

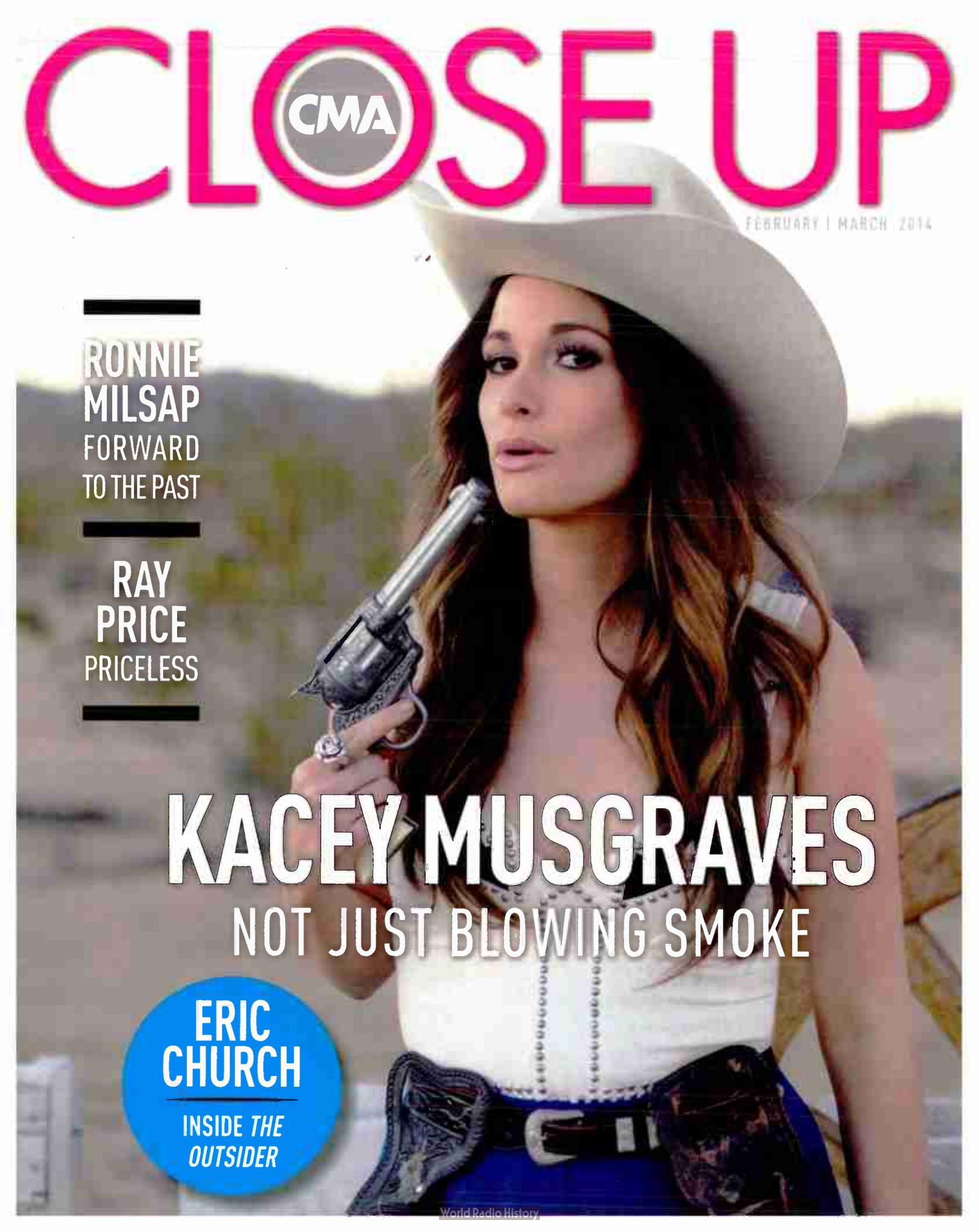
CLOSE UP

CMA

FEBRUARY | MARCH 2014

**RONNIE
MILSAP**
FORWARD
TO THE PAST

**RAY
PRICE**
PRICELESS



KACEY MUSGRAVES
NOT JUST BLOWING SMOKE

**ERIC
CHURCH**

*INSIDE THE
OUTSIDER*

FOCUS

- 6 WHO NEW TO WATCH
- 8 ERIC CHURCH
- 16 KACEY MUSGRAVES
- 25 RONNIE MILSAP
- 28 DEBUT SPOTLIGHT

CMA CURRENT

- 4 PULSE
- 20 CMA BOARD PRESIDENT FRANK BUMSTEAD
- 21 CMA CEO SARAH TRAHERN

THE CUSP

- 22 CUSTOM GUITAR STRAPS

CULTURE

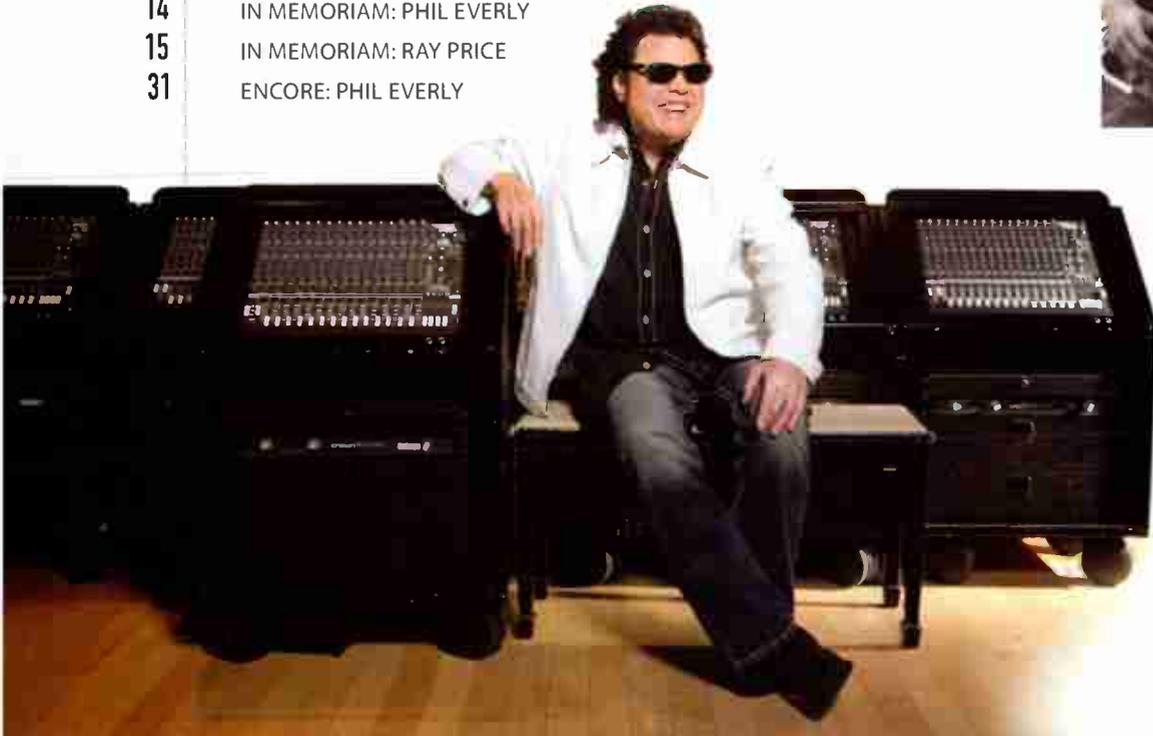
- 12 JOHN CARTER CASH

SHORT CIRCUIT

- 30 MASTHEAD AND CONTRIBUTORS
- 32 EVENTS CALENDAR, CU LATER, NEXT ISSUE AND ONLINE PREVIEWS

@ABOVE

- 11 TAYLOR SWIFT WINS CMA PINNACLE AWARD
- 14 IN MEMORIAM: PHIL EVERLY
- 15 IN MEMORIAM: RAY PRICE
- 31 ENCORE: PHIL EVERLY



25

Photo: Steve Musgroves / Dave Kautzman / Eric Church - Bill O'Connell / Justin Wang - Myra Perini / David Platt / Matt C. P. - courtesy of Nashville PR Firm J. Interprints

3 DAYS 2 CITIES 1 WORLD-CLASS EVENT

CMA and the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau
in association with The O2 and SJM Concerts present



photos: The Band Perry - David McClister; Zac Brown - Paul Mobley; Chris Young - Shylinn Smith; David Bentley - Nino Milose; Martina McBride - Glynis Carpenter; Brad Paisley - Jim Shea; Rascal Flatts - courtesy of Big Machine Records; London O2 - Andrew Timms

THE O2, DUBLIN: March 14 & 15 | THE O2, LONDON: MARCH 14 & 16

For tickets, lineup, event info and more, visit CMAworld.com/C2C.

[The O₂ LONDON]

World Radio History

'T WAS THE SEASON TO PARTY

The 2nd Annual CMA Member Holiday Party drew festive attendees to our lobby on Dec. 17.



HEY, BILLY!

On Dec. 3, CMA welcomed Billy Currington and friends to a celebration of his eighth No. 1 single, "Hey Girl." He and his co-writers found a moment to pose for a group shot.

(l-r) Rhett Akins, Ashley Gorley, Currington and Chris DeStefano

JO WALKER-MEADOR RECEIVES CECIL SCAIFE VISIONARY AWARD

Jo-Walker Meador, CMA Executive Director from 1962 to 1991 and a member of CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame, was presented The Cecil Scaife Visionary Award, whose recipients have made it possible for future generations to build careers in the music industry. The Award's namesake was a distinguished executive whose contributions include helping to found Belmont University's Mike Curb College of Entertainment and Music Business.

(l-r) Bob Meador, U.S. Representative Marsha Blackburn, Jo Walker-Meador, and Country Music Hall of Fame members Brenda Lee and Harold Bradley





CMA SONGWRITERS SERIES REVISITS JOE'S PUB

Nine years after debuting at Joe's Pub, the CMA Songwriters Series continues to draw packed houses to the New York City venue. So it was on Dec. 4, as another panel of Nashville hitmakers traded songs and stories.

(l-r) James Otto, host Bob DiPiero, Deana Carter, James Slater and Rory Feek.

KEEP YOUR FINGER
ON THE PULSE.

VISIT
CMACLOSEUP.COM



A TITAN SCORES FOR CHARITY AT "CMA COUNTRY CHRISTMAS"

All who attend the annual taping of the ABC special "CMA Country Christmas" are invited to donate toys to CMA's "A Gift for All." The campaign collects and distributes gifts to needy children up to age 18, in partnership with charities Generosity and The Bridge. In late November, Tennessee Titans tight end Delanie Walker stopped by The Bridge to autograph footballs for the program.

(l-r) Walker, Generosity co-founder Bethni Hemphill and Candy Christmas of The Bridge.

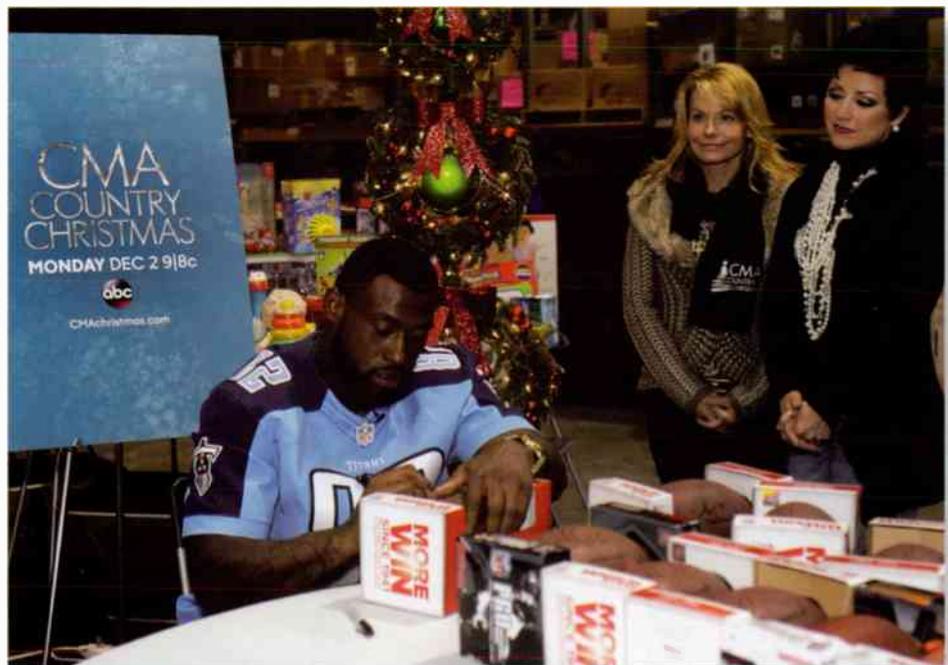




photo: Marcel Indik

BRANDON ALAN
Creative Arts Group



photo: Reed Rolls

AMERICAN YOUNG
Curb Records



photo: Chad Lee

ANGEL MARY & THE TENNESSEE WEREWOLVES
Verado Records



photo: Smaltz & Raskind

ROBBY ARMSTRONG
Strong Arm Records



photo: John Matthews

TIM ASH
A&M Productions



photo: Carlos Ruz

KELLEIGH BANNEN
EMI Nashville



photo: Prieststone Photography

HANNAH BETHEL
Hannah Bethel Music



photo: Russ Harrington

BORROWED BLUE
Red Buck Entertainment



photo: Gornillion & Leopold

DAKOTA BRADLEY
Streamsound Records



photo: Mike Coletta

BRANDON CHASE
AE Music



photo: Jessica Wardwell

LINDSAY ELL
Stoney Creek

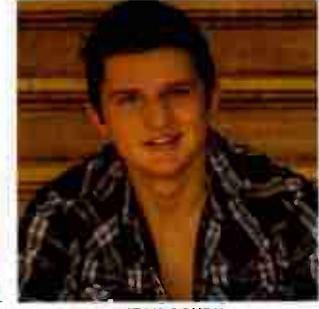


photo: Jamie Cochran

MITCH GOUDY
Third Floor Records



photo: Mike Lerner

LUCY HALE
DMG Nashville/Bigger Picture Group



photo: Debra Kay Elliott

JOLIE HOLLIDAY
Shamrock Records



photo: Angela Talley

SETH HOPKINS
Country Roads Records

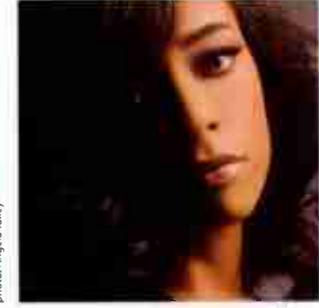


photo: Brian Guillaux

IMAJ
Thomas Triomphe Records



photo: Angela Talley

LEXI LARSEN
OWC Records



photo: Kevin Hubbard/Femal Image Design

LINDSAY LAWLER
Highway Angel Entertainment



photo: Goldflocks Photography

GB LEIGHTON
Incubate Records



photo: Scott Smalin

BRAD LONG
Blackwater Records



photo: Michael Gomez

ELIZABETH LYONS
Roar Records



photo: R. E. Nelson Photography

McKENZIE'S MILL
Independent

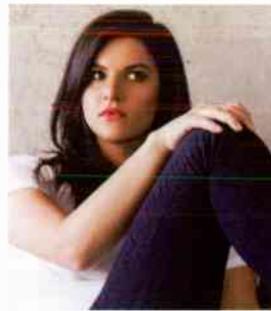


photo: Joseph Laines

MARIE MILLER
Curb Records



photo: Samantha Lamb

PARKER MILLSAP
Oklahoma Records



photo: Randy Peterson

NATALIE STOVALL AND THE DRIVE
Hit Shop Records



photo: Joseph Laines

MO PITNEY
Curb Records



photo: Monique Porter

JACOB POWELL
Sony ATV



photo: Jamie West

CHASE RICE
Dack Janiels/Sony Red/Thirty Tigers



photo: Camillelin & Leopold

MAGGIE SAJAK
Back East/GMV Nashville

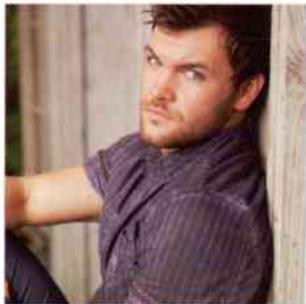


photo: Caleb Kuhl

DYLAN SCOTT
Sidewalk Records



photo: Michael Ruffini/Matt Photo & Design

DAVID SHELBY
Highway South Records



photo: Hodges Utry

COREY SMITH
Bigger Picture Group



photo: Renee Sorrell

CHELSEA SORRELL
YN Records



photo: David Bean

JAMIE STEVER
Tri-Mount Entertainment



photo: Sean Neagle

TIM SWEENEY
Oil House Records



photo: Robby Klein

COLE SWINDELL
Warner Bros. Nashville



photo: John Peets

THE BROTHERS OSBORNE
EMI Nashville

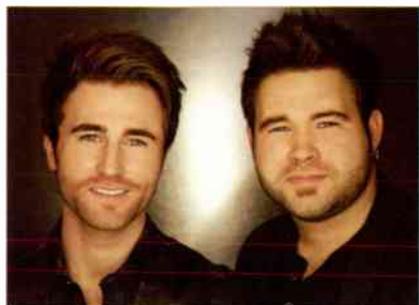


photo: Jeremy Cowart

THE SWON BROTHERS
Arista Nashville

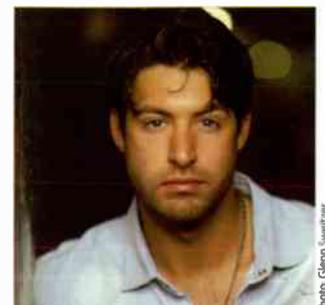
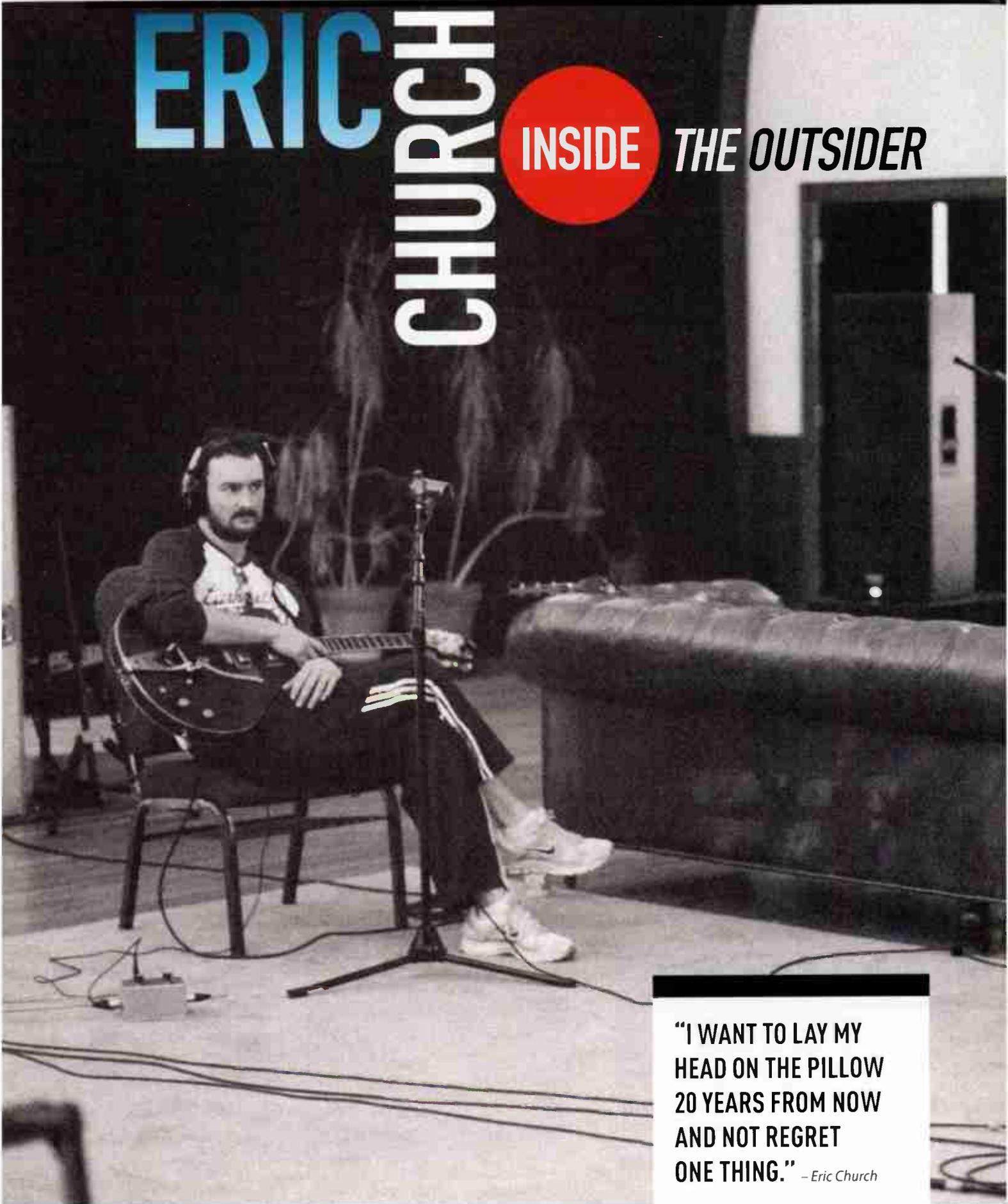


photo: Glenn Swentzer

AUSTIN WEBB
Streamsound Records

ERIC CHURCH

INSIDE *THE OUTSIDER*



"I WANT TO LAY MY HEAD ON THE PILLOW 20 YEARS FROM NOW AND NOT REGRET ONE THING." – Eric Church

by DAVID SCARLETT

Eric Church has spent nearly two hours in an old church-turned-recording studio in East Nashville, playing his new album, *The Outsiders*, for a group of Nashville media reps gathered to hear his latest offering. And when the listening session ends, the sense of satisfaction and, yes, pride that Church exudes as he answers questions about the project is undeniable. And justified.

The album, Church's fifth (four studio and one live), is both ambitious in its musical and lyrical scope and fearless in continuing the mission of Church and his producer Jay Joyce to push the boundaries of Country Music. Whether by adding a kick-ass 90-second instrumental section to the end of the title cut and first single (written by Church and Casey Beathard), cleverly reflecting the lyrics in the melody of "Roller Coaster Ride" (Church, Jeff Hyde and Ryan Tyndell), pulling no punches in describing a passionate reunion with his wife after a long road trip in "Like A Wrecking Ball" (Church and Beathard) or including a powerful three-and-a-half-minute spoken word section during what he describes as "the trilogy" near the end of the record, the album is unpredictable. Which means that it's vintage Eric Church.

Later, during a quiet moment on his bus, Church responded to a provocative question: Would the North Carolina kid who came to Nashville in 2001 be surprised by his new music or think it's what he would have expected from himself at this point in his career?

"I think he'd say, 'Holy shit! Did I do that?'" Church said. "For this record, we did 'A Man Who Was Gonna Die Young' (Church and Jeremy Spillman) first. Then we did 'The Outsiders.' And I'm looking at these two very different things, thinking, 'What is this? Where are we going?' I hate to use the word 'artistic,' but it was just so damn artistic, I couldn't wait to see where it was going from there."

That's the way it is with Church. His projects tend to evolve into what they're meant to be, no matter how much planning may have gone into preparing to record.

"(The project) is a whole entity," producer Joyce explained. "But we'll sit back and think, 'What is this little family (of songs) missing?' And we're smart enough to stand back and let the record reveal itself. Sure, you've got to show up and do the work. But Eric came into the studio with three new tunes this time, so you've got to allow for a great song at the last minute. On the last record, I think it was 'Springsteen' (Church, Jeff Hyde and Ryan Tyndell) that came in at the last minute. This time it was 'Wrecking Ball.'"

Joyce knows to expect these last-minute arrivals because he understands Church's work ethic. The man and his co-writers wrote an astonishing 121 songs in preparation for *The Outsiders*. Other than family time spent with his wife Katherine and their 2-year-old son

continued on page 10...

... continued from page 9

Boone, or cutting and splitting wood on the 800 acres they own west of Nashville, writing and otherwise making music is Church's life — so much so that while he's involved in suggesting and approving marketing strategies to promote the music, he abstains from another key marketing activity: social media.

"I've always kept it about the music," he said. "I've always kept it about 'this is what I'm good at.' But it's allowed our fans to empower themselves. Instead of *me* tweeting or *me* getting on Facebook, they do it. Then the next person does it and it spiderwebs. Some people have dogged me for not being on Twitter or Facebook, but we have the same impact. The people are doing that for *us*. They have a sense of ownership."

Church's manager, John Peets, couldn't agree more. "We have always come from the perspective that music is for people," he said. "Eric has always written and played for the people in the room. Once you release a record, the music is theirs. We respect them and count on them to spread the word."

Church even made consideration of his Church Choir fan base a factor in releasing the title cut as the album's debut single. "Could we have come first with another song off this record that might have been a big hit? Sure. But we didn't, because I wanted to make a statement that that's not what this is about. It's about making sure that we're pushing boundaries and honoring where we come from. I wanted to make sure that the people who built this foundation hear this record and go, 'This is the one we've been waiting on. This is when they were fully in the screws,'" Church noted, using the golf term that means hitting in the sweet spot of the club.

"I believe with any artist, there's that moment when you're writing your best, singing your best and playing your best," he continued. "The producer's producing his best and playing his best. There's that 'in the screws' moment. I think we started to hit it with *Chief*. And I think we hit it on this one."

That's really all that matters to Church in his career.

"When I make albums, I want to lay my head on the pillow 20 years from now and not regret one thing," he noted. "I want to have stayed true to my musical and moral compass, because that's what I trust, regardless of what's popular or whether you get rich or famous. It's about looking back and being proud of the work you've left behind.

"I may be the most rock 'n' roll-influenced artist in the format," Church concluded. "I'll admit I love to listen to Pantera. But I *revere* Country Music. I don't just do it. I revere it. And I want to make albums to put up on the Country Music shelf with all the Country records I revere and go, 'This is what we did.'"

EricChurch.com; [@EricChurch](https://twitter.com/EricChurch)

ERIC CHURCH
DISHES ON PICKING
FINAL CUTS AT
CMACLOSEUP.COM



TAYLOR SWIFT RECEIVES CMA'S PINNACLE AWARD



WATCH TAYLOR SWIFT'S PINNACLE AWARDS PRESENTATION AT CMACLOSEUP.COM

by BOB DOERSCHUK

Every CMA Award represents a significant accomplishment by its recipient in a given year. But the Pinnacle Award celebrates achievements over the course of years, whose impact will elevate worldwide appreciation for Country Music for generations to come.

Up until 2013, only one artist, Garth Brooks, has been deemed worthy of this recognition, in 2005. But in November, that number doubled as Taylor Swift received the Pinnacle Award during the live broadcast of "The 47th Annual CMA Awards."

The presentation began simply, as sisters Lennon and Maisey Stella from the ABC Television Network series "Nashville" serenaded her with their version of "You Belong With Me." Then the curtains opened on the Bridgestone Arena stage to reveal a constellation of Country Music headliners: Faith Hill, Tim McGraw, Brad Paisley, Rascal Flatts, George Strait and Keith Urban.

"It seems like only yesterday that Faith and I asked a very talented 17-year-old young lady with a hit called 'Tim McGraw' to be our opening act," McGraw told the audience. "In fact, back when she was a teenager, Taylor Swift opened for each and every one of us on this stage. We've all seen her grow up into a beautiful woman and a truly global superstar. That's why tonight CMA has decided

the time has come to present Taylor with the CMA Pinnacle Award, recognizing her groundbreaking place in music history and her positive impact in the appreciation of Country Music worldwide."

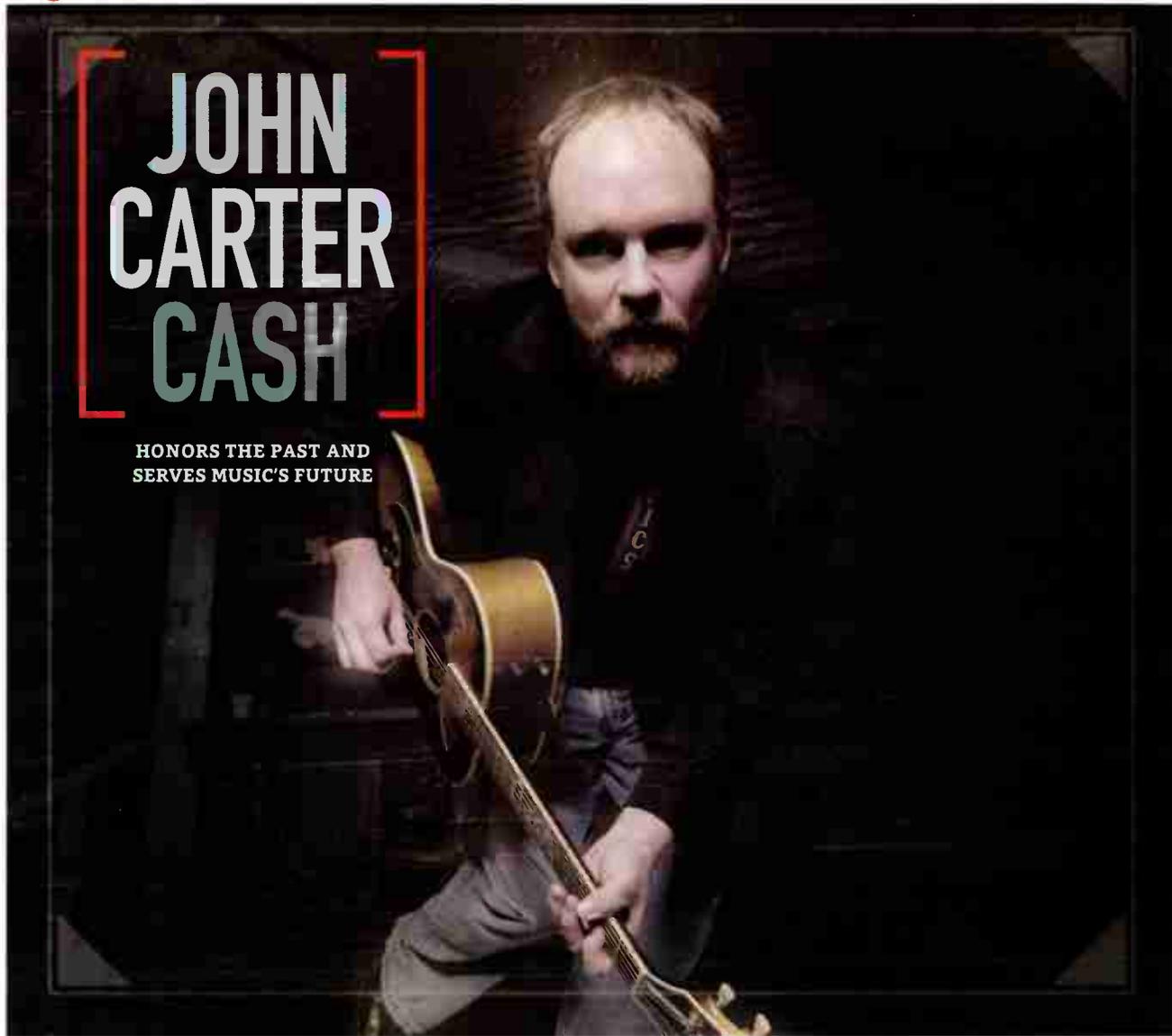
A video then rolled, and a jaw-dropping sequence of celebrities expressed their congratulations. These included not only Country giants Vince Gill and Urban, but also actors Julia Roberts and Reese Witherspoon, pop sensation Justin Timberlake, rock legend Mick Jagger, Ethel Kennedy and Ellen DeGeneres, who kept her expression deadpan as she intoned, "Congratulations on this wonderful Pineapple Award. What? Oh, *Pinnacle Award!* Well, that makes so much more sense now."

Swift's emotions welled as she accepted the Award. "You're not only awarding my hard work and exhaustion," she said. "You're also awarding the hard work and exhaustion of my family, my label, anyone who works with me — and most of all, the fans who fill stadiums. I love you! Thank you! I love you."

Rascal Flatts, Faith Hill, Tim McGraw, George Strait, Keith Urban and Brad Paisley present Taylor Swift with the Pinnacle Award at "The 47th Annual CMA Awards." Photo: Jamie Schramm

JOHN CARTER CASH

HONORS THE PAST AND
SERVES MUSIC'S FUTURE



by CRYSTAL CAVINESS

Welcome to the Cash Cabin Studio, nestled among tall, strong trees on a 40-acre property in Hendersonville, Tenn. Up three steps, across a wooden porch and inside the nondescript door is where John Carter Cash does his work while also maintaining the legacy of his parents, Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash.

Johnny and June recorded prolifically inside these walls, particularly in their later years. As head of the House of Cash, John Carter Cash weaves the business of his father's music publishing and recording catalog with recording, producing, songwriting and occasional book-writing via another company he leads, Cash Productions.

"I have to have a balance," he explained. "The House of Cash is about furthering the legacy. I'm vibrantly excited about the legacy — my parents' and the Carter Family's. I embrace it, but I have aspects of my life that are outside of that."

Within the House of Cash, John Carter Cash has the final word

on administering and licensing his father's deep catalog. While much is handled by BMG Publishing, Cash generally tackles the harder issues, along with his father's longtime manager, Lou Robin. "I handle the things that are gray," Cash noted. "We try to make decisions the same way as if my dad were in the room."

The list of Cash Productions projects is long and varied. In June, for example, Cash released his first novel, *Lupus Rex*, a fable involving quail, deer, mice, crows and rabbits, all struggling with the timeless themes of life, death, power, war and peace. As a companion to the novel, he released a CD of the same name.

Cash began writing seven years ago, when he authored his

mother's biography, *Anchored in Love: An Intimate Portrait of June Carter Cash*. (The book inspired the 2013 Lifetime original movie, "Ring of Fire," starring Jewel as June Carter Cash.) The idea for the project came as Cash was sorting through his late parents' estate.

"My mom saved everything," he said. "There was a camel saddle given to them by a king. We found hundreds of recordings. There were handwritten letters from my dad to my mom and to me. As we catalogued these things, it became clear to do the book."

Three children's books followed: *Momma Loves Her Little Son* (2009) and *Daddy Loves His Little Girl* (2010, both illustrated by Marc Burckhardt), plus *The Cat in the Rhinestone Suit* (illustrated by Scott Nash, 2012). Additionally, Cash wrote and published *House of Cash: The Legacies of My Father, Johnny Cash* (2012).

The Johnny Cash estate also yielded an abundance of unreleased music. Much of it was provided to Sony Legacy, which transferred the content to digital and released it as *Bootleg Volumes* in four volumes (2011 and 2012).

John Carter Cash also found recordings that his father cut with legendary producer Billy Sherrill in 1983. These tracks, with Marty Stuart on guitar, included duets with June Carter Cash and Waylon Jennings. Cash invited Stuart back to

recut his guitar parts. The result, *Out Among the Stars*, will be issued in March.

Other projects on the Cash Productions calendar include recording a brand new Roy Orbison song, titled "The Way Is Love." The demo, recorded in 1985 or '86, survives only as a single cassette tape, which the late singer's sons Alex, R.K. and Wesley found in their father's archives. Plans were made to record more vocals to the track laid down by their father, but when Cash listened to the rough, he realized it wouldn't be easy to bring the audio up to digital standards.

His solution was to bring in a team of German technicians who specialized in such salvage efforts. After several attempts, they completed the operation. A release date will soon be determined for the historic single. "It's stuff like this that inspires me with life," Cash insisted.

Another major artist, CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame member Loretta Lynn, has recorded a large amount of music at Cash Cabin Studio. Cash has produced these sessions since 2007, but they have yet to be heard. "We have 97 songs," he said. "Gospel, Christmas, Appalachian: She did all of the music with such strength."

These endeavors, as well as the productions he's undertaken recently for Angel Mary & The Tennessee Werewolves (who covered "Folsom Prison Blues" with John Carter Cash and Rob Caggiano of the Danish metal band Volbeat) and other sessions he has executive produced, add up to a full schedule. Yet Cash still finds time to write and record his own music. With his friend Bill Miller and Wesley Orbison, he has recorded and mastered 40 to 50 songs. They also perform together, recently headlining the Harvest Moon American Indian Festival in Kansas City, Mo.

"I love it all," Cash said. "It's about the heart. I work hard, but it's about passion and spirit. And that helps me feel really peaceful."

JohnCarterCash.com

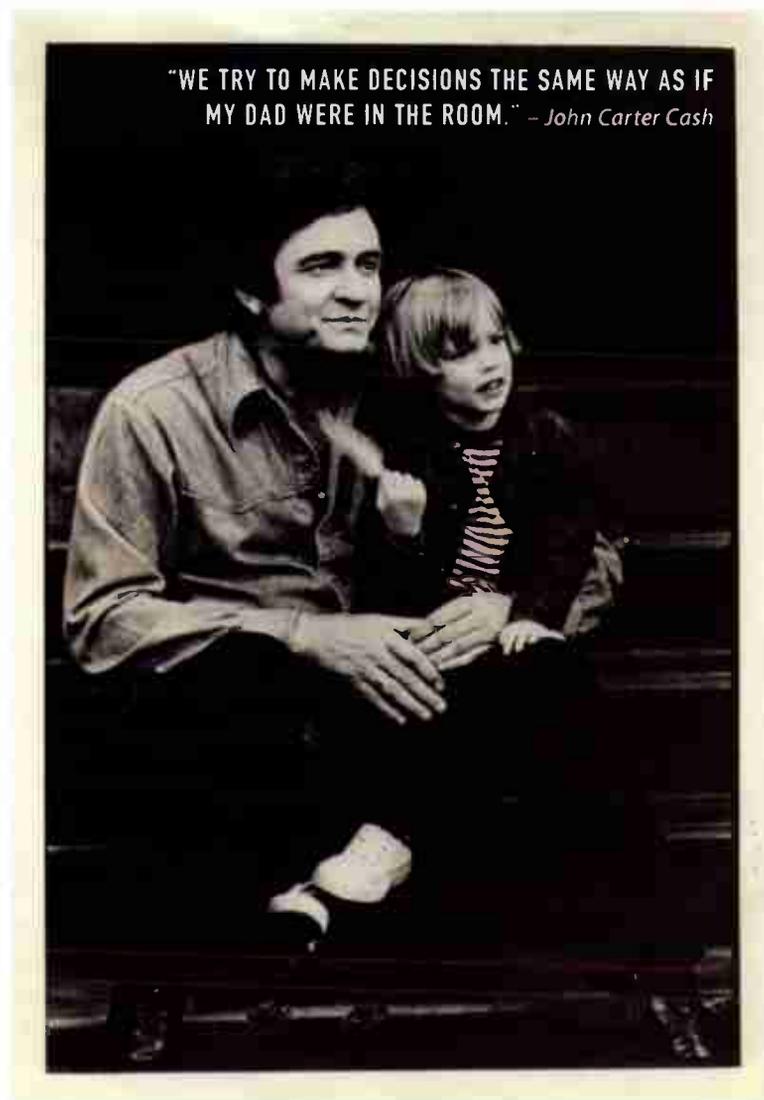


photo: courtesy of John Carter Cash

PHIL EVERLY

1939-2014

by BOB DOERSCHUK

The tradition of sibling singers is embedded within the body of Country Music. Maybe it has something to do with its Appalachian roots, in families that weathered hard times and found escape through singing songs and hymns whose authorship was even then lost to history. Whatever the reason, its hallmark was uncanny synchronicity, as if two or more voices rose from a single source.

The Everly Brothers exemplified this tradition, in the purity and perfect fusion of their singing. But they also went beyond the great duos that had preceded them by reaching out to the broader pop audience. In so doing, they exerted a definitive influence on American music and also set the stage for Country Music's transition from serving a single demographic to becoming a dominant genre.

There were long periods of time when the brothers feuded, sometimes bitterly. In July 1973, Phil interrupted their show at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, Calif., by smashing his guitar and stalking off the stage. They wouldn't play together again until 10 years later, when they reunited at London's Royal Albert Hall. But even after that relations between them were difficult.

Yet, shortly after Phil's death in Burbank, Calif., on Jan. 3 from complications attributed to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, his brother issued a statement to AP that said much about their bond. "I was listening to one of my favorite songs that Phil wrote and had an extreme emotional moment just before I got the news of his passing," said Don. "I took that as a special spiritual message from Phil saying goodbye. Our love was and will always be deeper than any earthly differences we might have had."

Phil and his older brother Don were on the road with their parents, Ike and Margaret Everly, as very young children. In 1955, Chet Atkins, a good friend of Ike's, introduced them to Wesley Rose, who became their manager. Signed initially to Cadence Records in 1957, they rose quickly to stardom. They wrote some of their biggest hits, including the Phil Everly solo composition "When Will I Be Loved"; many others were written by Felice and/or Boudleaux Bryant,



including "Bird Dog," "Bye Bye Love," "Devoted to You" and "Wake Up Little Susie." While at Cadence, before signing in 1960 with Warner Bros., they averaged one Top 10 hit every four months. No other duo has matched their record of 35 career Top 100 singles.

When their popularity in the United States diminished as the British Invasion stormed the mid-'60s charts, the Everly Brothers continued to draw huge crowds in England. The music there had already absorbed and incorporated the Everly influence; as far back as 1958, "All I Have to Do Is Dream" inspired John Lennon and Paul McCartney as they took their first steps in writing and performing together. McCartney later returned the favor by writing "On the Wings of a Nightingale" for the duo and name-checking them in Wings' "Let 'Em In."

Their many honors include induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986 and a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997. In 2001, they were welcomed into CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame.

"The Everlys have had such a far-reaching influence on music," said Sarah Trahern, CEO, CMA. "Their hits, the songs they wrote together and most of all their harmonies have inspired generations of artists. Their impact on Nashville and the Country community in particular is immense. I worked with Phil and Don on a TV show in the late '90s. I remember sitting in the house at the Ryman Auditorium during rehearsals and being mesmerized by their distinctive harmonies even then, after 40 years onstage. Phil's voice being forever silenced is a tragic loss."



One night back in 2007, as gossip about the paternity of Anna Nicole Smith's newborn daughter buzzed throughout the media, listeners filled the Grand Ole Opry House, hoping to escape for a few hours of great Country Music from three musical giants: Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson and Ray Price, on their epic "Last of the Breed Tour."

One by one, each introduced himself. Then the last of the three stepped forward and spoke in that graceful timbre that had been his hallmark for more than half a century. "My name is Ray Price," he intoned, triggering warm applause. A pause ... and then, "I'm 81 years old." The audience responded even more enthusiastically. And finally, after another short silence, he confessed, to tumultuous laughter, "And I am not the father of Anna Nicole's baby."

Dignity tempered by humor: That was one attribute of Price's demeanor onstage. But what earned him admission to CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame in 1996 was even more important: a voice and a willingness to take chances that inspired and elevated everyone in Country Music.

Raised in Dallas, Price served as a United States Marine in the Pacific theater during World War II. He began gigging locally after his discharge in 1946, eventually leaving North Texas Agricultural College in Abilene to perform full-time. He cut his first tracks in 1951, signed with Columbia Records and lofted a single, "Talk to Your Heart," to No. 3 in 1952.

RAY PRICE

1926-2014

by BOB DOERSCHUK

Relocated to Nashville, Price befriended Hank Williams, who arranged the young Texan's Opry debut, wrote him a hit song titled "Weary Blues" and took him in as a housemate. He also strongly influenced Price's formative style, so much so that when Williams died in 1953, Price took his place as front man for the Drifting Cowboys.

Soon, Price began sculpting his own sound, and not just vocally. He added a drum kit to his band, the Cherokee Cowboys, which helped create the rhythm pattern now known as the Ray Price Beat. The world heard it on "Crazy Arms" in 1956, which topped the Country charts for 20 weeks and implanted the four-beat shuffle throughout Country Music.

In the 1960s, he passed another milestone by adding lush string arrangements to his performances. From "Make the World Go Away" and "Burning Memories" to "Danny Boy," released in 1967 and buffeted by 47-piece orchestra, Price became the exemplar of orchestral Country. Only he could have maintained this polished approach while also championing Nashville's brilliant new writing talent, Kris Kristofferson, on another No. 1 single, "For the Good Times."

Until recently, Price was still doing about 100 shows each year on the road, in addition to dates at his own theater in Branson, Mo. In fragile health, he succumbed to pancreatic cancer in Mount Pleasant, Texas, on Dec. 16. He was 87 years old.

"We have lost one of the best vocalists in the business and a class act as well," said Sarah Trahern, CEO, CMA. "He will be missed not only by generations of fans, but also by the many Country artists he has inspired and influenced."

"More than one of the greatest singers in the history of our format, Ray Price spearheaded the evolution of Country Music through several eras," said Ed Hardy, President of the CMA Board of Directors. "I spent many enjoyable hours listening to Ray Price's music in my early days as a Country fan. In recent years, I felt honored and privileged to have spent time with him backstage at the Grand Ole Opry and will treasure those moments. Country Music will never forget our beloved Cherokee Cowboy, and our prayers extend to his wife Janie, his family, and his numerous fans around the world."

KACEY MUSGRAVES

by TOM ROLAND

The Well is a semi-bohemian hangout in Nashville's Green Hills neighborhood. The parking lot is a grid of potholes and chipped concrete. There's rust on the metal panels on the ceiling. The wooden tables are notable for their fading varnish and the gaps between their slats that allow all kinds of stuff — crumbs, coffee, jewelry — to fall through to the floor.

It's comfortably unkempt but friendly. And it's just a couple of blocks down the road from the Bluebird Cafe, the renowned symbol of Nashville's preeminence as a songwriting capital.

Which makes it a perfect place for a sit-down with Kacey Musgraves, whose debut album, *Same Trailer Different Park*, mines the contradictions of modern America and the ever-more-confusing jumble of emotions in her evolving, introspective heart.

It's a very different album by contemporary Country standards — no dramatic vocal peaks, no rapping, no truck and/or beer anthems — and those differences work in her favor. Her first single, "Merry Go 'Round" (written by Musgraves, Josh Osborne and Shane McAnally), became a Top 10 single at radio — an improbable development given its dreary portrait of suburban life as a likely dead end.

That was just the beginning. In 2013, Musgraves opened for Little Big Town, toured with Kenny Chesney and appeared at Bonnaroo, in addition to headlining her own shows — the last one of which featured some unexpected drama when she began crying in the middle of "Merry Go 'Round." Her grandmother had died of smoke inhalation the night before, and with the fatalistic opening line — "If you ain't got two kids by 21, you're probably gonna die alone" — all the improbabilities of 2013 opened a wellspring of feeling.

continued on page 18 ...

**"IF ANYTHING IS
TOO ONE-SIDED,
THEN IT'S EITHER
PREDICTABLE
OR BORING."**

— Kacey Musgraves

KACEY MUSGRAVES

CMA NEW ARTIST OF THE YEAR

"It's been a crazy, improbable year, packed with so many things," she reflected. "That song is kind of what started it. It's also about my hometown and is inspired by where I grew up, so it was just screaming words to me. They were partly good tears, though, just a release of emotion."

On a far more positive note, Musgraves walked off with CMA's New Artist of the Year trophy in November. Weeks later, Musgraves was still trying to wrap her mind around that victory.

"I'm a huge fan of Country Music, so it means a lot that I would be thought of as representing it," she said. "I really didn't expect to win. I thought Florida Georgia Line really had it in the bag. But overall saying, 'Hey, you're somebody that deserves to be in this world,' that means a lot."

Though a fan of multiple genres — she's written and will shortly tour with Katy Perry — Musgraves grounds her sound in classic Country. "Follow Your Arrow" (Musgraves, Brandy Clark and Shane McAnally) exemplifies her contradictory approach. Its acceptance of weed and same-sex relationships is decidedly 2014, while the folk guitar riffs and lighthearted whistling evoke the sound of Marty Robbins's 1965 hit "Ribbon of Darkness."

"You've gotta have that push and pull," she said. "That's my favorite thing, when there's juxtaposition between something that sounds really sad but has uplifting lyrics, or vice versa. Or something that has a really modern lyric but sounds really traditional. I feel like if anything is too one-sided, then it's either predictable or boring."

Neither of which remotely describes her artistry or, for that matter, her career trajectory. "If you have one chance to say something to the music world, then it better be what you are ready to say," Musgraves said. "A lot of people probably would have jumped at getting signed or whatever, but I guess that's because they're more driven by wanting to be famous or something. I just wanted to make great music that really mattered to me. I knew that whenever it was right, it was gonna feel right, and the right people would hopefully be onboard."

She had that opportunity when UMG Nashville Chairman and CEO Mike Dungan welcomed her to the Mercury roster. She enlisted Luke Laird and Shane McAnally, neither of whom had produced a previous hit single, as her co-producers. They had essentially finished *Same Trailer* for months when she wrote "Arrow" and "Silver Lining" (with Osborne and McAnally). Instead of holding them for the next album, she insisted on a last-minute session. Both songs helped shape the end product, with "Arrow" attracting attention for its controversial subject matter and "Lining" kicking off the album with a sense of hopeful melancholy.

"She knows what she wants, but she acts like she doesn't know at all," Laird said. "There's no sign of ego, but you can tell she has that instinct. It's something you can't just teach artists."

Her performances are built similarly from contrasting elements. Where



KACEY MUSGRAVES
ONSTAGE DURING
"CMA MUSIC
FESTIVAL:
COUNTRY'S NIGHT
TO ROCK," 2013



GET ON
THE BUS WITH
KACEY MUSGRAVES
AT CMACLOSEUP.COM.



many of her contemporaries fold arena-rock guitars and pop phrasing into the genre, Musgraves incorporates heavy doses of steel guitar. And her visual imagery cheekily features Western cacti and cowboy hats.

"I grew up singing Western swing and really traditional Country Music — Ernest Tubb songs, Jimmie Rodgers songs, Patsy Montana, Patsy Cline," she noted. "At the time, I liked the performance aspect. But I was like, 'Mom! Nobody my age likes these songs!' I was feeling kind of nerdy. Now, looking back,

that gave me a huge, huge schooling in eras that came way before me, so now I can take bits of pieces that stand out to me and make them fresh."

Musgraves hasn't yet mapped out her plans for 2014. Sessions are yet to begin on her sophomore album, and she doesn't seem in much of a hurry to get to it. "There's something just really special about a first record," she explained. "I just want to hold onto that as long as I can."

KaceyMusgraves.com; [@KaceyMusgraves](https://twitter.com/KaceyMusgraves)

CMA WELCOMES NEW
BOARD PRESIDENT

FRANK BUMSTEAD

An eclectic musical background plus more than 20 years of working with Country Music headliners on their financial plans equips Frank Bumstead as he assumes the office of CMA Board President.

Raised in a Texas household whose tastes embraced classical, Country and all points between, Bumstead graduated from Southern Methodist University with a bachelor's degree in business administration, served with the United States Navy in Vietnam and came to Nashville in 1970 to study at The Vanderbilt Owen Graduate School of Management. After earning his master's degree in business management in 1972, he launched his career as an advisor in financial planning, investment, valuations, merger sales and acquisitions.

In 1985, he founded Bumstead Co. Four years later, he helped launch Flood, Bumstead, McCready & McCarthy, Inc., serving initially as CEO. His accomplishments there have included negotiating and arranging Opryland's purchase of the CMT network and the merger of *MusicRow Magazine* with SouthComm.

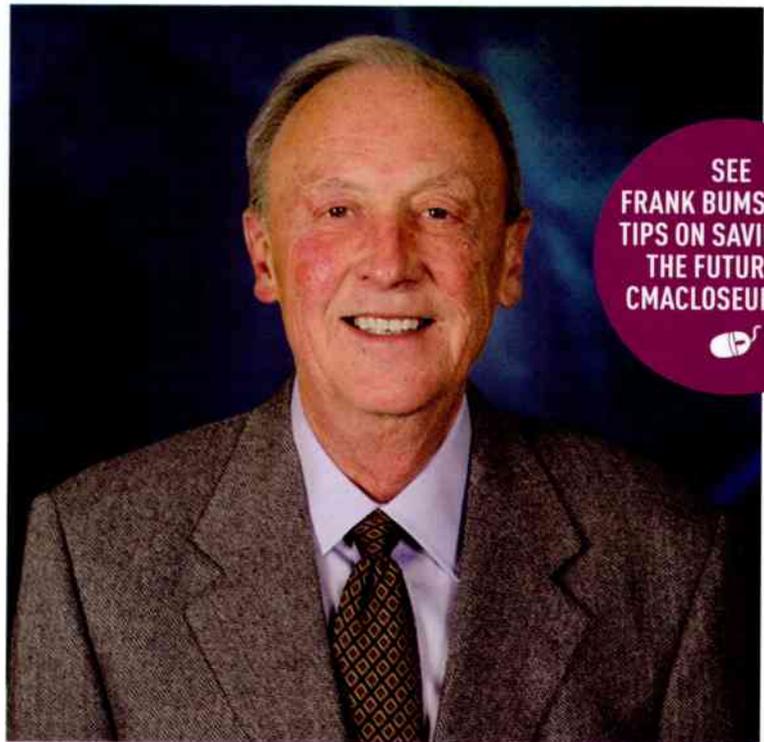
A Lifetime CMA member, Bumstead identifies his four top priorities as CMA Board President.

Priority No. 1

"First is to get to know well and become as supportive as possible of our new CEO, Sarah Trahern. I could not be more excited about her.

"BIGGER AND BETTER NUMBERS FOR THE AWARDS WOULD BE A GOAL FOR 2014."

- Frank Bumstead, CMA Board President



She's going to be an extraordinary CEO, and job one for me is to get to know her better and figure out what I need to do to support her and make her time as CEO as productive as possible."

Priority No. 2

"Job two is to do whatever I can do to continue to make the CMA Awards broadcast, 'CMA Country Christmas' and the Music Fest the incredible ventures they have become. Bigger and better numbers for the Awards would be a goal for 2014. This past show did very well, so that's a difficult hurdle. But I think we can get over it.

"Because of CMA Music Festival's importance to the City of Nashville, to the Country Music industry, to our fans and to the charitable efforts of CMA and the CMA Foundation — the Keep the Music Playing program, which I hope we can take nationwide in some way — we need to help the Board and management make it the best we've ever had in 2014."

Priority No. 3

"(CMA Board Chairman) Ed Hardy and I have agreed to a strategic planning process. Sarah will participate in every step. So will I. So will the Board leadership. So will, ultimately, the Executive Committee and the full Board. We've had strategic plans in the past, but it's time for a new one. It's time for direction on where our genre and CMA, as a major participant in that genre, are going to go over the next five years or more. That process will be ongoing throughout 2014."

Priority No. 4

"My last priority, and the one I'm probably looking forward to the most, is to have a lot of fun. I go back to 'Cowboy' Jack Clement, who said, when he was introduced as a 2014 inductee into our Country Music Hall of Fame, 'Fellas, the whole purpose of this industry is to have fun. Are we having fun?'"

photo: Paige Jackson



SARAH TRAHERN

TAKES THE REINS AS CMA CEO

can push Country Music, but what role can and should CMA play in that? We'll continue to look at how we can expand our television properties into those markets and in the global digital space."

TV Properties

"Our television properties deliver strong ratings and reflect the high caliber of talent in our industry with consistent production values and a creative vision from our Executive Producer, Robert Deaton. We have a long-term agreement with our network partner ABC, which provides a terrific base from which to grow and maximize the potential of our TV outreach for the industry."

"THERE'S A BIG WORLD OUT THERE WHERE WE CAN PUSH COUNTRY MUSIC."

– Sarah Trahern, CMA CEO

Research

"We can't look at where we are going as an industry without examining consumer touch points with music, which are constantly changing. CMA needs to continue to look at how we can best help our members connect with consumers. One way to do this is by sharing CMA's consumer research, which tracks where our audience is, where it's going and what options the industry has to reach that audience."

Professional Staff

"I am really looking forward to working with the CMA staff! Everybody here walks in the door thinking, 'How can we serve our members in the industry?' That's exciting to me because that's how I feel when I show up for work every morning. I bop out of the elevator, ready to see what kind of difference we can make today!"

SARAH TRAHERN DOUBLES AS EXECUTIVE AND HANDS-ON MUSICIAN! LEARN MORE AT CMACLOSEUP.COM.

Sarah Trahern brings a diverse skill set with her as she assumes her responsibilities as CMA's new CEO. She has devoted more than 27 years to network television, 18 of them to Country Music programming. As Senior VP and GM of GAC (Great American Country), she was responsible for the network's strategic direction and oversaw all aspects of the network, including programming, marketing, creative and digital. In 2010, *Billboard* included her on their list of 30 Woman "Power Players" in the music business. In December 2011, she was the subject and honoree of the Louise Scruggs Memorial Forum at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Recently Source recognized has a top leader in the music business.

Trahern came to Nashville in 1995 to oversee specials and entertainment series for TNN. She began her cable career at C-SPAN in Washington, D.C., covering politics and public affairs and producing the popular series "Booknotes." She joined GAC in 2005 as Scripps Networks Interactive acquired the network. There, she was promoted to SVP of Programming and, in 2010, GM. She assumed senior leadership duties in January 2013 with the retirement of GAC President Ed Hardy.

Just two weeks into her work at CMA, Trahern noted some of her goals for the upcoming year.

Strategic Planning

"We're going to be working in the next few months with Board leadership on a five-year strategic plan. One of the questions we will be asking ourselves is how do we best serve the various constituency groups within our membership base and make sure we have platforms and programs that are responsive to all of their interests and challenges."

International

"As part of this strategic planning process, the CMA Board will also consider international expansion opportunities. There's a big world out there where we

ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS WHY CUSTOM GUITAR STRAPS MATTER



by JEFF WALTER

A GUITAR STRAP IS MUCH MORE THAN A MEANS TO SUPPORT A PIECE OF EQUIPMENT. IT'S ALSO A CANVAS FOR PERSONAL EXPRESSION AND FOR HELPING THE AUDIENCE SEE EXACTLY WHO YOU ARE.

Take Marty Roe. When the Oiamond Rio guitarist wanted a strap with a prisoner-of-war theme for the video of "In God We Still Trust," he called on Jeri Hart, founder of the St. Louis-based jeri designs. She fashioned a one-of-a-kind strap: thick but supple belt leather, painted blue, airbrushed with the words "You are not forgotten" and adorned on the front with a hand-cut kidskin POW logo.

Hart, whose many clients include Trace Adkins, Little Big Town, Brad Paisley and Keith Richards, noted that her challenge "is to create a gorgeous strap that's really detailed, that will last a lifetime, that you can roll up and stick in your guitar case a million times, that has really personal meaning for the artist, that fits their style, personality and the way they feel about things. I want it to be one of their most treasured items."

That's a tall order, but the top custom guitar strap designers fill it routinely for many of the top pickers in Country and other formats. The specs vary from one musician to the other, but there are general rules for those who seek the perfect fit.

Leather and Beyond

Straps can be made from a variety of materials, the cheapest and most widely used being nylon. But custom designers typically start with fine leather. Among the many options are kidskin, elk skin, snakeskin and cabretta. Terry Misner of the Indianapolis-based Action



(L) HANK WILLIAMS JR. AND HIS JERI DESIGNS STRAP ROCK A "MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL" OPENING NIGHT. (ABOVE) ANOTHER JERI DESIGNS CUSTOM STRAP (R) PATTY GRIFFIN, EMMYLOU HARRIS AND SHAWN COLVIN WITH A JDDI HEAD STRAP.

Custom Straps makes his products from soft leather, largely for reasons of comfort.

"Some of the performers who use our straps play for hours at a time," said Misner, who has outfitted Adkins, Eric Church, Miranda Lambert and Keith Urban, among others. "If the strap is comfortable and the performer doesn't even notice it, then it has done its job." (Misner and other top designers generally avoid working with suede because of its tendency to hold moisture and adhere to the performer's shirt.)

There are numerous options for decorating leather, including embroidery, metal hardware such as conchos or spikes, gemstones, hand-sewn beads, crystals – even snake heads, a specialty of the Jodi Head Design Studio in New York City.

Functionality Meets Art

Issues in designing a custom strap address both the functionality and artistry. What kind of guitar will the strap be used for? How does it need to fit? The more information, the better for the designer.

One priority is to protect the guitar itself. Hart positions whatever buckles and other hardware she uses so that they never touch the instrument. And Misner wants no embroidery backing or metal showing on the underside of his straps.

But unexpected concerns can arise, as Misner discovered when Rickey Medlocke asked him to replicate his tattoo on a guitar strap. Medlocke, who has played guitar with Blackfoot and drums with Lynyrd Skynyrd, has a tattoo across his shoulders that spells DARKHORSE in ornate letters.

"I took a picture of the letters and then the fun began," Misner recalled. "Since a person's back is not totally flat and straight like a canvas, I had to transform the letters into art where all the letters were equal, so that they could be digitized. It came out pretty good. You see him wearing his DARKHORSE straps a lot."



First Things First

Customer input can vary a lot, Misner continued. "There might be a clear design that is presented to us. More often, there is an idea that needs to be developed. Rarely is there no idea. Whatever the situation, we work with the performer, or more often the guitar tech, in coming up with a final product."

Hart asks questions and does a lot of research on her customers, about their hobbies and passions and what's important to them. She'll use the information she gathers to incorporate birthstones, meaningful symbols, favorite colors and other expressions.

continued on page 24...

... continued from page 23



MORE COUNTRY CUSTOM GUITAR STRAPS ARE ON DISPLAY AT CMACLOSEUP.COM!

(ABOVE) PISTOL ANNIES' ACTION GUITAR STRAPS. (BELOW L-R) CUSTOM STRAPS BY JERI DESIGNS, JODI HEAD AND JERI DESIGNS



Jodi Head loves to meet personally with her clients to get their input. However, because she can't depend on high-end bead work to sustain her business, she has gradually moved from what she calls "custom/custom" work to manufacturing for lower-end consumers. Her 100-hour work weeks leave little time for "beautiful and magical" bead work.

But she does still personalize straps to order, using her existing designs as pieces that fit together in different ways. If someone wants more intricate work done, such as a logo, she'll recommend another company to them.

Misner also wrestles with "the time factor" at his shop. "We wear all the hats," he said, which include record-keeping, email, social media, design and keeping fine leathers in stock. "It's a lot to try and be good at. Our first priority, however, is the building of the straps."

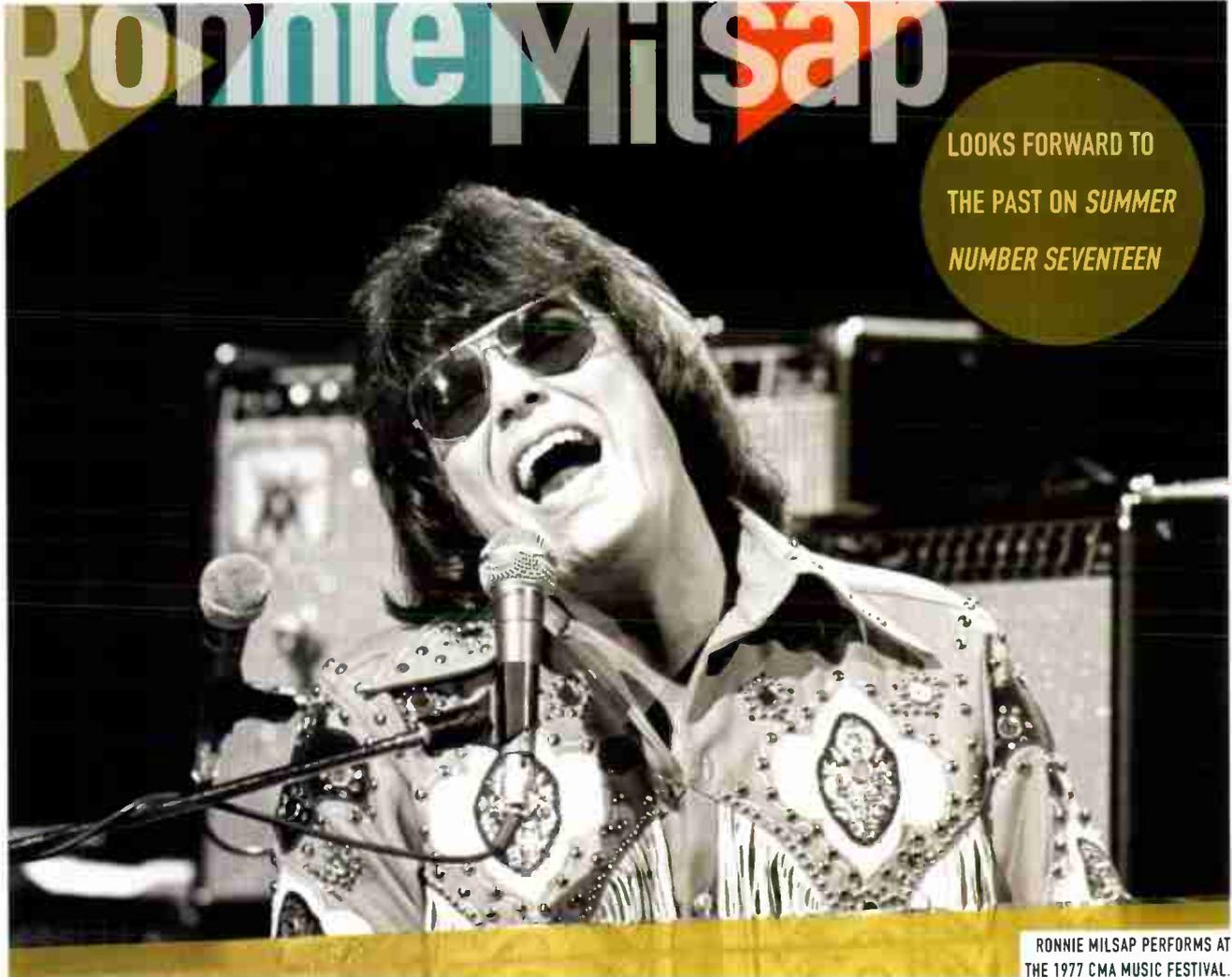
Passion, Pride and Profit

While Hart, Head and Misner aren't musicians, all three have spent considerable time around musicians and count themselves as fans. That passion enhances their work and drives their ambitions to get their straps onto the backs of popular performers. That's where "artist relation skills," as Head puts it, come in.

Starting out, Head often gave straps to her favorite artists, including Emmylou Harris and Lucinda Williams, to get her name out there. She also exercised her persuasive powers when she felt a strap she had created was right for a particular player. Warren Haynes of the Allman Brothers Band and Gov't Mule had misgivings about one of Head's straps with a rose emblem – but once she talked him into trying it, he was sold. She takes particular pride when she sees Williams wearing her skulls strap. "It's beautiful, and every time I see it, I think, 'I can't believe I made that!'" the designer said.

Misner still gets a sense of fulfillment from the hula-girl strap he created in 2002 for Jimmy Buffett. Wife Dena hand-embroidered the girl and added beads to form her lei and grass skirt. "It's nice to see it still at work each time Jimmy comes to town," he said, with a smile.

ActionCustomStraps.com;
Jeridesigns.com; JodiHead.com



LOOKS FORWARD TO
THE PAST ON *SUMMER
NUMBER SEVENTEEN*

RONNIE MILSAP PERFORMS AT
THE 1977 CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL.

by BOB DOERSCHUK

The interview began with a statement that got Country legend Ronnie Milsap's attention right away.

Ronnie, many of the classic elements of your sound are apparent in your new single, 'Summer Number Seventeen.' It's got the string section, it's got your unmistakable voice ... but it also has something that's rarely heard in today's Country Music."

Leaning forward in his seat, he asked, "What's that?"

"A diminished chord!"

Milsap tossed his head back and laughed uproariously. We were off to a good start.

The fact is, Milsap has no fear of mining the genre's past and building his sound on what he retrieves. All the elements of that single and title track, written by Joe Hunter and Sam Hunter, harks back musically to much of his catalog. His longtime, loyal fans will ease into it like weary listeners into a warm bath of reverie.

What's not so apparent to newer listeners is that what sounds so welcoming now was at one time considered a little risky. When he made his initial impact in the early 1970s, he straddled the line between Country and R&B, with a little jazz thrown in too. His fans loved it, but radio and recording executives needed a little more time to accept his obliviousness to genre. Thus the famous story of

continued on page 26 ...

how Jerry Bradley reacted when presented with a Milsap three-song demo. Then the head of RCA Records Nashville, he at first declined to listen because he knew that the young pianist/singer was an R&B artist. But as the demo played, Bradley's eyes opened wide and he shouted, "That son of a bitch can sing Country!"

"I've always thought those R&B songs and Country songs were very similar, in that they're both people music," Milsap mused. "They tell stories that are usually pretty common to everybody. But I used to think I had to yell a lot when I when I was singing the blues — scream and make my voice do crazy things in order to accomplish that song. So when I first came to town and I knew I was going to get a deal on RCA, I said, 'You know, if I sing Country, I won't have to do any of that. If I want to sing quietly, I can.'"

Inspired as much by Jim Reeves as by soul giant Jackie Wilson, Milsap embraces multiple influences. That's why his new album can't be pigeonholed any more than his earlier releases. *Summer Number Seventeen* is a concept project, specifically a tribute to some of the artists and songs that affected him in his formative years. This being Milsap, that means the selections are remarkably diverse, including his versions of Lloyd Price's "Personality," Jimmy Ruffin's "What Becomes of the Broken Hearted" and "Tears On My Pillow" by Little Anthony and the Imperials.

"We were talking with Ronnie's manager, Burt Stein, about Ronnie doing a new record and putting it out through Sony and Legacy to follow up on the great career he had at RCA," said John Jackson, VP, A&R and Content Development, Legacy Recordings. "We've had some success here with new records from Willie Nelson, Earth, Wind & Fire and other artists who have had a great history with the company but are still making great music. It makes sense to tie those two things together where possible.

"We started hearing some of the songs that Ronnie and Richard Landis and Rob Galbraith, his producers, were working on," Jackson continued. "At first it seemed like, 'Oh, here's a bunch of songs that Ronnie likes.' And there was nothing wrong with that. But when we heard the new song, 'Summer Number Seventeen,' I wrapped my head around what that means for him and for everybody, which is to remember back to the summer when maybe you graduated from high school or got your first car or



"I USED TO THINK I
HAD TO YELL A LOT
WHEN I WHEN I WAS
SINGING THE BLUES."

— Ronnie Milsap



THERE'S
MUCH MORE
FROM
RONNIE MILSAP
AT [CMACLOSEUP.COM!](http://CMACLOSEUP.COM)



went to the beach with your friends. That's what he was thinking about. These are songs that he was covering when he was 17 and just starting out. Once that gave the album shape, it made total sense."

Some of Milsap's covers stick closely to the arrangement and feel of the original versions, down to the sitar sweetening on the Stylistics' "You Make Me Feel Brand New," one of two duets with Mandy Barnett on the album. On others, though, he stretches out and takes the song to a different place. The most notable example is "Georgia On My Mind." With his personal and professional veneration of the late Ray Charles, Milsap realized that the worst way to approach the song would be to emulate his late friend's immortal rendition.

"I was going to be inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame in 1990," he remembered. "They said, 'Would you perform "Georgia On My Mind"?' I said, 'No, I can't do that! Ray Charles recorded the definitive version.' They said, 'Well, just see what you bring to it.' When we started work on *Summer Number Seventeen* we couldn't find the original master, but we had the performance on a DAT that Rob had kept. It's different than the Ray Charles version, but we really do like what we did."

Sweetened by a remake of a Milsap classic, "Lost In The Fifties Tonight" (Fred Parris, Troy Seals and Mike Reid), *Summer Number Seventeen* is essential listening for all who have long loved his music. But there's plenty for younger fans as well, if not in the elegant orchestrations and resonant vocals, then in the artist's epic history.

"There's a backstory of discrimination and misunderstanding of his talent and where he comes from," Jackson said. "He didn't understand racism, for instance, so he didn't differentiate between genres or styles or performers. It was weird to hear Country Music with a piano back then, when everybody was playing guitars. But he had 40 No. 1 hits despite being a little left of center. It's amazing. And it's a story that needs to be told to a new generation."

RonnieMilsap.com; [@RonnieMilsap](https://twitter.com/RonnieMilsap)

photo: Allyson Reeves-Land

CHARLIE FARLEY

It's official: Rap has crossed over to Country. What was a novelty just a few years ago has now become a subgenre, whose ties to hip-hop are as fascinating as they are controversial.

Charlie Farley gets both forms of music. Stylistically, this native of De Queen, Ark., vocalizes with complete authenticity, from the rhythm of his rhymes to the hints of melody that emphasize key words and cadences. Influenced as much by Tupac as Hank Williams, he began writing poetry at 12. In May 2012, Farley cut his debut album in Atlanta, helmed by Phivestarr Productions. It took him all of two days to finish 13 tracks, which were released in January by Average Joes Entertainment/BackRoad Records as *Hog Heaven*.

Though his delivery doesn't reference Country tradition, the feel isn't that different. Check out the first single, "Backwoods Boys" (written by Farley, Daniel Lee, Jared Sciullo and Justin Spillner): A

lazy fiddle underscores its celebration of Southern idylls. This focus predominates throughout *Hog Heaven*. In place of gangsta references, Farley pays homage to bedrock virtues, from skinny-dipping ("Average Joes," by Farley, Noah Gordon, Sciullo and Spillner) to rugged individualism: His people "still believe in America," he insists on the title cut (Farley, Sciullo and Spillner). "Hard times will never break us."

You might be on the fence about whether this hybrid sound will endure. But there's no doubt that Farley's commitment to Country values will.

CharlieFarleyMusic.com;

@CFarleyMusic

- Q** What book is on your nightstand?
- A** "I've never been much on books but you would probably find a *Field & Stream* or an *NRA* magazine there."
- Q** What would you be, if not a musical artist?
- A** "I would be working in the log woods, running a skidder or a loader."



photos: Jared Sciullo



[HEATHER LOONEY and PAIGE LOGAN]

photos: Brian Barlowe

NORTH 40

It's been a while since Paige Logan and Heather Looney chased their dreams to Nashville. Logan came from Safford, Ariz., where she studied piano, taught herself guitar and mandolin and soaked up the sounds of her dad's LP and 8-track collection. In 1993, she and her sister hit the road for Music City; a year later, Paige was there alone, beginning a long stretch of day jobs and determination.

Meanwhile, Looney and her dad had been performing around Shreveport, La. Going solo, she relocated frequently before settling in Nashville with her husband a year after Logan's arrival. Eventually the two crossed paths, and their 20-year friendship culminated in their debut album, *Whole Lot Of Livin'*, produced by Paige's husband Mills Logan and Leigh Reynolds. Rhymetown Entertainment released the debut album in January.

Vocal blends distinguish this duo. They embrace vibrato as an expressive device. When they drop it for a few beats, as in the higher passages of "Far Too Long" (written by Logan and Looney), the impact is dramatic. They also avoid the upper register, concentrating on the contralto range; the result is a honeyed, rich quality that draws listeners in as if to a whisper. And they sing almost exclusively in harmony; when one breaks into a solo line and the other improvises some churchy backup on "Don't Make Me The Reason" (Logan and Looney), the moment seems to spark from the speakers.

Is there life over 40 in Country Music? You betcha.

North40Country.com;

@North40Country

- Q** Who is your musical hero?
- LOGAN:** "Chopin."
- A** **LOONEY:** "Rodgers and Hammerstein."
- Q** What is your favorite food on the road?
- A** **BOTH:** "We both love fresh veggies and fruits — but everything tastes better with hot sauce on it!"

PARMALEE

A Southern rock patrimony, dues paid in church gigs, a player too drunk to pick, and a late-night gunfight: Parmalee's Country pedigree is as real as it gets.

Brothers Matt and Scott Thomas tagged along on their father's blues/rock band gigs around Greenville, N.C. Soon they started playing on their own, joined by their cousin Barry Knox, a church choir drummer. After their dad's inebriated guitar player failed to appear for a show, Matt took his place, with Scott assuming the drum chair and Barry switching to bass. When guitarist and keyboard player Josh McSwain came onboard, Parmalee was born.

Their road led eventually to Nashville — specifically, to a parking lot on Demonbreun Street, where they lived in their RV for a month of intensive writing and demo recording. Even the 2010 flood didn't stop them, but a bullet almost did: After a North Carolina show in September 2010, Scott suffered a near-fatal wound during a robbery attempt. (He did, however, kill one of his assailants with his own legal weapon.) Ten days in a coma and 35 days of hospitalization were his first steps toward recovery, which

culminated in his rejoining the band to audition successfully for Stoney Creek Records.

Produced by the New Voice team, released in December, *Feels Like Carolina* loosely tells the band's story through rock-solid vocals, tightly crafted tunes and a few discreet synthesizer effects — just enough to add a distinctive edge while keeping it Country.

Parmalee.com; [@Parmalee](https://twitter.com/Parmalee)

- Q** Who is your musical hero?
KNOX: "Dave Grohl." McSWAIN:
- A** "My dad." MATT AND SCOTT THOMAS: "Our dad."
- Q** What would you have been if not a musical artist?
- A** KNOX: "A hater." McSWAIN: "An astronaut." MATT AND SCOTT THOMAS: "A logger."



ERIC PASLAY

Eric Paslay's story is familiar, from his upbringing in Waco and Temple through his gigs on the Lone Star circuit and inevitable move to Nashville.

Eventually hired by Cal IV Publishing, the tall Texas redhead penned several hits. He won CMA's coveted Triple Play Award for writing or co-writing three songs that hit No. 1 in 2012: "Angel Eyes," "Even If It Breaks Your Heart" and "Barefoot Blue Jean Night," which also was honored as ASCAP's Country Song of the Year. Impressive, but not unique ... yet.

The epiphany comes with his self-titled inaugural album, released Feb. 4 on EMI Records Nashville. Produced by Marshall Altman and Daniel Hill/Billy Lynn, its 11 tracks reflect the strength of this young artist's work. Compositionally, he cultivates simplicity. Many of his verses cycle just three or even two chords. "Country Side of Heaven" (Paslay, Dylan Altman and Shane McAnally) hangs entirely on the I and V. But on that track, Paslay's organic dynamics, his inspiring vocals and especially his ability to conjure compelling images enrich both his sound and his story.

Though all his songs are beautifully crafted, one may qualify as a masterpiece. Caresssed by a sensitive arrangement, Paslay's aching vocal and evocative lyrics on "She Don't Love You" (Paslay and Jennifer Wayne) build on the title (" ... she's just lonely") to cast a spell that doesn't resolve until literally the last word. This is supreme writing and execution, by any measure.

EricPaslay.com; [@EricPaslay.com](https://twitter.com/EricPaslay)

- Q** What mode of transportation do you prefer?
- A** "Teleportation."
- Q** What is your favorite food on the road?
- A** "Catering, because it's free!"

FOR MORE Q&A RESPONSES, MUSIC, VIDEO AND OTHER INFORMATION ON DEBUT SPOTLIGHT ARTISTS, PLEASE VISIT CMACLOSEUP.COM

CONTRIBUTORS

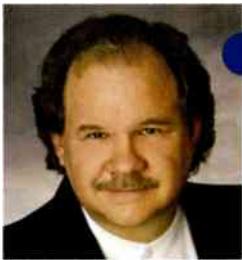


CRYSTAL CAVINESS

(John Carter Cash, page 12)
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PHIL EVERLY

.....
Shortly before the Everly Brothers were announced as 2003 inductees into CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame, Phil Everly shares a special moment in the Hall of Fame rotunda with sons Chris (l) and Jason.

photo: John Ruyse

READ MORE ABOUT PHIL EVERLY AT CMACLOSEUP.COM



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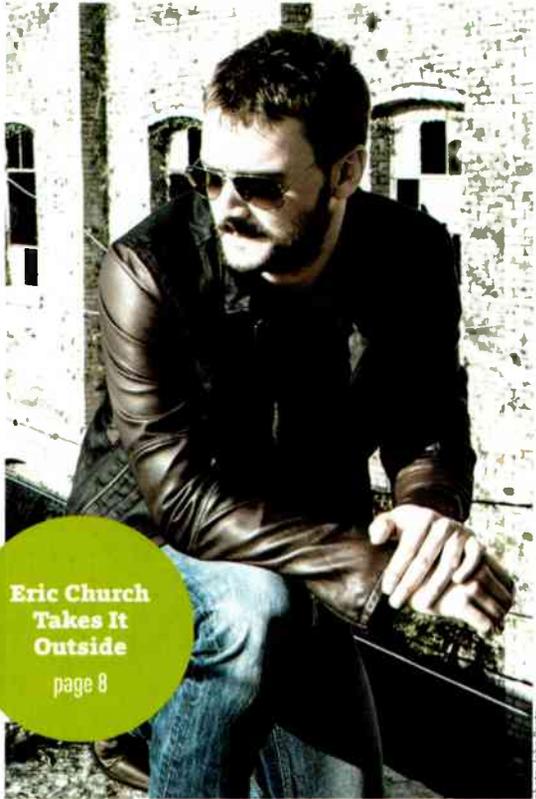


Photo: John Hines

Eric Church
Takes It
Outside
page 8

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