

# CLOSE UP

CMA

**LEANN  
RIMES**  
SETS THE  
RECORD  
STRAIGHT

**BRANTLEY GILBERT**  
MAKES THE RIGHT MOVES

**TIM  
McGRAW**

FULL SPEED IN THE FAST LANE

Plus more in-depth artist coverage!

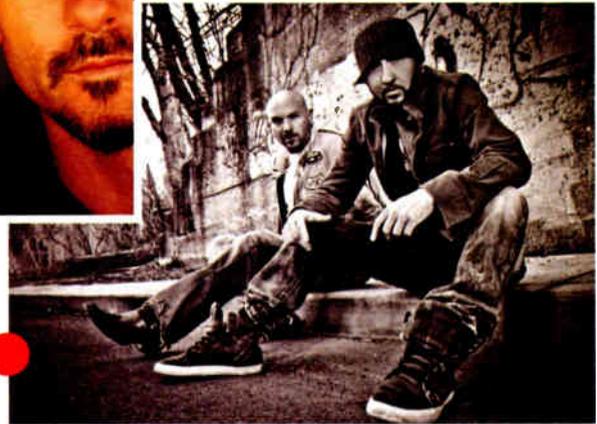
**LYRIC  
VIDEOS**  
Sweep  
the Web

**London ... Paris ... New York City Radio ... All Gone Country!**

APRIL | MAY 2013

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**Greetings CMA Members, 2013 is shaping up to be another banner year for Country Music. More headline artists are touring in 2013 than ever before.**

The CMA Songwriters Series returned with shows in Dublin, Belfast, London and Paris. The first-ever International Country Music Summit, held at Paris Disneyland, was a great success. We hosted approximately 85 registrants from Germany, Switzerland, Spain, the U.K., Norway, Ireland, Scotland and France. The registrants reflected a great cross section of industry professionals.

A week later, AEG presented the CMA-sponsored "Country2Country" Country Music Festival at London's O2 Arena. Tim McGraw headlined on Saturday and Carrie Underwood on Sunday, with support from Vince Gill, Darius Rucker, LeAnn Rimes, Brantley Gilbert, Little Big Town and Kristian Bush. The event was a smash. Tickets are on sale now for the 2014 dates.

The CMA Artist Luncheon is scheduled for April 10 at the Hilton Downtown Nashville Hotel. This annual event was established by the Artist Relations Committee to inform and update our artist and songwriter community on the benefits and activities for this important segment of our membership.

CMA has just released the "CMA Insiders and Home Improvement" study. Findings are summarized on page 15 of this issue.

In partnership with Nielsen Music, we presented "2012 Music Sales Review" via a members-only webinar. Country Music grew 6.6 percent YOY in total music sales, as the overall industry declined by



2 percent. And Country Music holds a stronger share of current versus catalog albums sales compared to the overall music industry. Full details about this study and all of our research is accessible at [My.CMAworld.com](http://My.CMAworld.com).

Also, mark your calendars for the CMA SRO Awards balloting in April. We have added a talent buyer/promoter category for 2013. The complete list of SRO categories is at [My.CMAworld.com](http://My.CMAworld.com).

CMA's health insurance program, now known as CMA Instrumental Healthcare, has been upgraded and improved. The new program is a partnership with Pancoast Benefits and Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Existing CMA members can get more information about CMA Instrumental Healthcare by contacting Pancoast Benefits at [CMAinfo@pancoastbenefits.com](mailto:CMAinfo@pancoastbenefits.com) or by calling (855)458-8486.

The 2013 CMA Music Fest shows at LP Field are nearly sold out and the

lineups are spectacular. Also, the CMA Booking Council, made of booking agent professionals from each of the top agencies, is putting the finishing touches on the performance lineups for the Chevrolet Riverfront Stage as well as some of the other Music Fest stages.

As I mentioned in my last letter, the new Music City Music Center is home to our Fan Fair X, and it is shaping up to be the best assembly of exhibitors, memorabilia, artists, vendors and historic attractions than ever before. LP Field ticket holders will have free admission, but daily and weekend ticket passes will be available for every fan to attend.

It is a pleasure serving this Country Music community. I look forward to seeing you all at our premier events.

Steve Moore

CEO / Country Music Association

CMA Close Up® welcomes your letters and feedback. 615.244.2840 Fax: 615.242.4783 or e-mail [CloseUp@CMAworld.com](mailto:CloseUp@CMAworld.com)

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CMA Close Up (ISSN 0896-372X) is the official bimonthly publication of CMA. Available to CMA members only. CMA Close Up subscription price of \$25 per year is included in membership dues. Periodicals postage paid at Nashville, Tenn.

Postmaster: send address changes to CMA Membership, One Music Circle South, Nashville, Tenn. 37203-4312.



# Calling All COUNTRY MUSIC Fanatics! CMA Music Festival needs YOU!



**JUNE 6-9 • NASHVILLE**

- ESCORT ARTISTS TO AND FROM THE STAGE!
  - ENTERTAIN FANS WITH THE FUN TEAM!
  - ASSIST AUTOGRAPH COLLECTORS AT FAN FAIR X!
  - ENJOY GREAT MUSIC DAY AND NIGHT!
- FREE MEALS, T-SHIRT AND TICKETS TO THE LP FIELD ALL-STAR SHOWS!

Sign up with friends and make new ones! Become a CMA Music Festival Volunteer!  
Apply today by visiting **CMAFEST.COM** then clicking on "About" and "Volunteers."

## See YOU at the Festival!

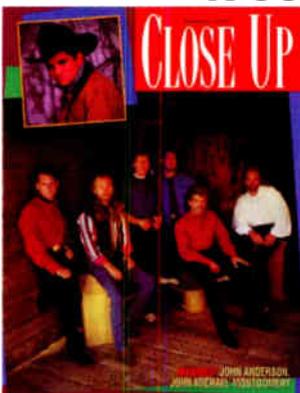




1983



1988



1994



2012

# NAVIGATE CMA CLOSE UP'S NEW LOOK

**CMA CLOSE UP** has come a long way from its early days as a four-page, non-illustrated pamphlet. But with this issue, your membership magazine makes its biggest leap ever, as a duo-platform publication and resource. From this point, you'll be able to expand on the strong content offered in our print editions with additional copy and media at **CMACloseUp.com**.

You've probably noticed the capitalized "CU" in each of these new titles. Here at CMA, that has long been our abbreviation for *CMA Close Up*. "CU" has always been our platform for serving the Country Music community. By sharing our in-house shorthand with you now, we're welcoming you to a new chapter in our story. Follow the latest info on **CMACloseUp.com**, and whether you prefer staying in touch via computer, smartphone or tablet screens, we will @ there!

Bob Doerschuk  
  
 Editor, *CMA Close Up*

Our **FOCUS** newsection includes artist interviews, the ongoing Debut Spotlight intros to up-and-coming artists and our new "Live@CMA" page, which highlights a recent artist concert at CMA and links to video coverage on **CMACloseUp.com**; you'll spot these features quickly by the red header on top of the first page.

**AT ABOVE**, with its green tag, identifies articles with a more historical theme. These can include "The Masters" (interviews with or articles about members of CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame and other giants), "Country Music Hall of Fame" (announcement of inductees and Medallion ceremonies), "Encore" (a photo page that captures a memorable moment in our past) and more.

Orange identifies **THE @SP**, with articles on new developments that can help advance member business interests, from technical innovations in touring and recording to tips on how to add pizzazz to your PR photos.

Articles that aren't centered on individual artists are listed under the blue **CULTURE** header. Here's where you'll find profiles and features about producers, engineers, musicians and industry leaders.

For news specific to CMA, look for the purple **CMA @RRENT**. In addition to coverage of our annual Awards and Music Festival, and Songwriters Series, the SRO Awards, the Triple Play Awards and other presentations, this header will flag profiles of CMA Board leaders, updates on member benefits, CMA Foundation initiatives as well as "Pulse," our photo wrap of recent events involving and/or happening at CMA.

What's left? You'll find it listed under **SHORT CIRCUIT** on our table of contents.

FOLLOW THE LATEST INFO ON **CMACLOSEUP.COM**

by BOB DOERSCHUK

## CMA TRIPLE PLAY

Award Winners Gather in Nashville



**D**ierks Bentley, Shane McAnally and Chris Young talk shop backstage at Nashville's Marathon Music Works, moments before being honored onstage along with other winners of CMA's latest Triple Play Awards on Jan. 29. The award honors writers whose songs reached No. 1 three times within a 12-month period.



photos: Donn Jones

### CMA Supports Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame

**A**t its annual Triple Play Awards, CMA presented a check for \$250,000 to help construct the first Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame at the new Music City Center. (l-r) CMA CEO Steve Moore; John Van Mol, former Board Chairman, Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame Foundation; CMA Board Chairman Troy Tomlinson; and Pat Alger, Board Chairman, Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame Foundation.

## SCOTTY McCREERY HOSTS KEEP THE MUSIC PLAYING ALL STARS CONCERT

**On Feb. 19, Nashville's Schermerhorn Symphony Center rang with the sounds of music played by Metro Nashville Public School students. Scotty McCreery hosted the event and, at an earlier ceremony, presented \$1.2 million on behalf of the CMA Foundation and CMA's Keep the Music Playing initiative to Metro Nashville Public Schools.**



photos: Donn Jones



photos: Steve Lowry

## FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE CELEBRATE PLATINUM SUCCESS AT CMA

To mark the milestone of Florida Georgia Line's No. 1 single "Cruise" being certified Platinum, BMI and SESAC hosted a celebration at CMA on Jan. 29. (l-r, front row) BMI's Penny Everhard; Florida Georgia Line's Tyler Hubbard and Brian Kelley; co-writers Jesse Rice, Joey Mo, and Chase Rice; and Big Machine Label Group's Scott Borchetta. (l-r, back row): Republic Nashville's Jimmy Harnen; Big Loud Mountain's Craig Wiseman, Seth England and Kevin "Chief" Zaruk; SESAC's Tim Fink; Artist Revolution Publishing's Sam Brooker and BMI's David Preston.

## DIGNITARIES AND DISNEY MARK THE CMA INTERNATIONAL MARKETING SUMMIT

**Music industry leaders from the United States and abroad gathered at Disneyland Paris for the first CMA International Marketing Summit on March 1 for panels, research presentations, networking ... and the CMA Songwriters Series' French debut at Billy Bob's Saloon.**

KRISTIAN BUSH OF SUGARLAND ENJOYED TAKING IN THE PARIS SITES, INCLUDING THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE, BEFORE JOINING DALLAS DAVIDSON, BOB DiPIERO AND BRETT JAMES AT BILLY BOB'S FOR THE CMA SONGWRITERS SERIES.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE "HOW DO YOU ENGAGE THE MUSIC FAN?" PANEL GATHER AT THE CONVENTION CENTER, NEWPORT BAY CLUB, IN PARIS.

(l-r) Jeff Smith, Head of Music, BBC Radio 2 & 6Music; Sheri Warnke, Senior VP, Marketing & Communications, CMA; Richard Wootton, Richard Wootton Publicity; CMA CEO Steve Moore; Iain Snodgrass, VP International Marketing, Concord Music Group, Universal Music Group International; and Bob Shennan, Controller, BBC Radio 2, 6Music & Asian Network.



photo: Whitney Pastorek



photo: Ky Chung



photos: Brian Rasic, courtesy of the O2

## "C2C: COUNTRY TO COUNTRY" DRAWS LEGIONS OF FANS TO LONDON'S O2 ARENA

**Sugarland's Kristian Bush, Little Big Town's Phillip Sweet and Karen Fairchild, Tim McGraw, Kimberly Schlapman and Jimi Westbrook of Little Big Town and Vince Gill gather backstage at London's O2 Arena on March 16, the first night of the "C2C: Country to Country" all-star concert, co-sponsored by CMA. The following night featured performances by Brantley Gilbert, LeAnn Rimes, Carrie Underwood and Darius Rucker (left).**

*continued on page 8...*

PUT YOUR FINGER ON THE PULSE. VISIT

CMACLOSEUP.COM



... continued from page 7



photo: Ed Roche

**ASCAP and CMA hosted a No. 1 party at CMA on Jan. 16 to celebrate Carrie Underwood's 16<sup>th</sup> No. 1 single, "Blown Away."**

(l-r) co-writer Josh Kear, Underwood and co-writer Chris Tompkins.



photo: Christopher Beaman

**CHRIS JANSON  
ROCKS THE CMA LOBBY**

Chris Janson performed Jan. 22 as part of the Live@CMA Performance Series.

## CMA SONGWRITERS SERIES RETURNS TO THE U.K. AND IRELAND



photo: Whitney Pastorek

**Keyboardist Brandon Bush, Brett James, Chris Young, Kristian Bush, Bob DiPiero and CMA CEO Steve Moore relax en route to their next stop on the CMA Songwriters Series trek through Dublin, Belfast and London in February. The tour was co-sponsored by BMI, CMA and Gibson Guitar.**

# LOCASH COWBOYS

**STAYING FOCUSED FOR THE LONG HAUL**



by LORIE HOLLABAUGH

**The LoCash Cowboys have been down on their luck more than a few times during their 10-year career. But the high-energy, fun-spirited duo is still betting that the odds are in its favor as it prepares to release its first album.**

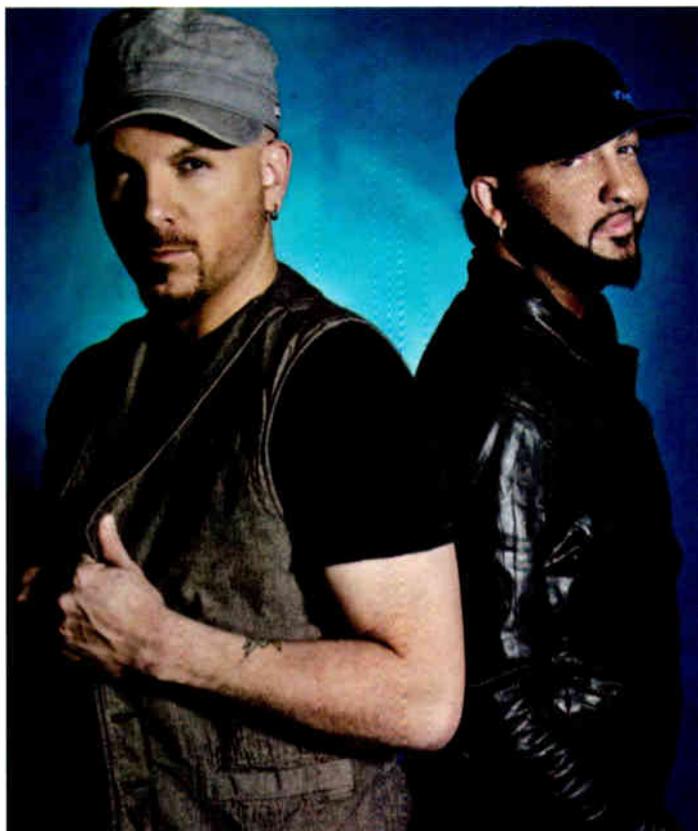
Preston Brust and Chris Lucas met when they were working as DJs at Nashville's Wildhorse Saloon. Soon, they landed an additional gig at Tootsies Orchid Lounge. But when they were offered the coveted Friday night gig at Tootsies, having signed with the booking agency Buddy Lee Attractions, they elected to hit the road.

"I saw a wild side in them that maybe had not happened in Nashville or Country Music for a while — or ever, to be honest," said Tony Conway, then CEO at Buddy Lee. "I was impressed with their humor

**"YOU CAN'T HAVE A PLAN B. YOU JUST HAVE TO GO FOR IT AND KNOW IT'S GOING TO WORK."**

— Preston Brust, LoCash Cowboys

*continued on page 10...*



[ PRESTON BRUST and CHRIS LUCAS ]

**“THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THIS INDUSTRY IS TO HAVE A BACKBONE AND BE READY TO BE STOMPED ON.”**

– Chris Lucas, LoCash Cowboys

and the vision and the dreams they had. Lots of record company folks thought they sounded and looked like the Mötley Crüe of County Music, but in fact they were exploring and developing the style they would fine-tune and have down completely today.”

They landed a deal with DreamWorks and then lost it when the label was sold. But they had made a fan in label head James Stroud, who later offered them a shot on his own Stroudavarious label. Through all of this, Brust and Lucas kept burning up the road. In 2008, they were picked to headline the 12-city Red Man/Maxim Roadhouse Tour. This led them back to the Wildhorse.

“John Rich was host of our concert that night,” Brust said. “He brought Jeffrey Steele with him. We start singing a Jeffrey Steele song that we love, so that perked him up. He works his way to the front and waves me down in the middle of the song. I’m like, ‘Who is the crazy guy with the crazy hair?’ So I go down there and he screams, ‘Man, I get it! Call me and let’s get this thing together! All you need is the songs.’”

Calling Sony/ATV the next day to locate Steele, the guys were offered a publishing deal, thanks to Steele’s interest. That same day, they headed over to his house. “There was something bigger than the music going on with the three of us,” Brust said. “Not only did we find our producer and he found an artist to work with, but we found a brother and we began to lean on each other for the next four years.”

“That’s the cool thing about having a duo,” Lucas agreed. “When I would be down, Preston would be there to cheer me up. And I would do the same for him. The most important thing in this industry is to have a backbone and be ready to be stomped on. When I say I lost a house and a car, I *really* lost a house and a car. I lived on tuna fish and mustard for two years.”

“You can’t have a Plan B,” Brust added. “You just have to go for it and know it’s going to work, because if you have a backup plan, you’re going to go to it because this gets grueling sometimes. We’ve never had a backup plan. I was with my dad the other day, showing him the parking lot where I lived in my car for a while.”

“During that time I had my lovely wife and a little baby, but we lost our fiddle player (Ryan “Troop” Jones) at 28, and before that I lost my dad, who was my best friend and my backbone,” Lucas said. “So I’m sitting there on my couch in our apartment that was too small. I remembered my dad saying, ‘Never give up! Stay positive!’ But it’s hard to stay positive in this business when I don’t know where I’m going to get the money

THE LOCASH COWBOYS PERFORMING AT CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL, 2012



**NEW WAYS TO  
BOOK EARLY GIGS  
A FULL INTERVIEW  
WITH JEFFREY  
STEELE  
AND MUCH MORE  
ON LOCASH  
COWBOYS –  
IT'S ALL AT  
CMACLOSEUP.COM**

to take care of my child. I'm in tears, looking up and saying, 'You gotta give me something.' And I promise you, five minutes later, I get this call from a DJ in California who says, 'I'm sitting here with Keith Urban and he wants me to tell you he's making your song his next single.' And I jumped up and screamed as loud as I could, hugged my wife and said, 'Thanks, Dad. I don't know what you did, but you did good.'

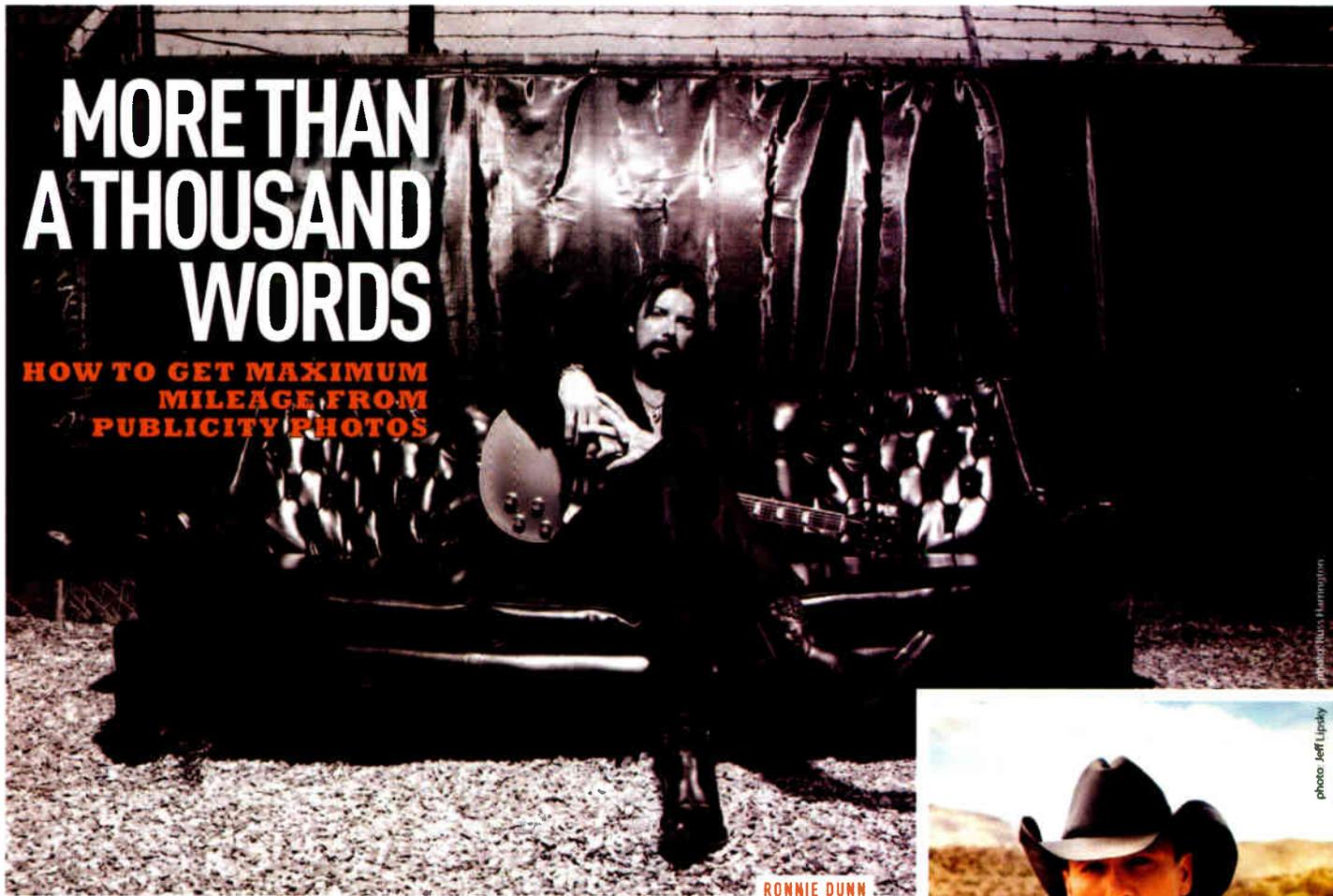
That cut — "You Gonna Fly," written by Brust, Lucas and Jaren Johnston — lodged for two weeks at No. 1. Brust and Lucas followed with "Truck Yeah," which they wrote with Chris Janson and

Danny Myrick and went Gold for Tim McGraw. They've struck gold as artists too, having signed with Average Joes Entertainment.

"I've always told these guys, 'You are going to be great songwriters,'" said Steele. "I know you want that ride, the fame and the big thing, but whatever happens to you on the other end of this thing, remember, it all starts with the song. It all ends with the song. And if it's good, you'll rise."

**LoCashCowboys.com, [@LoCashCowboys](#)**

photo: John Russell



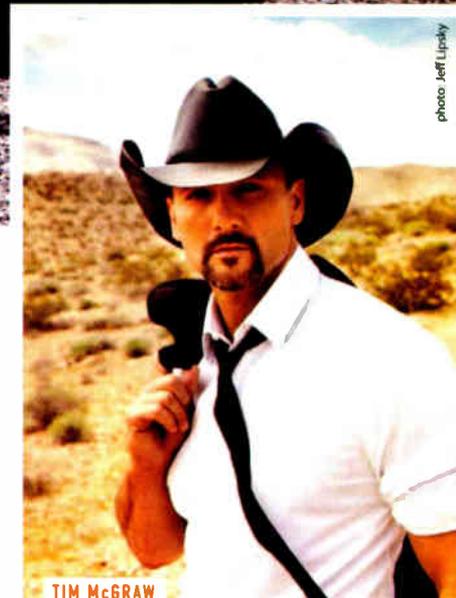
by NANCY MORAN

**FOR YEARS, PUBLICITY PHOTOS WERE SIMPLE: BLACK-AND-WHITE, 8X10, GLOSSY HEADSHOTS TAKEN IN A PHOTO STUDIO ON A WHITE OR GRAY SEAMLESS PAPER BACKGROUND. AT THE TIME, IT MADE SENSE: THESE PHOTOS WERE DESTINED MAINLY FOR BLACK-AND-WHITE NEWSPRINT.**

But with digital photography, color media formats, photo-oriented social media and web-based news sites, many of the rules have changed — or at least softened. Most media outlets are now looking for color photographs. Publicity photos can include interesting backgrounds, props or settings. Many are more than just a close-up of the artist's face.

For music artists, these changes offer new opportunities to define who they are and make an impact. Photographer Jim McGuire's shots of Dailey & Vincent, for example, give you a strong sense of who they are and how they sound. "I like this shot because these are two bluegrass guys, but they're really animated onstage," said McGuire. "They really put on a show, and that's one of the things I wanted to capture."

Remember, many promoters, DJs, journalists and even potential fans will see some artists before they *hear* them. To get them to take the next step and listen to your music, you need to get their attention. But that can be tricky.



**"I'M ALWAYS  
LOOKING FOR THE  
SHOT BETWEEN THE  
SHOT."**

— Jeff Lipsky

"We are, on a daily basis, bombarded with images," said photographer and video director David McClister. "It's very difficult to cut through. Our challenge as photographers is to create an image that makes someone flipping through a magazine or newspaper stop and go 'Wow!' — and then to pull them in enough to say, 'I want to know more about that artist.'"

Surprisingly, dialing back to black-and-white is one technique for triggering interest. "A black-and-white portrait has a way of making something look really important," McGuire noted. "Color is very literal. You can see color all day long in your daily life. But when you see something in black and white, it stops you because it's not what your eye is used to seeing in the natural world."

The good news is that digital cameras and photo-editing software save you from having to shoot black-and-white separately for color. Hunter Hayes' current PR photo was originally in color, but then his photographer, Juan Pont Lezica, presented a black-and-white version to Hayes' team. The resulting photo is stark, eye-catching and strong enough to fill the Feb/March 2013 cover of *CMA Close Up*.

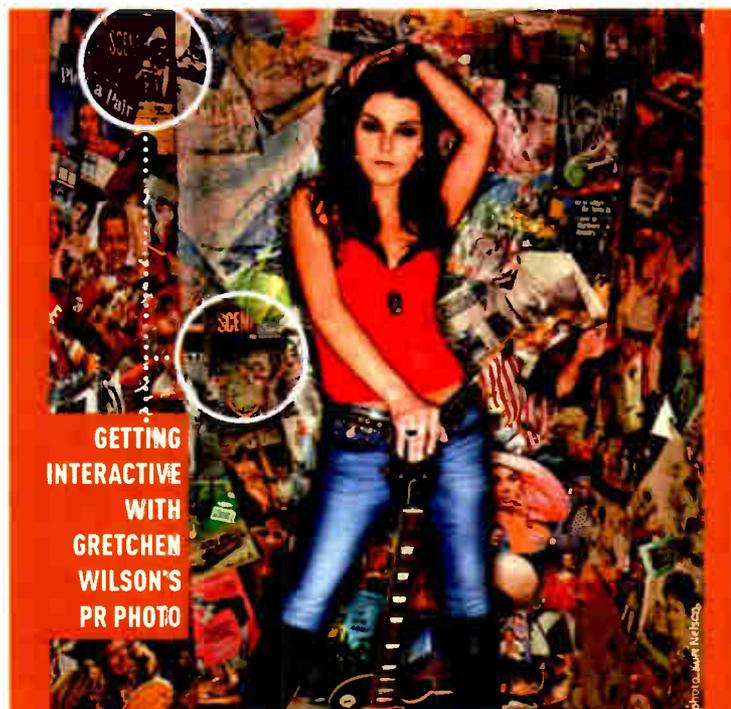
Of course, there are plenty of ways to make a color photo stand out. One is to capture a genuine, comfortable moment where the artist isn't posing. "I'm always looking for the shot between the shot," said Jeff Lipsky. "Whether they're looking at the camera or away from it, it's all about catching that special moment."

An example of this is Lipsky's powerful photo of Tim McGraw. The artist is looking at the lens, but there's something else going on as well. "It's not just him staring at the lens and smiling," the photographer explained. "He's doing something. He was throwing his jacket over his shoulder. He was moving. We were interacting. It was dynamic rather than static."

Shooting on location gives the artist something to interact with. It's not as intimidating as a studio can sometimes feel. But that doesn't mean that you have to shoot out in the desert or high in the hills to put your subject at ease. A few props or a set can go a long way toward creating a comfortable environment in the studio.

"You can have a set that costs \$1,000 to build or you can set a \$60 beat-up, used chair on a background or anywhere in between," said Russ Harrington. He cites as an example his most recent session with Ronnie Dunn, behind the Imogene & Willie's custom jeans

*continued on page 14...*



For as long as people have used printed media to herald upcoming events, the message has been essentially static. You see a celebrity's name, a blurb about where he or she is about to make a personal appearance, basic facts about where and when it happens — and that's about it. There's nothing to encourage a more dynamic response from either the person reading the message or the local newspaper that prints it.

Though that kind of interaction happens all the time on digital media, print remains a one-way street. But that doesn't mean you can't tweak the information highway a little bit. That's what happened back in 2010, when Gretchen Wilson's publicist Craig Campbell sent out this photo to promote her album, *I Got Your Country Right Here*.

Today, Campbell admits to not foreseeing how an imaginative editor might see an opportunity to play a bit with the picture. As far as he was concerned, Kurt Nelson's attitude-drenched image of Wilson was a strong but fairly traditional photo. But then he got a call from someone at the *Nashville Scene*, Music City's free weekly paper.

"They were doing a cover story on Gretchen," Campbell recalls. "And I think they inserted their own logo over the *Life* magazine covers we had pasted onto the wall. I wish I could say it was my brilliant idea."

We're not actually sure who's idea it was; Elizabeth Jones, Art Director at the time for the *Scene*, insists the shot arrived in their office with that alteration. In the end, it doesn't matter; what counts is that someone saw the potential of inserting a little interactivity and branding into a standard PR shot — and that a little creative designing might have the same effect for other publicity pics as well.



BAILEY & VINCENT

Photo: John Mc Guire

shop in Nashville, with little more than a black vinyl couch, a chain-link fence and Dunn with a Fender Telecaster in the image.

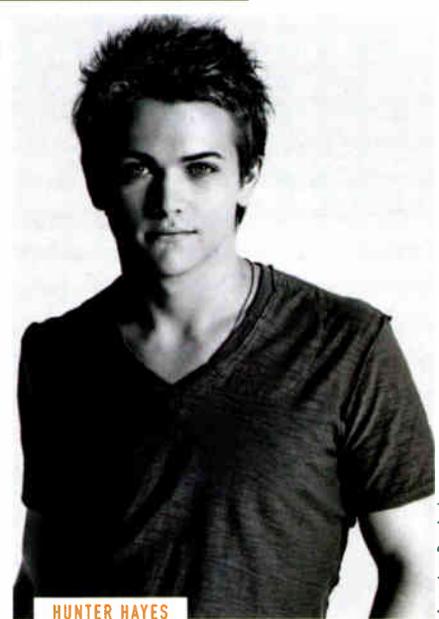
Shooting a band presents its own challenges. The shot becomes more about blocking — positioning everyone in an interesting way that still looks natural. You try to capture the band as a whole, yet you're also dealing with separate personalities. "But then again," Lipsky added, "it's much more dynamic. There are more things you can do."

Above all, lighting is essential to getting great pictures. "Lighting is *everything*," McGuire emphasized. "If the lighting isn't right, it can be distracting. It can even make a person look *bad*."

Even when shooting with natural light, well-lit shots don't happen by accident. "I go through a lot to make the light look natural," Lipsky explains. "I leave nothing to chance. I research my location, including where the light will be at a certain time of day. It's very calculated, yet at the same time I am shaping that ambient light."

Finally, be wary of using your brother-in-law-turned-weekend-photojournalist who claims he can "fix it in Photoshop." There's no substitute for professional experience. Make sure you choose a photographer who speaks to you through their work. Check out their portfolios. Who do you feel drawn to? Whose images do you love? Meet with the photographer ahead of time to see if you feel comfortable together. Do a practice session, if you can. Without taking these steps, it's going to make the shoot more difficult and may affect how you come across in photos.

"You have to be careful about which images you release," Harrington concludes. "Because some images will hang with you for years and years."



HUNTER HAYES

photo: Juan Pont Lezka

**RELAXATION TIPS:  
WHAT *NOT* TO WEAR  
HOW *NOT* TO STAND  
AND MORE TIPS FOR  
PR PHOTO SHOOTS –**

**IT'S ALL AT  
CMACLOSEUP.COM**



# HOME IMPROVEMENTS AND THE COUNTRY MUSIC CONSUMER

**2/3** OF COUNTRY MUSIC CONSUMERS UNDERTAKE AN AVERAGE OF **3 PROJECTS** IN AN 18-MONTH PERIOD

**63%** OF PROJECTS ARE **D-I-Y**

THE AVERAGE AMOUNT SPENT PER PROJECT IS \$2,078



**8 IN 10** SHOPPERS THAT VISIT HOME IMPROVEMENT RETAILERS MAKE A **PURCHASE**



Full study available to CMA members on [My.CMAworld.com](http://My.CMAworld.com)

Online survey conducted in January 2013 with a random sample of 563 respondents, age 18+ from the CMA Insider Fan Panel.

© 2013 COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

A close-up portrait of Tim McGraw wearing a black cowboy hat and a black leather jacket over a white shirt. He has a goatee and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a bright blue sky.

# TIM MCGRAW

*SHIFTS GEARS ON TWO LANES OF FREEDOM*

by DEBORAH EVANS PRICE

**FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES, TIM MCGRAW HAS BEEN ONE OF THE COUNTRY FORMAT'S MOST CONSISTENT HITMAKERS. YET WITH HIS LATEST ALBUM, TWO LANES OF FREEDOM, THE VETERAN ARTIST FEELS AS THOUGH HE'S JUST GETTING STARTED.**

"After the past 20 years of doing this, it's interesting when you really feel like you are a brand-new artist but you're not," said McGraw. "The best part about it is I feel the freshness and the attitude that you have when you cut your first record, but I've got a vast well of experience behind me. The place I'm at in my career is a good place. It's a good dichotomy. It's all fresh and new and exciting, and the music reflects all of that. But it comes with everything that I've done throughout my career.

"I felt like *Two Lanes of Freedom* was another sort of *Everywhere* album for me in a lot of ways," he added, referencing his fourth disc, which has been certified Quadruple Platinum. "*Everywhere* was an album where I really felt like I could understand what I was doing and had more and more input on the making of the record and the sounds that I wanted to have. I've always been that way, but *Everywhere* was when I got my confidence in making records.

"*Two Lanes of Freedom*, to me, is another turning point in my life and career," he added. "It's an *Everywhere* moment, making this record. It reflects that. It was like turning a corner."

Though he's long enjoyed a happy home life with wife Faith Hill and their three daughters, McGraw's business relationships have undergone many changes during the past few years, as he has acquired new management, a new publicist and a new label.

"Change is always a good thing," he reflected. "I've been fortunate that I've had good people around me throughout my career. I've been able to sort of sit in a great train and drive and find my artistic tracks, so to speak. Now it feels like I'm at

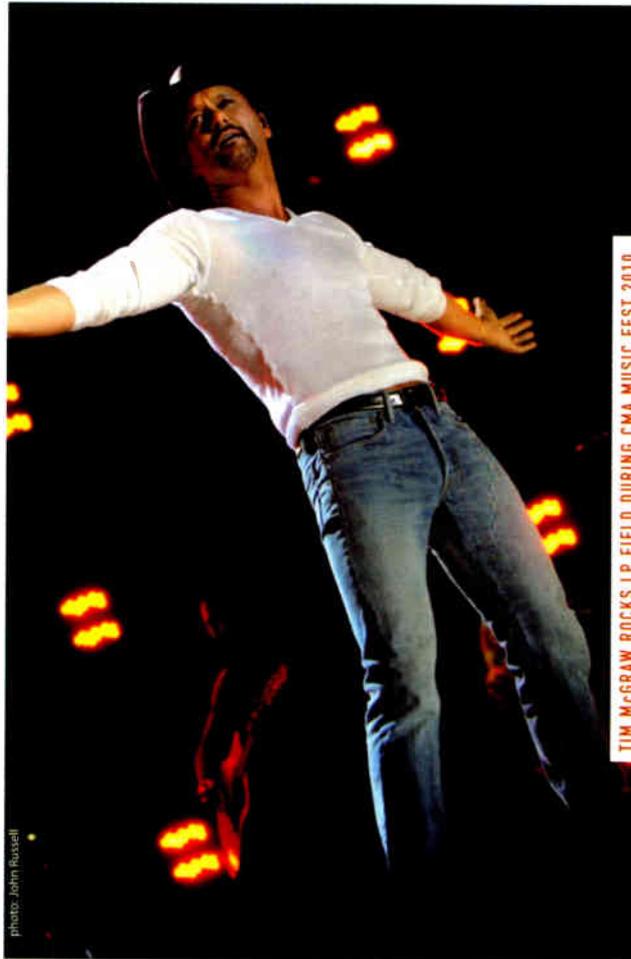
a place where I can take that to a bigger and better experience."

That place includes Big Machine Records, which became his label after a very public departure from Curb Records. McGraw is especially happy about being able to work with Scott Borchetta, President/CEO of the Big Machine Label Group. "There are lots of things that make him successful," he said. "His energy, for one: He has a tremendous amount of energy. It reflects off of him and energizes everyone around him. When you have that sort of positive energy, it can't help but elevate the situation you're in and elevate everybody around you.

**"IT'S INTERESTING WHEN YOU REALLY FEEL LIKE YOU ARE A BRAND-NEW ARTIST BUT YOU'RE NOT."**

– Tim McGraw

*continued on page 18 ...*



TIM MCGRAW ROCKS LP FIELD DURING CMA MUSIC FEST 2010.

"More than that," McGraw continued, "he recognizes artists and lets them be artists. He appreciates what they do and figures out a way to make it work in a marketing and commercial sense. He understands that the art has to be driven *by* the art. And then you figure out how to make it work for the business side of things. If you try to do it vice versa, it's not going to work."

One relationship that remains constant in his business career is with his longtime producer, Byron Gallimore. "I wouldn't even think about going into the studio without Byron," he said. "He allows me to be an artist and allows me to be creative. I have this freedom to not have to think about any borders when I'm recording, because I know he's not going to let it get crazy or let it go where it gets bad. There's a fine line between creating really good, fresh, instinctual stuff that you love and just making bad stuff. Sometimes artists don't know when they've crossed it. Byron is my musical consciousness in a lot of ways."

"Tim and I have always complemented each other," Gallimore said. "We see songs the same. We like a lot of the same songs and agree on the songs we think are hits. It never feels like there's a rub or anything where we totally disagree. We have a mutual respect and anything I've wanted to try or do in the studio, he's been wonderful to try it. And that goes both ways."

Their history as a hit-making team is long and illustrious. McGraw burst on the scene in 1992 with his debut single, "Welcome to the Club" (written by Andre Pessis and Steve Jay Seskin). He has since lofted 68 tunes onto the *Billboard* Country Singles chart, including 33 No. 1 hits, as charted on *Billboard* and *Mediabase*. *Two Lanes of Freedom* is the 18<sup>th</sup> album he's placed on *Billboard's* Top Country Albums

ADVICE FOR  
ARTISTS IN  
TRANSITION...

REFLECTIONS ON  
*TWO LANES OF  
FREEDOM...*

AND MORE FROM  
TIM MCGRAW...  
IT'S ALL AT  
CMACLOSEUP.COM

listings and his 14<sup>th</sup> to debut at No. 1.

To what does he attribute his longevity? "If I could answer that, I probably wouldn't tell anybody," he replied, laughing. "I don't know! I just try to know who I am as an artist and try to stay true to who I am as an artist. I don't try to reinvent myself. I just try to go in and make records that make me feel like I'm doing what I want to do. I make the kind of music that I want to make."

Gallimore attributes his friend's ongoing success to "his excellent song taste. He's not one to pass on many hits. Another thing is the emotion in Tim's voice, the way he's able to

connect with a song, especially on ballads. He has a way of touching people that's just hard to describe."

"I've changed a lot of things in my life," McGraw summed up. "I quit drinking five years ago. I have a different perspective on what my future is and what I want to get out of it. I didn't think that I was anywhere close to done and didn't just want to ride it out. There's a lot more of my career ahead of me than behind me. I just want to shift gears. I want to go from third to fourth — and I still have fifth left."

TimMcGraw.com, [@TheTimMcGraw](#)

**"I WOULDN'T  
EVEN THINK  
ABOUT  
GOING INTO  
THE STUDIO  
WITHOUT  
BYRON  
(GALLIMORE)."**

— Tim McGraw



# LEW DICKEY

**Cumulus Media  
President/CEO  
Brings Country Radio  
Back to New York City**

by BOB DOERSCHUK

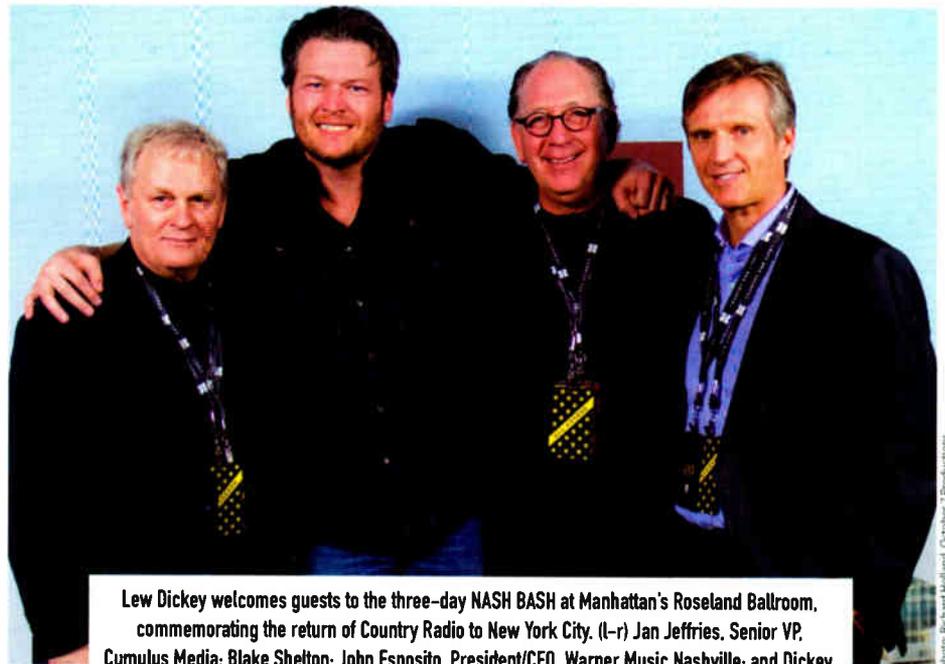
For 17 years, New York City proved a tough nut for Country radio to crack. Despite the format's obvious popularity as measured by concert attendance and music purchases, local radio remained closed to Country — until Jan. 21, when Randy Houser's "How Country Feels" heralded the launch of NASH FM, which went live on 94.7 FM. The revival of the format in this market was engineered by Lew Dickey, President/CEO of Cumulus Media.

## **Why did it take 17 years to bring Country Music back to radio in New York City?**

It was simply because of scarcity. Both ESPN and CBS decided to simulcast with their AM stations, so that took two viable FM's out of the mix. And obviously we weren't going to blow up (Cumulus adult contemporary station) WPLJ. So we didn't have a distribution platform until WFME became available. Then we jumped all over it.

**"WE BELIEVE NASH CAN BE AN ENTERTAINMENT BRAND LIKE NASCAR IS AN ENTERTAINMENT BRAND."**

— Lew Dickey, President/CEO,  
Cumulus Media



Lew Dickey welcomes guests to the three-day NASH BASH at Manhattan's Roseland Ballroom, commemorating the return of Country Radio to New York City. (l-r) Jan Jeffries, Senior VP, Cumulus Media; Blake Shelton; John Esposito, President/CEO, Warner Music Nashville; and Dickey.

photo: Richard Holland, October 7 Productions

## **You had a high demand for Country in that market to help you get out of the gate.**

Our research showed that there was a terrific demand for the music in New York. If Kenny Chesney came and played the Meadowlands, he'd sell the place out. Jason Aldean could play Madison Square Garden and sell the place out.

## **How did you come up with the NASH brand name?**

We are the largest Country broadcaster, so we wanted to organize that into a content vertical by going after that consumer segment and offering advertisers multiple ways to reach that segment. We needed a national brand for Country. We were racking our brains, constantly trying to figure out a name. We'd bought the New York radio station, but 45 days out from launch we didn't have a name for it. So I was reading the paper on a Saturday morning, and my girlfriend Vanessa bursts outside and says, "I've got it!" I said, "What?" She said, "I've got the name for the Country brand — NASH." As soon as she said it, I knew that was it. Everybody who heard it was like,

"Why didn't I think of that?" I've said that myself to so many people!

## **With all Cumulus Country stations embracing the NASH format, how do you plan to maintain the close ties between listeners and those stations?**

The talent is local. The request lines are local. Our promotions are local. We touch people locally. We know that Country radio does have a unique position in its relationships with its listeners, just as Country Music has a unique relationship with its fans. NASCAR has that too, and its advertisers have made that a very profitable commercial venture. We believe NASH can be an entertainment brand like NASCAR is an entertainment brand. Country fans are a consumer segment for advertisers. If we take our entertainment hat off for a second and put our business hat on, the NASH brand is a very lucrative consumer segment. Advertisers want to sell their goods and services to this segment, and we believe they should do that through a multimedia channel under the NASH brand.

LEW DICKEY DISHES DEEPER ON NASH AND NEW YORK ON [CMACLOSEUP.COM](http://CMACLOSEUP.COM)



CHARLIE WORSHAM



“I’m proud of the fact that I was in the first bluegrass band in Berklee.” – from video interview with Charlie Worsham

“We’ve never been one to necessarily put labels on what we do. We just always strive to make the best music we can.” – from video interview with Parmalee



PARMALEE

FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE



“Every night we’re onstage, we’re learning.” – from video interview with Florida Georgia Line

SEE ARTIST INTERVIEWS AND PERFORMANCES AT [CMACLOSEUP.COM](http://CMACLOSEUP.COM)

Photo: Christian Borroff

# LYRIC VIDEOS

**Open New Doors for Promotion and Creativity**

by PHYLLIS STARK

Once almost exclusively fan-created works, lyric videos have become important components in record label strategies for marketing their acts. As a result, lyric videos are being created more quickly, more often and with much better production values than ever before.

The term "lyric video" might actually already be outdated. Two years ago, CeeLo Green made a splash with a simple lyric clip for his controversial song, sometimes referred to as "Forget You." While that video now has far more than 10 million views on YouTube, its simple format of lyrics scrolling on a screen seems dated by today's standards, where stop-motion graphics, creative use of found objects, performance footage and actors are used routinely.

"Fans love lyric videos because, let's face it, fans love lyrics," said Leslie Fram, Senior VP, Music Strategy, CMT. "We have a whole new generation of fans that didn't grow up with having the lyrics to read on an album cover."

**SING ALONG TO  
OUR LYRIC VIDEO  
COLLECTION AT  
CMACLOSEUP.COM**



Excerpts tell the tale from Taylor Swift's lyric video for "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together."



By selling the lyric videos on iTunes and through deals that provide compensation for views on YouTube and VEVO, labels earn small amounts of income from the clips. But the primary goal is to give fans something to watch between when a single is sent to radio and digital retailers, and when the "real" video is released. For labels that also hold off on shooting a production video until the song becomes a hit, this interlude can last for several months.

"Often it takes three to four weeks to set up a music video properly and get it shot and edited," said Sandi Spika Borchetta, Senior VP, Creative, Big Machine Label Group. "So we started doing lyric videos to get something creative out

there to the fans first — and they love it. With a lot of our artists' fans, the content is king and they want as much as they can possibly get. This is just another way that we can give it to them."

Peter Strickland, EVP/GM, Warner Music Nashville, says that fans are actually seeking the lyric videos out. On the high end, he estimates, a lyric video might generate half a million views. But even one for a more routine song that's working at Country radio can expect in the neighborhood of 100,000 views — one reason why his label now creates a lyric clip for every single it releases.

"These are fairly inexpensive to make, and if it gets us a higher number of visibility clicks online, then we're in great shape," said

Strickland, who estimates that the typical lyric video runs around 5 percent to 10 percent of what a standard production video might cost.

While fans still create their own lyric videos for songs and artists they love, labels have more control over quality by making their own versions, which utilize the master recordings as well as approved artist images.

At Big Machine Label Group, the clips are created by the company's creative digital team. They've been known to work through the night to meet deadlines while creating intricate, even hand-drawn lyric clips, such as the one for Taylor Swift's "Eyes Open," from the soundtrack to "The Hunger Games."

CMT and GAC have also taken notice, with Suzanne Gordon, VP/Programming, GAC, observing a dramatic rise in production values for lyric videos. "That's really important from our point of view," she said. "Something that is (mainly) type, just sort of a PowerPoint thing, has value on the Internet and on social streams. But a lyric video has to have good production value as well as being paired with a great single for us to consider airing it."

Those that possess these attributes have made it onto the networks' rotation. "I never thought that we would air a lyric video on CMT," Fram admitted. "But when Taylor Swift's highly anticipated 'We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together' came out, we aired the lyric video because it was so clever. It was really interesting to watch. We aired it for two



## "FANS LOVE LYRIC VIDEOS BECAUSE, LET'S FACE IT, FANS LOVE LYRICS."

— Leslie Fram, Senior VP, Music Strategy, CMT

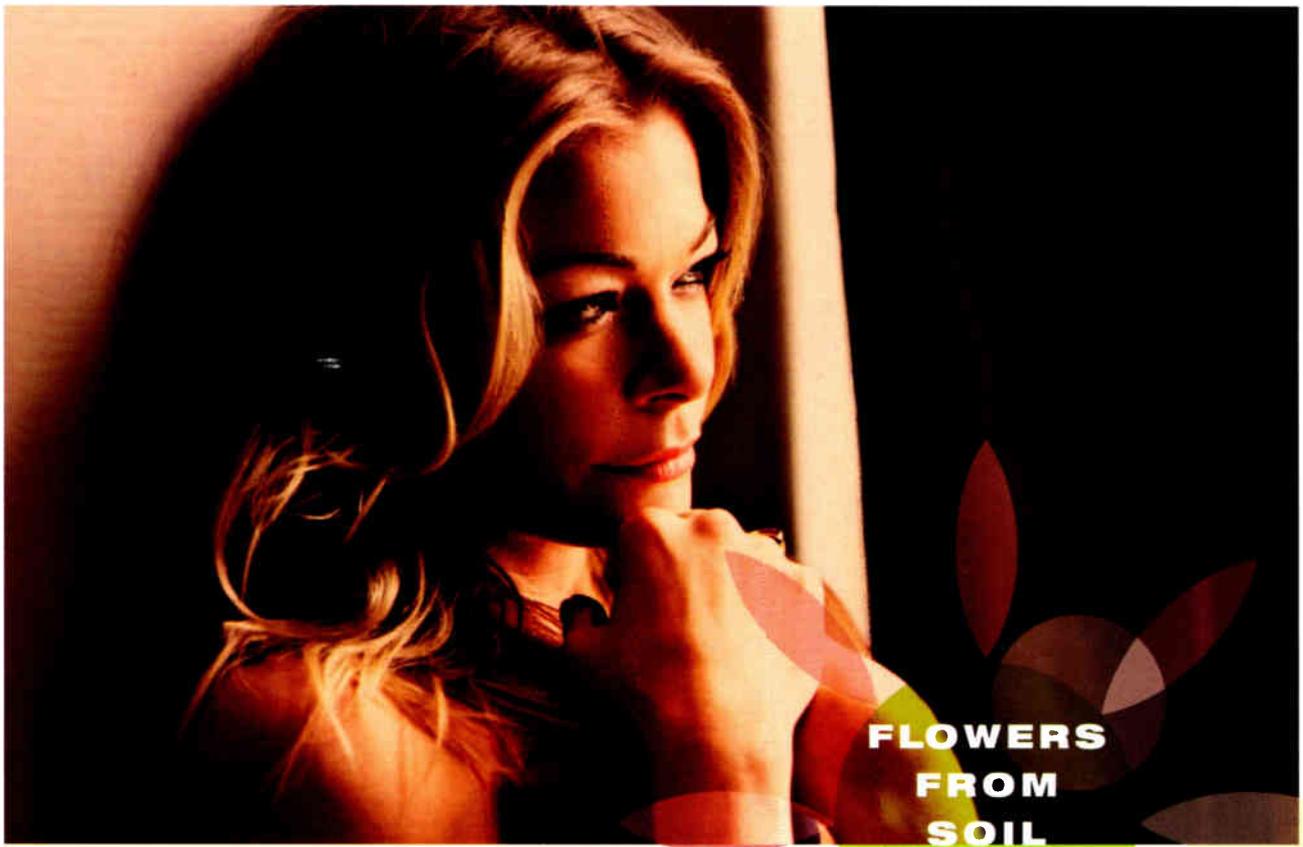
weeks before the official video came out because we thought it was very well done, a great concept piece, and it was nice to have new Taylor content on the air."

GAC aired it too, with Gordon calling it "the best example of doing it right, because it illustrated the song in a creative way that also reflected her image and her personality, starting with that diary at the very beginning and at the end. It looked like something that would be a (real) Taylor Swift video. It was not repetitive. It had a lot of creative elements and creative animation in it. The other thing that made it a great lyric video was that it was a good tease to the playful nature of the official video that they released later.

"It's important for a lyric video not just to be a placeholder for the real video but to complement it if there's another video coming out," Gordon added. "It has to be another creative integration of the song and the performance together. And it has to be highly produced and something that looks great on the air and our viewers want to see."

Not surprisingly, the networks have become proactive at giving their viewers what they want. "We're starting to look on social media and see what's out there," Gordon acknowledged. "If there's a single that's doing well on the chart, or if our viewers are looking for a video and we haven't had one delivered to us yet, then we'll start looking to see if the label made a lyric video that might be produced well enough that it would substitute on the air for us. I think we're going to see a lot more of them."





# LEANN RIMES

## RISES ABOVE CONTROVERSY WITH *SPITFIRE*

by BRIAN MANSFIELD

For the past four years, a tabloid-skewed version of LeAnn Rimes' life has played out online and in public. With her new album, *Spitfire*, the twice-married, 30-year-old singer tries to set the record straight.

"It's an emotional roller coaster ride of everything I felt, everything a human being could feel, in the last four years," she said. "I didn't set out to write a record that attacked the stories that have been out there. I've always said there's 10 to 15 percent truth in those stories — the rest is BS. There's a lot being thrown around out there. Any real artist takes what they've been through and uses it for their art. That's basically what I'm doing."

Rimes co-wrote eight of the 13 songs on *Spitfire*, her first album of mostly new material since *Family* in 2007. "She's loosened her tongue, she's loosened her heart, she's loosened her spirit," said producer Darrell Brown, who wrote many of those songs with her. "She's writing ungodly better than she has in her entire life."

Rimes signaled the direction of the new material in late 2012, when she released "What Have I Done?" (written by Rimes, Brown and David Baerwald) and "Borrowed" (Rimes, Brown and Dan Wilson), which

acknowledge the guilt and shame she felt about the dissolution of her eight-year union with Dean Sheremet, and the circumstances under which her current marriage with actor Eddie Cibrian began. But these only hint at the emotional depths Rimes plumbs on the album. As she works through desire, anger and ultimately acceptance and wisdom, she sings honestly but never defensively. She may be the principal character in this drama, but she doesn't see herself as its hero.

"I'm not perfect," she says. "And I don't want to be. At all. Anymore. I want to be imperfect — and I want to write about that."

"God Takes Care of Your Kind," which Rimes and Brown wrote with her then-husband Sheremet, is almost a harbinger of her ambition to honor her imperfections. "We always wrote together," she remembered. "We had a great relationship that way. It probably was the first song we wrote for this record that ended up here. That's life, isn't it? It kind of works out like that."

As Rimes' personal life began to implode, she, Brown and their co-producer Vince Gill ended up recording *Lady and Gentlemen*, which features Rimes' versions of classics written by John Anderson, Gill, Merle Haggard, Kris Kristofferson and other Country giants.

By the time Rimes returned to the studio, she was deep into the process of setting her life to song. "I didn't set out to make a record that was true to my life," she said. "At the same time, I didn't know how to stop that train, because it was coming out of me, just so naturally. I didn't want to record songs just to record songs anymore. I wanted everything to mean something to me. Even if I didn't write it, I wanted it to be part of the story."

A good example would be "Where I Stood," which Australia's Missy Higgins wrote and released as a single in 2007. Brown adjusted the song's structure to accommodate Rimes' broad vocal range, at one point modulating the chorus up a fourth for more dramatic impact. Its lyrics ("She will love you more than I could/She who dares to stand where I stood") became Rimes' message to Sheremet and his new wife, photographer Sarah Silver.

"It was important for her to say what she wanted to say with Dean, to apologize to him, but also to let him know that Sarah was going to love him more," Brown noted.

Brown recruited top-notch songwriters Baerwald, Wilson and Nathan Chapman to write with Rimes. To bring out what he heard as "the blues and the soul" in her voice, as well as its Appalachian and Texas influences, he hired the R&B-based rhythm section of bassist Willie Weeks and drummer Steve Jordan. Then he fleshed out the band with Dean Parks, Dan Tyminski and Waddy Wachtel on acoustic instruments and Paul Franklin on pedal steel.

On all but a couple tracks, there's no electric guitar. "I didn't want any other frequency to interfere with that lower part of LeAnn's voice, which is her natural voice," Brown said. Instead, he instructed Franklin to play lines on steel that he thought an electric guitar player would add to the tracks.

Rimes also employed some unorthodox methods while recording her vocals. A hand-held

*continued on page 26...*

**"I WANT TO BE  
IMPERFECT —  
AND I WANT  
TO WRITE  
ABOUT THAT."**

— LeAnn Rimes



LeAnn Rimes performs at the C2C: Country to Country concert at London's O2 Arena on March 17.

... continued from page 25



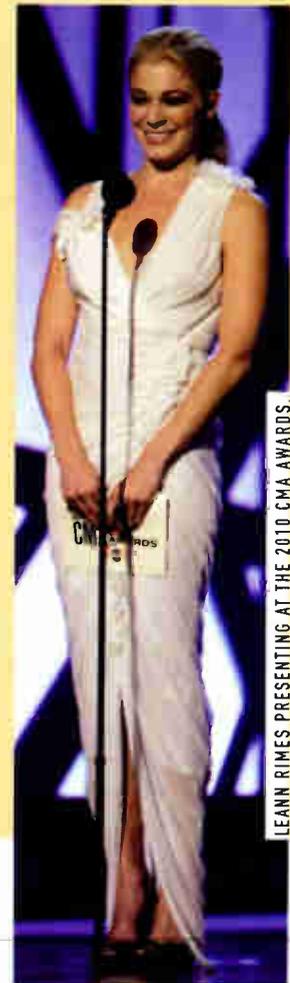
FOR MORE ON  
LESSONS RIMES HAS  
LEARNED ABOUT  
SOCIAL MEDIA, VISIT  
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microphone, much like the kind she would use in a live setting, allowed her mobility in the studio. Rimes recorded "Borrowed" on her knees and "What Have I Done" while lying flat on her back. That freedom of being able to move her hands and body appealed strongly to her. "It's a very expressive thing I haven't been able to do before," she said.

Important as her messages are throughout *Spitfire*, Rimes now understands that the most important conversations are the internal ones. "Looking at this album, you see someone who's talking to herself, almost, who's being honest with herself for the first time and not worrying about everyone else," she said. "From there, God knows where I go. But if I can start here, I'll be so proud of myself."

LeAnnRimesWorld.com, @LeAnnRimes



LEANN RIMES PRESENTING AT THE 2010 CMA AWARDS.

photos: (l) Sara Hertel; (r) John Russell

# BRANTLEY GILBERT

**Has the Right Attitude for Mountain Dew**

by BOB DOERSCHUK

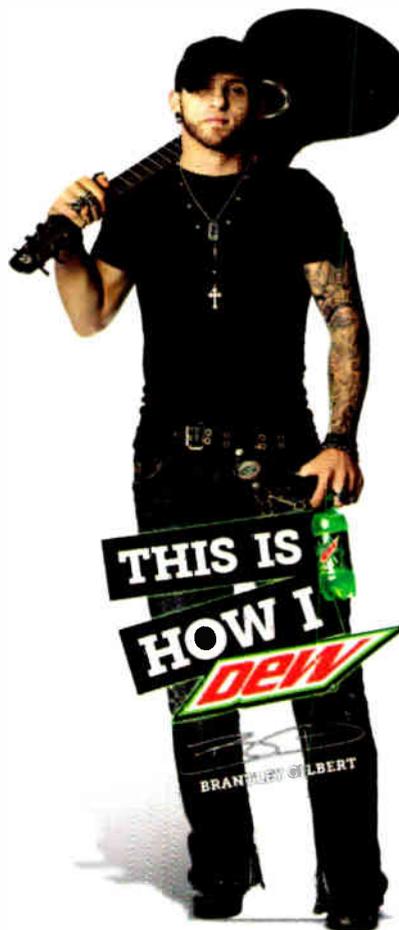
What does Brantley Gilbert have in common with rappers Joey Bada\$\$ and Lil Wayne, NASCAR's Dale Earnhardt Jr., snowboarder Danny Davis and a pack of skateboard virtuosos?

A visit to [MountainDew.com](http://MountainDew.com) provides one answer: Each of these folks is promoting the popular soft drink. But Patrick Santangelo, Senior Brand Manager, Mountain Dew, sheds a different light on the question.

"What's more important than what they do is who they are," he explained. "When we think about developing new partnerships with our brand, we always look to who the artist is. What drives them? Are they really, truly doing things in their own way?"

Gilbert aced that test. Being independent, answering to no one but one's self, is the essential quality that Santangelo and his team scout out — and there are people at Mountain Dew whose responsibilities begin with identifying potential partners blessed with this attitude.

"As a brand team, we have guys that live and breathe skate," Santangelo said. "We have guys that love hip-hop. And we have die-hard Country fans. They started listening to Brantley a year or two ago. The more they found out about him, the more we felt he was the perfect person to drive toward our



Mountain Dew's Brantley Gilbert standee for store display.

millennial target in the heartland states."

After contacting Gilbert's manager, Rich Egan of Hard 8 Management, Mountain Dew arranged an initial meeting. "Right off the bat, they were talking about how they run their company and their partnerships," the artist said. "That caught my attention, and when they explained what they wanted to do, it was undeniable that it matched what I wanted to do. The guys we met with at Mountain Dew are some cool dudes and ladies. They've been out to the shows and we've had a chance to hang with them."

So far, their interests have met at several intersections. Mountain Dew maintains a Dew Lounge at Gilbert's "Hell on Wheels" tour as well as those he opens on Tim McGraw's "Two Lanes of Freedom 2013 Tour"; in this space, up to 30 winners of local radio and retail promotions gather for a private meet-and-greet with Gilbert. Point-of-sale displays featuring the artist are being positioned in C&G and 7-Eleven stores.

The partnership has also hit a home run on social media. "We did a photo shoot with Brantley a few days ago," Santangelo said. "I shot a picture of Brantley on my phone and

**"WHEN WE THINK ABOUT DEVELOPING NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH OUR BRAND, WE ALWAYS LOOK TO WHO THE ARTIST IS."**

— Patrick Santangelo,  
Senior Brand Manager, Mountain Dew

then flipped it to the person on our team that managed social media. We put it up on our website, and within two hours it had 10,000 likes and a couple hundred comments."

Gilbert, who describes himself as a lifelong aficionado of Mountain Dew, counts another benefit of their affiliation. "Our bus and the backstage area are stocked to the gills with Mountain Dew."

[BrantleyGilbert.com](http://BrantleyGilbert.com); [MountainDew.com](http://MountainDew.com)

**READ MORE FROM GILBERT AT [CMACLOSEUP.COM](http://CMACLOSEUP.COM)**

photo courtesy of Mountain Dew

## THE HENNINGSENS

These are halcyon times for Country vocal groups. So how does a new group stand out? The Henningsens have at least two ways of making an impression in this crowded field.

One involves songwriting: On *American Beautiful*, their Arista Nashville debut, Brian Henningsen, son Aaron and daughter Clara, as a trio or in various combinations, join with various co-writers on all 10 tracks, with consistently pleasing results.

Match that with singing that exceeds today's standards for technique, expression and emotion, and you've got a winner on your hands. Producer Paul Worley captures every nuance of Clara's phrasing and then pulls back to reveal their three-part power in all its glory. The title cut (written by all three with Brett Beavers) anchors on a punchy power-guitar riff and soars on a catchy, sing-along chorus. It's no surprise that this single totaled 77 *Country Aircheck* and *Billboard* radio adds in its first week.

But dig into the album and you'll discover other levels of artistry. A nostalgic fiddle and dreamy waltz setting take us deep into "Arkansas" (Brian and Clara with Cactus Moser), whose story of aged siblings gathered for a brother's funeral casts a spell that lingers after the last chord dies. (Recollections of "kerosene nights and innocent days" draw us back into a nearly forgotten past.) And when they join voices to celebrate the light that guides them through stormy times on "To Believe" (all three with Jimmy Yearly), even doubters have to be left feeling a little less alone.

**TheHenningsens.com;**  
**@TheHenningsens**

**Q** Who is your dream duet partner?

**A** "The Band Perry."

**Q** What actors would portray you in a biopic?

**A** "Moe, Larry and Curly."



## JOEL CROUSE

Just 20 years old, Joel Crouse writes as if he were, on the first verse of "That's Why God Made Love Songs," 18. Penned by Crouse, Jamie Houston and Jimmy Yearly for his upcoming debut, it relates how a young guy, too dazzled by the girl he's with to find the right words, turns on the radio and lets a romantic tune speak on his behalf. But then, on verse two, we shift to 1963, where a future husband and wife meet at the Armory as their favorite song plays; nearly 50 years later, they dust off that 45 every Friday night and "fall in love again."

The point here is that Crouse can already project himself into stories beyond his own experience and make them come alive for listeners of every age. His singing seals the deal; from quiet passages to big climaxes, even falsettos, Crouse delivers on his songs vocally while keeping an intimate feel at every dynamic throughout his upcoming debut album.

Born in Holland, Mass., Crouse was in a hurry to grow up. He wrote his first song at 14, put a band together at 15, graduated from high school at 16 and signed to Show Dog-Universal shortly after turning 19. His songs have a loose, laid-back vibe; the first single, "If You Want Some" (Crouse, Houston and Luke Laird), covers the familiar ground of friends getting together to party, but the groove ambles along, there's no sense of hurry and at the end a sing-along riff fades like a sunset after a perfect day.

**JoelCrouse.com;** **@JoelCrouse**

**Q** What's your pet peeve?

**A** "I hate warm or even lukewarm milk."

**Q** What actor would portray you in a biopic?

**A** "Haha ... The Most Interesting Man in the World, from the Dos Equis ads."



[ CLARA, BRIAN and AARON HENNINGSEN ]

## TATE STEVENS

**T**ate Stevens' triumph on Season 2 of "The X Factor" confirms that Country Music is stronger than ever. More important, it heralds the arrival of a performer whose music is in step with what America wants to hear.

On his self-titled upcoming Syco Music/RCA Nashville debut, Stevens flaunts a raw vocal power. This Missouri native and onetime construction worker has clearly lived the life he sings about. When it comes to connecting to the real world of his fans, this ability to project from real experience can't be learned in a classroom.

There's plenty of humor in his delivery too. Whether giving a friend advice on the how to treat women right ("That's How You Get the Girl," written by Dallas Davidson, Ben Hayslip and Rivers Rutherford) or joking about being distracted from his work by a pretty young thing ("Can't Get Nothin' Done," by Stevens, Ashley Gorley, Wade Kirby and Phil O'Donnell), he comes across more as a good-time pal than a star on the rise. But when called on to deliver a ballad with intensity and drama on his first single, "Power of a Love Song" (Jeremy Bussey, Bradley Gaskin and Marcus Franklin Johnson), he can go toe-to-toe in the spotlight with anyone else.

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

[@TateStevensCtry](https://twitter.com/TateStevensCtry)

**Q** Who is your musical hero?

**A** "Joe. Joe. Joe Diffin."

**Q** What can you tell us that we'd never guess about you?

**A** "I'm terrified of spiders of any size."



Photo: Jeff Linsky



## CARRIE ZARUBA

**W**hat made Carrie Zaruba so tough, so able to express her feelings in song? Maybe it comes from always being the last kid when your class had to line up in alphabetical order? Whatever it was, she is rising into the Country Music sky, bright, fast and impossible to ignore.

Her debut album, *Woman on a Mission*, announces her arrival with crunchy power guitar, sizzling Country fiddle and lyrics that bounce between heartbreak and fist-pumping pride. Released on Go Time Records, produced by Kent Wells, who also co-wrote all six tracks with Zaruba, it showcases the Baltimore native's ability to blend these disparate elements in a single song — even a single line — and make it completely believable.

Only part of this stems from the chops she cultivated as a jazz and opera vocal student at Philadelphia's University of the Arts. She was molded more profoundly by her subsequent move to Nashville, the bar gigs she fronted and the writing skills she developed through working with Wells.

On ballads, Zaruba addresses a theme of hiding her sadness while putting on a brave front. When she assures us that she'll be OK, in "Little Lies," you feel the pain behind her bravado as well as the resolution that will in fact get her "out the door and on my way." And all doubt is gone on the up-tempo rockers; the hip "tick, tick ... boom" hook on the bridge in "Time Bomb" makes you want to run — straight to the dance floor.

[Facebook.com/CarrieZarubaOfficial](https://www.facebook.com/CarrieZarubaOfficial)

[@Carrie\\_Zaruba](https://twitter.com/Carrie_Zaruba)

**Q** What is your lucky charm?

**A** "A rosary blessed by Pope John Paul II."

**Q** What song would you love to cover?

**A** "'Run to the Hills' by Iron Maiden."

FOR MORE Q-A RESPONSES, MUSIC, VIDEO AND OTHER INFORMATION ON DEBUT SPOTLIGHT ARTISTS, PLEASE VISIT [CMACLOSEUP.COM](http://CMACLOSEUP.COM)

## LORIE HOLLABAUGH

has written for *Country Weekly*, *Radio & Records* and many other other publications.



## BRIAN MANSFIELD

has covered Country Music for more than 20 years. He currently serves as the Nashville correspondent for *USA Today*.

## NANCY MORAN

is an independent singer/songwriter, recording artist and artist development coach at Azalea Music Group in Nashville and the former assistant editor of *American Songwriter* magazine.



## DEBORAH EVANS PRICE

has written for *Billboard* for 17 years. She's also a regular contributor to *Country Weekly*, **TheBoot.com**, **watchGMCtv.com**, *Homecoming* and other outlets.



## PHYLLIS STARK

has been reporting extensively on the music industry for two decades. She authors MSN's music blog, "One Country," as well as other music articles and features for MSN.



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**PRINTING** MCQUIDDY PRINTING

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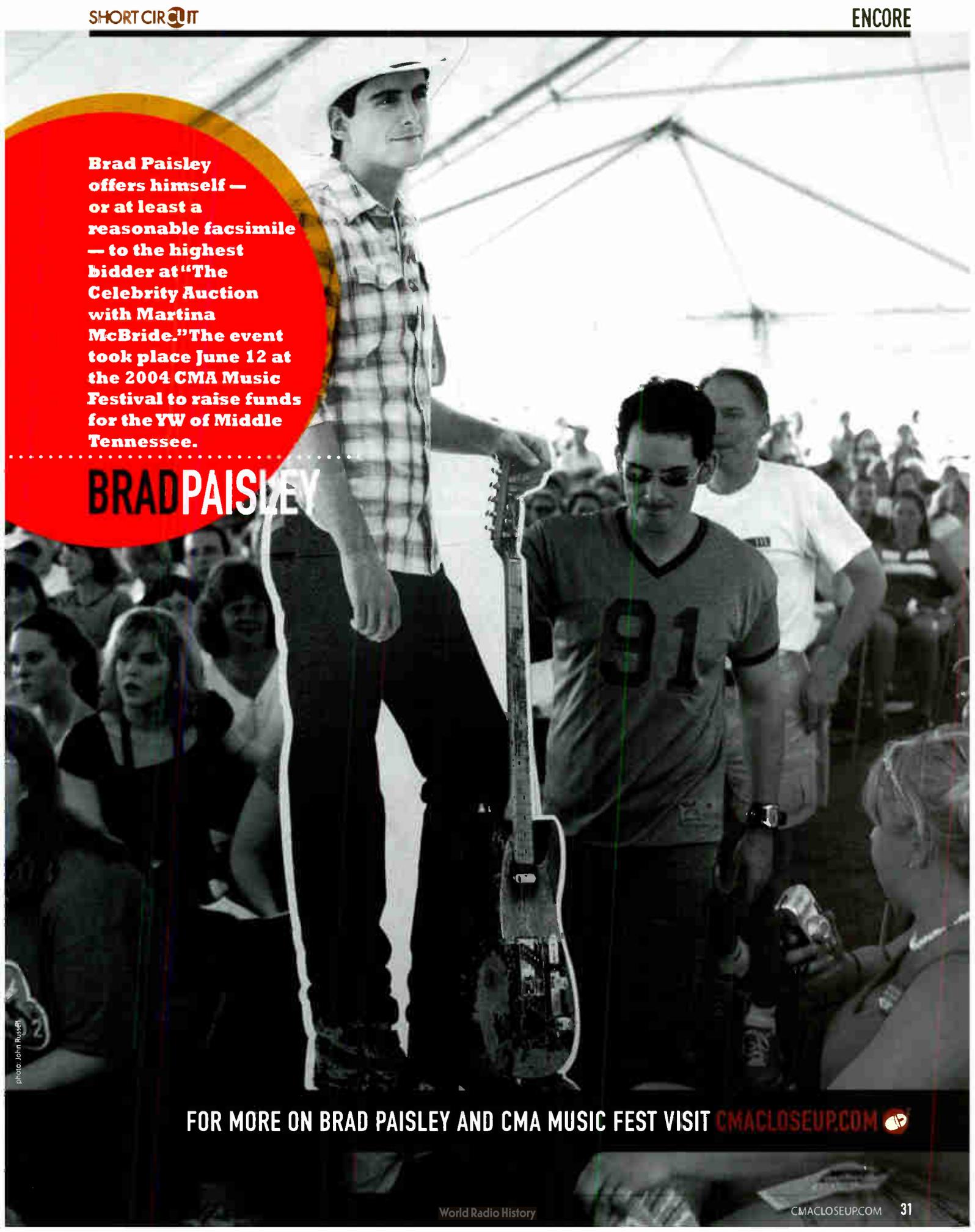
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**Brad Paisley offers himself — or at least a reasonable facsimile — to the highest bidder at “The Celebrity Auction with Martina McBride.” The event took place June 12 at the 2004 CMA Music Festival to raise funds for the YW of Middle Tennessee.**

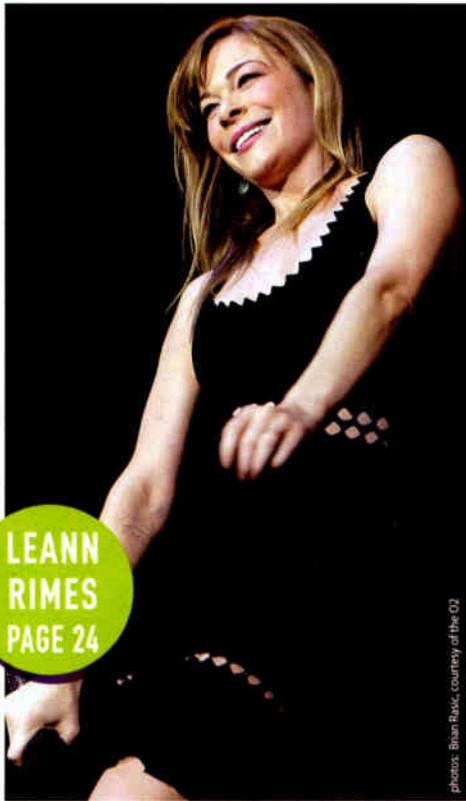
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FOR MORE ON BRAD PAISLEY AND CMA MUSIC FEST VISIT [CMACLOSEUP.COM](http://CMACLOSEUP.COM)



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LEANN RIMES PAGE 24

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