his 88 Republic Pictures films and 100 episodes of “The Roy Rogers Show.” He has also been immortalized in song by Toby Keith in “Should’ve Been a Cowboy” and Elton John in “Remembering Roy Rogers.”

Rogers was one of the artists responsible for putting the “Western” into what was known then as Country and Western Music. He holds the distinction of being the only person inducted twice into CMA’s Country Music Hall of Fame for his contributions both as a founding member of The Sons of the Pioneers (1980) and as a solo artist (1988). Rogers and Dale Evans hosted the first televised CMA Awards in 1968. In 1988, The Sons of the Pioneers won a Grammy Hall of Fame Award. In addition, Rogers has four stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Perhaps the most memorable tribute thus far to Rogers, who died in 1998, was seen by millions during the grand finale of the 123rd Tournament of Roses Parade, which aired Jan. 2 on NBC. A volunteer force of 100 golden palominos rode in formation before a 75-foot-long float, sponsored by RFD-TV, that featured the preserved likenesses of Rogers’ beloved palomino, Trigger, and German shepherd, Bullet. Also on the float were Rogers’ son, Roy “Dusty” Rogers Jr.,

and his son Dustin Rogers, both singers, who waved to spectators as a recorded soundtrack of father and son sang “Happy Trails,” penned by Evans.

Patrick Gottsch, owner and founder of RFD-TV, invested \$500,000 in this homage to the man he feels carries the network’s standard high. The float was RFD-TV’s fourth consecutive entry in the parade as well as the highlight of the Happy Trails Tour, which began in July 2010. In February, Trigger and Bullet were taken to the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center in Nashville for a viewing by attendees of a cattle industry convention.

“We never had a plan. It seemed like the right thing to do,” said Gottsch, referring to the tour, which took the famous horse and dog to 48 states. “I get why Roy saved Trigger and Bullet; it was to keep the Western spirit alive.”

Last year, Gottsch acquired Trigger and Bullet from Christie’s Auction House for \$265,000 and \$35,000, respectively. He also purchased Evans’ quarter horse, Buttermilk, for \$50,000. “To me, they’re priceless,” he said.

And Gottsch is doing his best to keep the King of the Cowboy’s memory alive by airing all of Rogers’ old movies as well as TV episodes on his network.

Henager’s Memories & Nostalgia museum in Buckskin, Ind., honored Rogers in July 2011 with a one-time tribute that benefited the National Veterans Memorial. Owner James Henager notes that his nonprofit museum has the largest collection of Rogers and Evans memorabilia after the closings of museums in Victorville, Calif., and Branson, Mo., which the Rogers family ran. Henager reported spending \$35,000 to bring in six acts including Hugh O’Brien, star of “The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp,” and veteran TV actor Bo Hopkins, as well as look-alikes for the Lone Ranger and others.

Born Leonard Franklin Sly on Nov. 5, 1911, in Cincinnati, Ohio, the only son of Andrew and Mattie Sly, Rogers was

raised in a musical family. By the time he was a teenager, he played guitar, mandolin and banjo. At 16, he began his career in music by adding an "e" to his last name and forming The Slye Brothers duo with his cousin Stanley Sly. He was part of the westward migration during the 1930s, when thousands fled the Midwest and the Dust Bowl for better opportunities. Rogers farmed, picked fruit, worked in a shoe factory, drove a truck and did what he could to support his music habit. He joined a few Western groups before forming The Pioneer Trio in 1933, which consisted of himself, Bob Nolan and Tim Spencer. They eventually became known as The Sons of the Pioneers.

Band personnel changed often because of the group's inability to earn money during the Depression. Rogers was so poor that he even admitted to eating crow, said Chris Enss, who co-authored two books on Rogers, *The Cowboy and the Senorita* and *Happy Trails*, with film producer Howard Kazanjian.

A hallmark of The Sons of the Pioneers, which was noted for smooth, tight harmonies and romantic songs about the West, was Rogers' tenor. The group popularized harmony yodeling as well. Dusty Rogers recalled that his father would listen to the simple yodels of Jimmie Rodgers, the Singing Brakeman, and triple-time it. "He even beat out Elton Britt in the 1930s as the top yodeler in the country," he said.

"I think people think of Elton Britt as the supreme yodeler's yodeler," Green concurred. "And indeed, he was. But Roy Rogers was a magnificent yodeler."

Many of the group's hits penned by Nolan, including "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" (1934) and "Cool Water" (1936), have been covered over the years by various artists but never duplicated. "I don't know of anybody who has ever copied his style," said Bill Mack, a Grammy-winning songwriter and Disc Jockey Hall of Famer, who as the Midnight Cowboy at WBAP in Fort Worth, Texas, interviewed Rogers twice.

Contemporary Western singer Michael Martin Murphey has a lifelong admiration for Rogers, whose help he sought for Murphey's 1989 *Cowboy Songs* album. Murphey, who remains grateful to Rogers as adviser and mentor for the project, recently finished a closed-circuit TV tribute to Rogers and Evans, which is airing in retirement communities.

Murphey recalled the singer telling him, "If you want to be a singing cowboy, get yourself a good-looking horse, because when you're old

and ugly the kids will still like the horse." He also remembered Rogers saying, "I want you to promise to me that if you're going to be a singing cowboy, you'll never do anything that would send a kid down the wrong trail in life."

Although artists today are not singing much Western music, they can learn from Rogers about surviving losses, even as severe as the deaths of his second wife, Arline Wilkins, and three children, and approaching life with humor and a smile.

As Rumble said, Rogers reached into "the grass roots of popular culture and popular *material* culture — not just the music and the films and the recordings, but also the merchandise."

Dusty Rogers agreed that his dad was a marketing visionary. He told of how his father sought and gained control in the early 1940s over the Roy Rogers name, which was assigned to him in 1938 by Republic Pictures. A New York merchandiser had approached Rogers about marketing gun belts and outfits for boys, so the star told Republic he wanted to control the name and his likeness. The studio said, "We don't care what you do, just don't ask us for any more money." He legally changed his name in 1942.

"He was an industry in and of himself," reflected Enss, who believes today's singers can learn much from Rogers' persistency and tenacity. As she put it, "Few people will eat crow because they love music."

Though the Roy Rogers centennial year has passed, the parties aren't over yet. At least one more is planned to honor the hundredth birthday of his leading lady and wife, Dale Evans, at the Roy Rogers Festival, scheduled for Aug. 1-4 in Portsmouth, Ohio. James Henager plans to follow up the YouTube tribute he created last year for Rogers with another one this year honoring his Queen of the West.

HenagerMuseum.com; RoyRogers.com; RoyRogersFestival.org
CMA created the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1961 to recognize individuals for their outstanding contributions to the format with Country Music's highest honor. Inductees are chosen by CMA's Hall of Fame Panels of Electors, which consist of anonymous voters appointed by the CMA Board of Directors.

Eileen Sisk is a veteran journalist and the author of Buck Owens: The Biography and Honky-Tonks: Guide to Country Dancin' and Romancin'.



The Roy Rogers float in the January 2012 Tournament of Roses Parade, opposite Dale Evans and Roy Rogers with Trigger.

"If you want to be a singing cowboy, get yourself a good-looking horse, because when you're old and ugly the kids will still like the horse."

— Roy Rogers, as told to Michael Martin Murphey

LEE BRICE SHARES HIS LIFE IN SONG on page 8



cma events

JUNE

FRIDAY, JUNE 1

Chevy Ride 'n' Drive | One Music Circle South | Nashville

MONDAY, JUNE 4

CMA Global Artist Party | The Stage on Broadway | Nashville | 6 PM | FREE

TUESDAY, JUNE 5

Aristo Global Show | The Second Fiddle | Nashville | 12:30 PM | FREE

MONDAY, JUNE 4 – TUESDAY, JUNE 5

Billboard Country Music Summit | The Cannery Ballroom | Nashville |

CountryMusicSummit.com | CMA is a proud sponsor.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6

CMA Music Festival Kick-Off Parade (Chevrolet Riverfront Park) | Nashville | FREE

Marty Stuart Late Night Jam | Ryman Auditorium | Nashville | 10 PM |

Tickets: Ticketmaster.com or

Ryman Box Office (615) 889-3060

THURSDAY, JUNE 7 – SUNDAY, JUNE 10

CMA Music Festival | Nashville | Tickets: (800) CMA-FEST, CMAfest.com, Ticketmaster.com, (800) 745-3000

SATURDAY, JUNE 9

City of Hope Celebrity Softball Challenge | Greer Stadium | 9 AM | Nashville

Tickets: Ticketmaster.com

MONDAY, JUNE 11

Deadline for voting on CMA SRO Awards Final Ballot | 5 PM CT

FRIDAY, JUNE 22

Application deadline to vote on second and third CMA Awards ballots

MONDAY, JUNE 25

Voting opens on first CMA Awards ballot

TUESDAY, JUNE 26

Songwriters Series | House of Blues | Los Angeles | 8 PM MT | Bill Anderson, Kristian Bush, Bob DiPiero and Bobby Pinson | Tickets: CMAworld.com/Events/SongwritersSeries

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27

Songwriters Series | Musical Instrument Museum | Phoenix, Ariz. | 8 PM MT | Bill Anderson, Kristian Bush, Bob DiPiero and Bobby Pinson | Tickets: CMAworld.com/Events/SongwritersSeries

FRIDAY, JUNE 29

Deadline for CMA Broadcast Awards submissions to Broadcast@CMAawards.com

JULY

MONDAY, JULY 9

Voting closes for first CMA Awards Ballot | 5 PM CT

TUESDAY, JULY 24 – THURSDAY, JULY 26
CMA Board Meeting | InterContinental New York Times Square Hotel | New York City

FRIDAY, JULY 27

Deadline for membership renewal payments to vote on second CMA Awards ballot

AUGUST

TUESDAY, AUG. 7

Voting opens on second CMA Awards ballot



*All times Central unless otherwise noted.