

CMA Close Up

2011 | VOLUME 9

OPRAH WINFREY
NETWORK

Committed to Country

CMA MUSIC
FESTIVAL

40 Years and Counting

BILL MONROE

Centennial Celebration

COUNTRY MUSIC
HALL OF FAME

CMA Inducts Bobby Braddock,
Reba and Jean Shepard

EP STRATEGIES

Maximizing Exposure

RONNIE MILSAP

No Getting Over Him

COLT FORD

Talkin' Country

SARAH DARLING

Creative Sequencing

MARTINA McBRIDE

STARTING OVER FROM THE TOP



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cma close up

issue date | june 6

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**CMA INSIDERS:
A VITAL NEW SOURCE OF FAN FEEDBACK**

For thousands of Country Music fans all around the world, CMA Music Festival is their calendar's red-letter event. From the handshakes, embraces, photo ops and autographs offered by the stars in Fan Fair Hall past the stages and attractions that fill the streets of Downtown Nashville and across the Cumberland River to LP Field for four memorable nights of all-star entertainment, that's what makes it essential for all who love this music and the people who make it.

The Festival is just as important for those at CMA whose mission it is to serve the interests of its members. What attendees recognize as their ultimate celebration is also a unique opportunity for CMA to dig for deeper insight into interests of today's Country Music devotees.

Since 2006, CMA has advanced its study of the Country Music consumer by sending post-Festival e-mail surveys to those who purchased four-day and single-night tickets. This outreach has yielded valuable findings, but a new campaign, CMA Insiders, launched at this year's event, will broaden and deepen that information more than ever.

The approach will combine the best of traditional face-to-face encounters with modern communication tools. Organized by CMA Marketing Research Director Greg Fuson, this effort goes beyond old-school Q-and-A interviews to engage fans directly and on an ongoing basis. On June 8, starting with the Kick-Off Parade and Block Party that precedes the next day's official Festival opening, about 20 volunteers invited onlookers to become CMA Insiders — that is, members of a fan group that agree to provide input about their experiences throughout the Festival via text messages and pictures as well as answer questions texted or e-mailed to them by CMA. Those same 20 volunteers

will conducted interviews with fans day and night throughout the Festival, filing answers as they come on iPads.

The CMA Insiders project was actually underway before the Festival, through outreach to fan club members, via Facebook and Twitter and through other channels. Response has been robust, with more than 7,000 already signed up. Other avenues are being explored too. But the Festival offers an especially promising time and place to recruit fans personally and to keep them engaged long after the fireworks have gone dark at LP Field — and not just at CMA events.

CMA Insiders will be encouraged to share their experiences at other occasions, including other Country Music events, concerts and festivals.

Those who become CMA Insiders will enjoy more than just being a part of the action. Exclusive sweepstakes, giveaways and special promotions are being planned for them, beginning with a handsomely decorated Epiphone acoustic guitar adorned by images of and autographs from CMA Awards hosts Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood (left). No matter what demographic surprises this research will yield, odds are that all Country fans would agree that's a treasure worth working for.

**CMAworld.com/
InsiderSurvey**



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

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cma
COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

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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.



CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

Thursday, June 9

BUD LIGHT STAGE Sean Patrick McGraw, The Cleverlys, CMA Celebrity Close Up with Sunny Sweeney, Ty Stone, Ashley Gearing, Due West, CMA Songwriters Series: ASCAP (Brent Anderson, Marla Cannon-Goodman, Brad Crisler, Blaine Larsen)

CHEVROLET RIVERFRONT STAGE Gary Allan, Craig Morgan, Jake Owen, Neal McCoy, Randy Rogers Band, Steel Magnolia, James Otto, Sammy Kershaw, Emerson Drive, Colt Ford

CHEVROLET STAGE (at Sports Zone) Sonia Leigh, Skyler, FLW anglers Jimmy Houston and Larry Nixon, Bob Redfern, Paul Bogart, Jolie Holliday, Sonny Burgess

DURANGO ACOUSTIC CORNER Gene Watson & Rhonda Vincent, Richie McDonald, Riders in the Sky, The Quebe Sisters Band, Ernie Hendrickson, Mark Wills, Carter's Chord, Billy Dean, Ken Mellons, Billy Yates

FAMILY ZONE Ultimate Air Dogs, White Castle Family Picnic; Random House Children's Books Celebrity Storytelling with Julie Roberts; Nashville Zoo Wildlife on Wheels; CMA Family Feud (The Dirt Drifters, HER and Kings County, Jana Kramer, Ty Stone); Country Music 101 (Lynn Anderson, Mel Tillis, Don Cusic); CMA Music Festival 40th Birthday Bash; Opry Guitar Auction; Gloriana's Music Video Dance Contest

GILDAN FUN ZONE Gildan (Payton Rae, Ashley Gearing, The Roys); Carl Black Chevrolet (The Lunabelles, Chris Cavanaugh, Josh Thompson, Bush Hawg, Ashton Shepherd, Edens Edge); GSN Game Show Network (Jerry Springer); Super 8 (NASCAR Sprint Cup Series driver AJ Allmendinger)

HARD ROCK ENTERTAINMENT STAGE Kimberly Wolff, HER and Kings County, Matt Mason, Sunny Ledford, Matt Stillwell, Captain Kid, Zane Williams, Courtney Dickinson, Carter Twins, Davisson Brothers Band, Cross County Junction, Ira Dean

LAY'S STAGE Blackberry Smoke, Bush Hawg, Daryle Singletary, Joanna Smith, Classic Country Show with Jeannie Seely, Moore & Moore, Gene Watson, Rhonda Vincent, Lynn Anderson and David Frizzell, Casey James, Jason Jones, Edens Edge

LP FIELD CONCERT STAGE Zac Brown Band with Alan Jackson, Amos Lee, Sonia Leigh and Randy Travis, Easton Corbin, Sara Evans, Jason Aldean, Brad Paisley

POWER ZONE Greg Hanna, Jason Sturgeon, NHRA driver Dan Fletcher, Matt Gary, Sean Patrick McGraw, Australian Showcase, DC & Julia, Jacob Lyda, Brother Trouble

Friday, June 10

BRIDGESTONE ARENA Shania Twain book signing

BUD LIGHT STAGE Tiffany, Ray Scott, CMA Celebrity Close Up with Ashton Shepherd, Rhonda Vincent and The Rage, Burns & Poe, HER and Kings County, CMA Songwriters Series: BMI (Jason Matthews, Tim Nichols, Jimmy Yeary)

CHEVROLET RIVERFRONT STAGE Phil Vassar, Jo Dee Messina, Brett Eldredge, Bucky Covington, Bill Anderson, Frankie Ballard, Sawyer Brown, James Wesley, Darryl Worley

CHEVROLET STAGE (at Sports Zone) Skyler, Paul Bogart, Bone Collectors, Daniel Lee Martin, Celebrity Outdoor Challenge, FLW Anglers Jimmy Houston and Larry Nixon, Payton Rae

DURANGO ACOUSTIC CORNER Donna Ulisse, Due West, Marty Raybon, Burns & Poe, Wade Hayes, Lulu Roman, T. Graham Brown, Blue Mother Tupelo, Black Lillies, Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver

FAMILY ZONE Ultimate Air Dogs, ABC Summer Block Party, Random House Children's Books Celebrity Storytelling with Miss Willie Brown

GILDAN FUN ZONE Gildan (Lucy Angel, Tiffany) Carl Black Chevrolet (Phil Vassar, James Otto, Jason Wyatt, Kip Moore, James Wesley, The Harters), Super 8 (Champion Bull Rider Tyler Thomson)

HARD ROCK ENTERTAINMENT STAGE Scarletta, Matt Ramsey, The Band Chelli, Derek Joseph, The Lunabelles, Rachael Farley, Hollywood Yates "Wolf," Mickie James, The Lost Trailers, Corbette Jackson, Dustin Lynch, Chase Rice, Dave Pahanish

LAY'S STAGE Steve Azar, Katie Armiger, Laura Bell Bundy, Earl Thomas Conley, Ty Herndon, Kip Moore, The Harters, Miss Willie Brown, JT Hodges

LP FIELD CONCERT STAGE Ashton Shepherd, Dierks Bentley, Keith Urban, Sugarland, Lady Antebellum, Reba

POWER ZONE Nick Carver Band, The Roys, NHRA driver Dan Fletcher, Lee Gibson, John Carter,

Jacob Lyda, Steve Richard, Australian Showcase, Greg Hanna, Karli Whetstone, Stacey David, Johanna Jacobsen

Saturday, June 11

BUD LIGHT STAGE Matt Stillwell, Margaret Durante, CMA Celebrity Close Up with Chuck Wicks, Winfield's Locket, Tyler Farr, Brother Trouble, CMA Songwriters Series: SESAC (Tim Johnson, Blaine Larsen, Annie Tate, Kim Tribble),

CENTENNIAL PARK Gildan's World's Largest T-Shirt with Danny Gokey; Musician's Corner (Love and Theft, The Henningsens, Sara Jean Kelley, Heather Morgan, Andrew Combs, Emmylou Harris)

CHEVROLET RIVERFRONT STAGE Lonestar, Jason Michael Carroll, Steve Holy, Mel Tillis, Crystal Bowersox, Corey Smith, Chuck Wicks, David Nail, David Lee Murphy, DRIVE4COPD Songwriter Winner Tim Wright, Billy Ray Cyrus

CHEVROLET STAGE (at Sports Zone) Russell Dickerson, Daniel Lee Martin, NASCAR Camping World Truck Series driver Austin Dillon, Bone Collectors, Skyler

DURANGO ACOUSTIC CORNER Con Hunley, Mandy Barnett, Teea Goans, Lynn Anderson, Lee Roy Parnell, Dana Romanello, Chase Rice, The Cleverlys, Shawn Camp with 18 South

FAMILY ZONE Ultimate Air Dogs, ABC Summer Block Party, Random House Children's Books Celebrity Storytelling with Ty Stone

GILDAN FUN ZONE Gildan (Crystal Shawanda, Lacey Brown, Karli Whetstone); Carl Black Chevrolet (Jason Michael Carroll, David Nail, The Dirt Drifters)

GREER STADIUM City of Hope Celebrity Softball Challenge

HARD ROCK ENTERTAINMENT STAGE Lacey Brown, Clint Wade, Brinn Black, Martin McDaniel, Common Thread, Ty Brown, Greg Bates, Buffy, Cowboy Troy, Tyler Farr, Thomas Rhett, Bridgette Tatum

LAY'S STAGE Andy Griggs, T. Graham Brown, Bradley Gaskin, Jamie O'Neal, The Dirt Drifters, Sarah Darling, Hunter Hayes, Stealing Angels, Rumba

LP FIELD CONCERT STAGE Chris Young, Little Big Town, Josh Turner, Trace Adkins, Martina McBride, Rascal Flatts

POWER ZONE One Night Rodeo, NHRA driver Dan Fletcher, Flat River Band, Runaway Home, Kevin Tetz, Mark Cooke, Matt Kennon, Josh Mullins

WILDHORSE SALOON Fifth Annual CMA Music Festival Fan Social presented by CMT (Joe Nichols, Little Big Town, Thompson Square, The Civil Wars, "Next Superstar," Kristin Chenoweth, The Harters)

Sunday, June 12

BUD LIGHT STAGE Carolyn Dawn Johnson, Mark Cooke, The Roys, Curtis and Luckey, Frank Ortega, Josh Hoge, Anita Cochran, Bridgette Tatum, Kristen Kelly

CHEVROLET RIVERFRONT STAGE Brantley Gilbert, Roy Clark, Larry Gatlin and The Gatlin Brothers, Sunny Sweeney, The Bellamy Brothers, LoCash Cowboys, Troy Olsen, Josh Kelley, Terri Clark

CHEVROLET STAGE (at Sports Zone) Jolie Holliday, Bob Redfern, Skyler, Julie Roberts

DURANGO ACOUSTIC CORNER DJ Miller, Nash Street, Amber Hayes, Sarah Darling, CJaye LeRose, The Roys, Jesse Keith Whitley, Brazil Billy

FAMILY ZONE Ultimate Air Dogs, YWCA Celebrity Auction with Martina McBride

GILDAN FUN ZONE Gildan (Julie Roberts, Carolyn Dawn Johnson, Ty Brown); Carl Black Chevrolet (Matt Mason, Bradley Gaskin, Justin Moore, Troy Olsen)

HARD ROCK ENTERTAINMENT STAGE Tommy Steele, JD Shelburne, Heath Forbes, Alyssa Bonagura, Carly Pearce, Brianna Tyson, Corey Crowder, Matt Kennon, Chris Cavanaugh, Bucky Covington, Mark Wills

LAY'S STAGE Jaron and the Long Road to Love, Robin Meade, Foster & Lloyd, Dailey & Vincent, Christian Kane, Carter's Chord, Mark Wills, Walker Hayes, Bo Bice

LP FIELD CONCERT STAGE the Jane Dear girls, The Band Perry, Darius Rucker, Blake Shelton, Miranda Lambert, Taylor Swift

POWER ZONE Johanna Jacobsen, Brother Trouble, Flat River Band, Runaway Home

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

Schedule listed in venue order, artists listed in performance order. FREE ADMISSION to Bud Light Stage at Sports Zone, Chevrolet Riverfront Stage, Chevrolet Stage at Sports Zone, el Jimador Lounge, Lay's Stage at Bridgestone Arena Plaza, Fort Nashboro; Gildan World's Largest T-Shirt at Centennial Park; Hard Rock Entertainment Stage; and Gildan Fun Family, Power and Sports Zones. LP Field Concert Stage EXCLUSIVE TO SINGLE-NIGHT AND FOUR-DAY TICKETHOLDERS. Separate ticket required for City of Hope Celebrity Softball Challenge. EXCLUSIVE TO CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL FOUR-DAY TICKETHOLDERS. Fan Fair Hall and Durango Acoustic Corner, Shuttle Service. Photo Lines and early admittance to Chevrolet Riverfront Stage.



JOIN THE PARTY!

Celebrate the 40th Anniversary of CMA Music Festival!

Forty years can seem like eternity or the blink of an eye. Looking back to 1972, when CMA Music Festival debuted as Fan Fair at Nashville's Municipal Auditorium, it feels like a combination of both and something else as well: just a step in a journey that just may go on forever.

For Country Music will endure. It is a part of America's cultural DNA, always changing yet never forgetful of its past. On this 40th anniversary, all these perspectives are at play. Legends with deep roots in Country's past, megastars for whom the world is their fan base and those who are just starting their climb toward that pinnacle: All have come to the event annually throughout four decades to honor the music they love as well as the fans who share that passion.

That celebration has grown dramatically, moved from the Auditorium to the Tennessee State Fairgrounds in 1982 and then in 2001 to its current home Downtown. Its positive impact on the city's economy has grown as 65,000 attendees fill the streets each of the Festival's four days. Since 2006 it has also benefited Metro Nashville Public Schools by donating half of the Festival's net proceeds to fund music education through CMA's Keep the Music Playing program. Premiere Radio Networks returns to keep local radio markets up to date with live on-air artist interviews. And fans can get a glimpse of the action later this summer with CMA's annual Festival television special on ABC.

But just as important, the Festival continues to offer Country Music fans unparalleled opportunities to get together, make friends, witness unforgettable performances, meet their favorite artists and much more.

Nightly Concerts feature some of the biggest stars in Country as they deliver foot-stomping, stadium-rocking performances. In between sets, catch acoustic performances by Clint Black, The Cleverlys, Eli Young Band, Casey James, Tracy Lawrence, Ricky Skaggs, Thompson Square, Clay Walker and Jimmy Wayne.

Chevrolet Riverfront Stage is where a mixture of great shows, souvenirs, enticing aromas from food vendors and spectacular views of the skyline and Cumberland River beckon.

Fan Fair Hall brings fans face-to-face with artists for photos and autographs, exhibits, product samples and attractions. Martina McBride, Kellie Pickler and Darius Rucker are among the stars signing at the CMA booth. Other exhibitors include record label groups Big Machine, Warner Music and Universal Music, the movie "Captain America," Carhartt Clothing, Chevrolet, Dillard's Reba Brand, Durango, Sony PlayStation as well as fan clubs for Lynn Anderson, Alan Jackson, Lorrie Morgan, Dolly Parton, Chris Young and many others.

Take a load off in the **Durango Acoustic Corner** and listen to unplugged tunes. Stop for a treat at Jack Daniel's stations throughout the Hall.

Watch the monitors for **Fan Fair TV** featuring historical photos and video footage, interactive callouts, celebrity greetings, helpful tips and more, in the Hall and on LP Field Jumbotrons.

Pull up a chair or stand up and dance at the **Lay's Stage** at Bridgestone Arena Plaza, with sets from new artists as well as fan favorites. Visitors can also buy refreshments and escape the heat in the Arena's nearby, air-conditioned concourse.

Bring your brood to the **Family Zone** with games, activities and samples for parents and kids alike.

Child Fun Zone offers three blocks of enjoyment with giveaways, free samples, interactive entertainment and prizes.

Be a spectator or get in the game at the **Sports Zone**, where exciting activities abound including Cracker Boy cooking demonstrations, fishing and hunting clinics with Bob Redfern and the return of the Bone Collectors. Refresh with cool sounds at the **Bud Light Stage** and **Chevrolet Stage** and check out CMA Celebrity Close Up hosted by After MidNite's Blair Garner.

Rev up your engine at the **Power Zone**, with high-octane displays, interactive action, tool challenges, car trivia, Traxxas remote control racing, the famous Budweiser Clydesdales and the Ultimate Air Dogs.

Outdoor sports activities are at **Fort Nashboro** featuring *Field & Stream* Celebrity Total Outdoorsman Challenge (Ash Bowers, Rhean Boyer, Ty Brown, Tyler Farr, Lucas Hoge, Julie Ingram, Tom Jackson, Sean Patrick McGraw, Craig Morgan, The Roys, Trent Willmon, Mark Wills, Darryl Worley and more), *Outdoor Life* Save-A-Stream Celebrity Pro-Am (Tyler Farr, Matt Kennon, Craig Morgan and more) and el Jimador Lounge.

Test drive the newest Chevrolet vehicles at the **Chevrolet Ride and Drive** or just hitch a ride with **Catch A Chevy!**

ABC Summer Block Party combines autograph opportunity with ABC talent, games based on the network's popular and new series, product giveaways, a photo booth and more.

And that's just for starters – see below for additional Festival elements and check CMAfest.com for even more!

Global Artist Events Launch Festival Week

Chevrolet Presents the CMA Global Artist Party at The Stage on June 6, hosted by the Australian husband and wife duo O'Shea and featuring Kaylee Bell, Dean Brody, Chad Brownlee, Diana Corcoran, Luke Dickens, McAlister Kemp, Raintown and Marlee Scott. The following day is the AristoMedia Global Show at The Second Fiddle, hosted by Australian sister trio The McClymonts with High Valley, Brett Kissel, Ryan Laird, Mike & Ashley, Craig Morrison, Six West, Springfield and Steve & Heather. Both shows feature international artists from Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand and the U.K.

Kick-Off Events

Fans can follow the stars in cars down Broadway on June 8 in the Kick-Off Parade with Co-Grand Marshals Bill Anderson and The Oak Ridge Boys, leading to the Block Party at the Chevrolet Riverfront Stage featuring Lee Brice, Eli Young Band, Uncle Kracker and Randy Houser. Parade participants include Deborah Allen, Lynn Anderson, Katie Armiger, Sherrié Austin, Bo Bice, Bomshel, Ash Bowers, Crystal Bowersox, Lee Brice, Carter's Chord, Dailey & Vincent, Sarah Darling, Billy Dean, The Dirt Drifters, Eli Young Band, Tyler Farr, Ashley Gearing, Andy Griggs, The Harters, Walker Hayes, HER and Kings County, Ty Herndon, JT Hodges, Steve Holy, Buddy Jewell, Jason Jones, LoCash Cowboys, Lunabelles, Miss Willie Brown, The Roys, Daryle Singletary, Stealing Angels, Josh Thompson, Tiffany, Rhonda Vincent, Mark Wills and more.

Later, attend Marty Stuart's Late Night Jam at the Ryman Auditorium with Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives, Doug Kershaw, Dolly Parton, The Quebe Sisters, Connie Smith and Mel Tillis.

Festival Mobilizes Followers Online

CMAfest.com offers more ways to connect. Along with the basics of buying tickets, taking part in polls and joining Twitter and blog conversations, visitors can load an iPhone app to create their own personal schedules, post them on various social media and send to friends — those with Android phones can download a similar app. Other features include a page connecting visitors to sponsor sweepstakes and info on fan club parties, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum activities, Grand Ole Opry lineups and more to enhance each visitor's experience.

CMA Welcomes DRIVE4COPD Songwriter Winner

Tim Wright is no stranger to Nashville. The 59-year-old Carmel, Ind., native used to live and perform in Music City. In fact, he appeared at Fan Fair years ago, with his band, The Wright Brothers. He returns as winner of the Tune Up for COPD Songwriting Competition, co-sponsored by DRIVE4COPD and CMA to find a song to help raise awareness of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and encourage listeners to take control of their health. On June 9 at the Chevrolet Riverfront Stage, DRIVE4COPD spokesman Billy Ray Cyrus will introduce Wright, who will perform "Breathe." Download the song at DRIVE4COPD.com.

Big Time for Gildan

Known for its promotional clothing, Gildan is using the Festival to herald its first consumer product line. And what better way to announce a major expansion by unfurling a truly major T-shirt, made from six tons of cotton and adorned with logos for Gildan and CMA's Keep the Music Playing? Gildan will attempt to break the Guinness Record for World's Largest T-Shirt on June 11 at Centennial Park. Danny Gokey will be on hand to emcee the event, which also features live music. Gildan will use the T-shirt to create 12,000 T-shirts, based on the humongous original to donate to Metro Nashville Public Schools.

Kroger Customers Offered Discount

Beginning in May, Kroger stores throughout Middle Tennessee and in Bowling Green and Hopkinsville, Ky., offered Kroger Plus Card shoppers a \$10 discount on \$35 tickets to any Nightly Concert at LP Field.

Festival Merchandise Honors Past and Present

Fans can join the Festival's 40th anniversary by checking out new merchandise with vintage as well as contemporary themes. A variation of the original Fan Fair globe logo, used from 1977 to 1988, displays on a green T-shirt as well as a key chain, all marked on the back with the tag-line "40 years of bringing fans and stars together." Nearly 20 products are offered, produced by Music City Merchandise. Many items, including the official Spirit of Nashville CMA Music Festival poster created by the Anderson Design Group, are available at CMAfest.com.

Shania Twain Surprises Oprah Fans with Free Tickets

On May 3, "The Oprah Winfrey Show" featured an interview with Shania Twain. The audience listened as she discussed her life, her new book *From This Moment On* and the launch of her series "Why Not? with Shania Twain" on OWN. But the listening stopped and the excited screaming began when Twain announced that everyone in the audience would receive free two-day passes (June 9 and 10) to the Festival along with paid accommodations at the Gaylord Opryland Resort. Twain also invited them to a private brunch which she would host during the Festival.

Every Ticket Is a Winner

For 40 years the Festival has brought fans together with the artists they love. Tickets to this year's event celebrate that legacy by including images of six such encounters, chosen from hundreds sent to CMA by attendees from years past in a contest on CMAfest.com. The Grand Prize winner was Mandie Palcic of Indian Trail, N.C. Her photo with Taylor Swift, taken at the Fan Fair Hall in 2008, appears on Gold Circle tickets. Her prizes include two Gold Circle tickets, a plaque displaying a ticket with her winning photograph, a merchandise pack and more. Submissions from the Second (Dianne Everett of St. Louis, Mo., with Loretta



Gold Circle ticket features Taylor Swift with Mandie Palcic.

Lynn) and Third (Jamie Leslie of Ashland, Ky., with Jason Aldean) Place winners and three Runners-up (Jackie Brannan of Albuquerque, N.M., with Faith Hill and Tim McGraw, Michelle Ferullo of Westfield, Mass., with Carrie Underwood and Laura Kolar of Wappingers Falls, N.Y., with Lady Antebellum) — are used on other Festival tickets and promotional materials.

Banners and Billboards Spread the Festival Word

You couldn't be in Nashville this spring without knowing that the Festival was just around the corner. From First to Fifth Avenues along Broadway, up Second Avenue North and westward along Demonbreun Street to Music Circle, 154 poles displayed 308 Festival banners. Depictions of artists appearing at LP Field alternated with others showing historic Fan Fair images; in total, the banners sported 78 different designs. Two freeway billboards — one depicting Reba and the other Darius Rucker — touted the Festival to commuters. And out-of-towners got the word too, via a wall wrap in the baggage claim area of Nashville International Airport.



pole banners

Catch a Private Cruze

Need a lift around Downtown? Just look for one of the 10 new Chevrolet Cruzes that will be roaming the Festival from 9 AM to 7 PM, Thursday through Sunday. Flag it down, tell them where you'd like to go and enjoy the FREE ride. It's all part of this year's Catch a Chevy! campaign.



photos courtesy of CMAfest.com

General Mills, Rodney Atkins and CMA Reach Out to Independent Restaurants

Many major corporations have benefited through partnerships with Country artists. But last year, in a meeting of interests facilitated by CMA's Strategic Partnerships Department, General Mills opened the door toward small businesses as well by launching its Pillsbury BiscuitFest campaign to promote the sale of biscuit meals at independent restaurants. With Danny Gokey as the 2010 spokesperson, the program was successful enough to be brought back this year on Aug. 1.

There were several important changes, though. The first was to welcome Rodney Atkins onboard as the face of this year's campaign. The second was to make him the voice as well by providing customers a free download of their choice from three Atkins songs — "Take a Back Road," "These Are My People" and "Watching You" — when they purchase a meal with biscuits at participating restaurants. Perhaps the biggest draw of all is a sweepstakes that offers a VIP trip for two to the CMA Awards in November. Make that three sweepstakes: one for customers, one for the owner of the participating restaurant and one more for a distributor sales rep (DSR) who had recruited independent restaurants to the BiscuitFest promotion.

Establishments that join the program receive several point-of-sale promotional materials, including table tents, posters, recipes menu inserts and much more, all containing information on how to enter the CMA Awards sweepstakes as well as how the customer can get the free Atkins download.

"We wanted to expand the program to have more of a consumer overlay and incorporate a music download," said Lisa Kessel, Promotion Marketing Manager, General Mills. "This has been a tough time for the Mom-and-Pops and independent restaurants, so we believe BiscuitFest will be beneficial to them."

Visit BiscuitFestVIP.com for more information.

CMA Music Festival is conceived and produced by the Country Music Association, Inc. Premiere Radio Networks is the Official Radio Broadcast Partner, American Airlines is the Official Airline of the CMA Music Festival. Chevrolet is the Official Ride of Country Music. Gildan is the Official T-Shirt of CMA Music Festival. Lotz is the Official Snack of CMA Music Festival. CMA is a proud supporter of DRIVE4COPD.

by BOB DOERSCHUK



Bush Hawk's Russ Caldwell, Ben Helton, Alex Wilshire and Shaun Ames with two Boy Scouts and a member of the Red Cross during cleanup after the Tohoku quake in March. (Not pictured: band members Craig Hand and Jim Phipps.)

BUSH HAWG

This Nashville-based six-piece, signed to RCA Nashville and working on its debut with producer Michael Knox, felt like they were embarking on an adventure when they began their tour of U.S. military bases in Japan for Armed Forces Entertainment.

But on March 11, when the ground started rocking and rolling at Yokota Air Base, 30 miles from Tokyo, their adventure took a dramatic turn.

"We were unloading gear from the back of our truck at the airman's club where we were going to play that evening," said lead singer Craig Hand. "Then Russ (Caldwell, rhythm and lead guitarist) was like, 'Man, I know I'm not drunk, but the ground's moving!' For probably the next minute and a half it just continuously got worse. All the Japanese people running out of these buildings had a look of sheer terror on their faces. That's when we realized this wasn't just an earthquake; this was something big. And I was terrified too."

This was, of course, the Tohoku earthquake, at 9.0 unprecedented in its ferocity, its epicenter about 200 miles from Yokota. Its consequences would include deadly tsunamis and a nuclear crisis. At that moment, however, all that was clear was that a major disaster had just occurred and help would be needed immediately to deal with it.

When the band — Hand, Caldwell, acoustic guitarist, banjo player and mandolinist Shaun Ames, bassist Ben Helton, drummer Jim Phipps and rhythm and lead guitarist Alex Wilshire — heard that a nearby barracks had to be checked for damage and cleaned up to accommodate incoming relief personnel, they pitched in at once.

"Our tour manager had received a call saying the Red Cross was looking for volunteers," said Hand. "The relief workers and search-and-rescue teams were landing on the base and they needed those barracks. Basically, it needed a lot of cleaning and picking up to give these guys a nice, safe place to come, rest up, go out and do what they had to do."

The building, about nine stories tall, had been unused for about a year, so some significant amount of work had to be done. "I personally fixed about 20 toilets in there," Hand recalled. "The water to the building had been turned back on, and toilets were running and leaking water. We worked top to bottom, cleaning it up and helping out the soldiers, volunteers and a lot of really great kids whose parents were in the military."

Amazingly, Bush Hawk performed as scheduled that night. "The turnout wasn't as big as expected," said Ames. "A lot of people were on call and had to work through the night."

But they played as promised and went on to finish their two-week tour through Japan and Guam. When they returned to the States, they brought with them a new set of insights. "Any time there's devastation like that," Wilshire reflected, "it's good if everybody just shows up to help. That's what I walked away with: respect for the volunteers."

BushHawg.net



Susan Niles of Susan Niles Public Relations with River and Quarterback Records Co-owner and President Chris Allums with Ted visit a patient at Vanderbilt Stallworth Rehabilitation Hospital.

CHRIS ALLUMS

When Alabama-born Chris Allums moved to Nashville in 1995 to work as Director of Operations at Imprint Entertainment, he was, in his own words, "a young guy who was working too much and didn't know how to get involved. I've always wanted to do what I can in a general sense, but I didn't have the time or flexibility, so it was like, 'As I get further in my career, maybe I will.' Who would have thought that I would end up volunteering with my dog?"

Ted, a Labrador/Chow mix with a friendly, gentle disposition, turned out to be the key that unlocked the door toward Allums' volunteer work. A friend suggested that Ted would make an ideal therapy dog, used for comforting and lifting the spirits of people recovering from physical and mental ailments. So in 2002, Allums enrolled him for a six-week course at Therapy ARC, Nashville's affiliate for the Delta Society's program for training therapy dogs.

After Ted had completed the program, Allums checked out local facilities that could benefit from his services. Eventually he settled on the Vanderbilt Stallworth Rehabilitation Hospital, an 80-bed facility overseen by Vanderbilt University Medical Center and HealthSouth Corp. "They work a lot with stroke victims and head/brain injury patients," Allums noted. "It's about people relearning how to walk or talk. It's intensive in-patient treatment."

For nearly 10 years, Allums, now Co-Owner and President of Quarterback Records (whose roster includes Jason Michael Carroll, Mark Cooke, Emerson Drive, Matt Gary and Bridgette Tatum) and Ted have visited Stallworth at 2:30 PM on the second and fourth Fridays of every month for 30 minutes to an hour. "A lot of times it ends up being a good psychological thing," he said. "These people have a dog at home that they miss or they used to have a dog when they were younger. Or it's just a break in their day from the monotony of trying to get better."

Sometimes Ted gets more actively engaged. "If there's someone having trouble with feeling on their right side, I'll give them a brush from my backpack so they can brush him. Or they can hold a treat to give him. I've had people in speech therapy get Ted to sit by saying 'Have a treat.' And if they're working on walking, I'll give them a leash while holding a second leash at the same time so he doesn't get too fast."

Seven years ago, another CMA member, Susan Niles of Susan Niles Public Relations, and her dog River, a Sheltie, joined Allums and Ted at Stallworth. Both have given their time generously while also taking something from the experience themselves.

"It's great for the patients, but it also helps me as much as anybody else," Allums said. "I can come away feeling like that hour I spend there is sometimes more productive than a frustrating day at the office."

QuarterbackRecords.com; TherapyARC.org; VanderbiltStallworthRehab.com

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

COLT FORD

TALKIN' COUNTRY

by BOB DOERSCHUK

COLT FORD AND SHANNON "FAT SHAN" HOUCHINS PULLED INTO NASHVILLE IN 2007 WITH PLENTY OF MILES ALREADY BEHIND THEM. THEY'D BEEN WORKING TOGETHER FOR YEARS, TWO GEORGIA COUNTRY BOYS WHO HAD GROWN PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY TIGHT. THERE WERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM: FORD WAS AN IMPOSING 300-POUNDER, A GARRULOUS CONVERSATIONALIST WHO FAVORED SHADES AND BLACK COWBOY HATS. HOUCHINS SPOKE LESS OFTEN BUT MORE QUICKLY, GAVE AN IMPRESSION OF THINKING A FEW STEPS AHEAD OF THE CONVERSATION AND HAD A FONDNESS FOR BASEBALL CAPS WITH A SUPERMAN LOGO.

What they had in common was more important: an ambitious musical vision and a complete absence of connections as they took their first look around Music City. This seems odd in retrospect, since Houchins was already a hit-making record producer, although mostly in the hip-hop realm. On staff at Jermaine Dupri's So So Def Recordings and later as co-founder of 11th Hour Entertainment, he branded his name onto a number of albums by Bubba Sparxxx, Jagged Edge, Kut Kloze, T.L.C., Usher and other urban heavyweights. Their sales helped finance his company's merger with Mindzai Multimedia, a multimedia audio and video recording facility. His work made him familiar in the upper echelons of the music industry in Atlanta, Los Angeles and New York.

But none of these executives quite knew what to do with the music he and Ford had been cutting since they met during Houchins' So So Def run. The Country flavor of Ford's vivid spoken-word compositions finally prompted an executive in Burbank to suggest they try their luck in Nashville.

"Now, you're talking about a guy who's sold 40 million records as a producer," Ford said, nodding toward Houchins. "But we loaded up the truck and moved to Beverly, so to speak. And when we get to Nashville, everyone is looking at us like we're just a couple of bums on the street."

Much has changed since then. The label that Ford and Houchins co-founded in 2006, Average Joes Entertainment, is now headquartered in Nashville, with a number of artists — including Montgomery Gentry — signed to the roster. Ford has released three albums on the imprint, featuring guest appearances by Luke Bryan, Eric Church, Charlie Daniels, Jamey Johnson, Tim McGraw, James Otto and many others. He's written with some of the top talent on Music Row; one collaboration, with Brantley Gilbert, yielded "Dirt Road Anthem," a hit for both Ford and Jason Aldean. More than a million fans have downloaded Ford's music and more than 600,000 have paid to see him onstage all to savor his "recitations," which evoke a way of life he upholds with deep, sometimes sentimental pride.

It's a place he takes us to instantly on *Every Chance I Get*, the top Country debut during its release week in May, with more than 19,000 copies sold. Produced by Houchins and Ford's bandleader Jayson Chance, the first track, "Country Thang," written by Ford, Rhett Akins, Dallas Davidson and Ben Hayslip, opens with a low-down guitar riff and a bad-attitude beat, over which Ford intones, "Shotgun shack on the edge of town / is where I'll be when the sun goes down. / Big-money bird dog barking out back. / Wouldn't trade him in for a Cadillac." There's more: On the breakdown, with Rob Hajacos' fiddle whipping up a hot summer wind, he declares, "Take pride in working hard for a living. / Pray before meals; it feels good giving / back to the needy; greedy is not us. / Thank God for it, even if it ain't much."

There is a long tradition of spoken word performance in Country, and others have experimented specifically with borrowing from rap techniques, as in Cowboy Troy's "hick-hop." But this fusion hadn't found real traction, a fact that still puzzles Ford. "The cool thing about some of the similarities between hip-hop and Country Music is the storytelling, which is very similar," he said. "You're just talking about different stories. The story in the inner city is different from

the story out in the woods. But the struggles and things are just as bad when a factory closes in Detroit as when a factory closes in South Georgia. Things are different but they're the same."

Even so, it was a hard idea to sell once Ford and Houchins hit Nashville. "We played our record for a lot of people," Ford recalled. "A lot of them were like, 'This is awesome! There ain't no way in Hell I'm going to do anything with it!' We were used to L.A. and New York, where the urban world is like, 'Hey, we going to do this? Cool, let's do it!' Next week, it's done. Then we got here and it's like, 'Let's have a meeting. Three months from now we'll meet again and talk about the next meeting, which will be six months later. We ought to be able to figure this out in two or three years.' Finally, we just realized that if it was ever going to get done, we would have to do it on our own because nobody was going to do it."

They did hook up with some significant people, mostly artists who sensed something different in Ford's work. Another early contact was publicist Ebie McFarland, who had just launched her own company, Essential Broadcast Media. Acting on an enthusiastic recommendation from John Michael Montgomery, she listened to and fell in love with the music. Significantly, she heard it not as a cross-genre oddity but as something important in its own right, though that also meant it would be a challenge to market.

"Initially, we used quotes from artists to get people's ears to open up a bit," she said. "It was extremely frustrating to not have those go-to people that would at least give it a chance. But slowly the bigger mainstream tastemakers became believers. Jon Caramanica really championed *Chicken and Biscuits* at *The New York Times*. Chuck Eddy came onboard at **Rhapsody.com** and *The Village Voice*. Our history was to break an artist primarily from standard Music Row publications or critics and grow outward. This one we built in Athens, New York, Atlanta: We found these pockets of media that would take it, really give it a listen and run with it."

Songwriters also took note, seeing him as a new type of interpreter of their work. In the midst of writing "Doing It with My Eyes Closed" with David Lee Murphy and Kim Tribble, labelmate Ira Dean began to sense that this song was well suited to Ford. "Colt came to mind about halfway through our writing because of those verses," he said. "Rap is a bad word in Country, but his lyrics are more Country than 90 percent of what you hear on the radio. I could just see him out there, 'busting his knuckles in the hot sun.' It was honest for him. He wouldn't be lying. He's as Country as cornbread, and those verses just sound like him."

This down-tempo tune is unusual for Ford, who prefers matching his words to a more driving groove. He was up



for the challenge, though, and even more so on "She Wants to Ride in Trucks." The intro is pure Country ballad, but in place of the anticipated melody Ford relates a wistful story about his daughter Annesly, complemented on the choruses by Craig Morgan's evocative singing.

"It's unlike anything I've ever done," Ford said. "It's very emotional. The music is very open and breathing, with beautiful piano and brushes on the drums. And I'm being very vulnerable because I'm talking specifically about my child here. The things I'm saying are very real to me. It took me forever to get it recorded because I had a very hard time with it.

"It also took me a long time to finish writing it, to get it exactly where I wanted," he continued. "I wrote the chorus with Noah Gordon and Thom Shepherd. Then I said, 'This will be unusual for you guys because I know you're used to finishing songs together. But I've got to write these verses myself because you don't know what I'm feeling about my daughter.' Now it's one of my favorite things I've ever done."

It also illustrates Ford's concept for balancing spoken and sung material. On that track, he chose Morgan to handle the choruses specifically because of the emotional intensity he can convey. "People that know me would tell you that this isn't normally my type of music, but I love Colt to death," Morgan said. "I like what he's doing because he's real honest about it and the material speaks to country people. You don't hear a rap record talking about pickup trucks and barbecues and girls growing up. I was very honored that he asked me to sing on something that was that important to him."

"I'm talking about my daughter and Craig has boys that age, so he's on the other side of the fence," Ford added. "At the same time, I've got a son that's 11, and when he wants to go off, it'll feel the same as it does with my daughter."

As he speaks about his kids, Ford tears up for a second. Clearly, his music isn't just a cerebral exercise; it comes from his immersion in the country lifestyle's values, sights, sounds and rituals, from raising a family to raising a little Hell now and then. "Hey, I can't give you anything other than what I am," he concluded. "At the end of the day, I just try to talk about stuff I know. I am Country. I lead a Country life. It's who I am."

ColtFord.com

"THE COOL THING ABOUT SOME OF THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HIP-HOP AND COUNTRY MUSIC IS THE STORYTELLING, WHICH IS VERY SIMILAR. YOU'RE JUST TALKING ABOUT DIFFERENT STORIES."

- Colt Ford

When The Judds' self-titled reality series wrapped its sixth episode in May on the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN), it was followed immediately by the premiere of "Why Not? with Shania Twain," the Country superstar's own revealing documentary series. Coincidental scheduling? Hardly. The new cable network is happily aware of this genre's pull.

"The truth is we know that Country Music appeals to a massive audience," said Lisa Erspamer, CEO, OWN. "And we all love Country Music. It's a big part of our audience base, and we think that The Judds and Shania Twain are compelling, dynamic women with real stories that our viewers can relate to. It felt like the perfect pairing."

Given the long history of showcasing Country artists as guests on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," it was a natural fit, especially in the case of Naomi and Wynonna. "We had The Judds on the 'Oprah' show many times over the years," said Erspamer, who served as a Co-Executive Producer on the iconic daily talk show, which aired its final new episode in May. "What I loved about them is that they've been through everything at least once. Maybe you don't relate to one piece of their story, but God knows there will be a piece that you do relate to."

Audiences apparently did just that. Upon its April 10 debut, "The Judds" drew more than 1.7 million total viewers over its two-hour premiere, which followed Naomi and Wynonna as they prepared for and embarked on their final tour, "The Last Encore." But while their reunion onstage may have been the framework of the series, its engine was the mother's and daughter's famously complex relationship. Coupled with a string of unexpected revelations, including Naomi's shocking memories of being abused as a child, "The Judds" was not short on drama.

"It was a mix of having them be together on a daily basis," said Kerry Hansen, The Judds' Manager of 17 years and an Executive Producer of the series. "They hadn't performed with each other on a tour since 1999, so it brought up a lot of family baggage. But it ended up changing their relationship and we're thankful for it."

BUILDING A BRIDGE

The idea to do such a behind-the-scenes series had been floating around since 2004, according to Hansen. But it was the reaction to the duo's performance at CMA Music Festival in 2009 that made them realize the timing was right to both organize a farewell tour and document its preparation.

"We had no intention of another reunion," Hansen said. "But that night (onstage at Nashville's LP Field), Wy brought Naomi out and they sang 'Love Can Build a Bridge'" (written by John Barlow Jarvis, Naomi Judd and Paul Overstreet), and 50,000 people started singing it back to them. They came offstage and looked at me like, 'Holy cow! If there's a time to do it, now is probably it.'"

Erspamer echoes this now-or-never sentiment. "Over the years, we've talked with them about doing



Shania Twain in Lisa Vegas on "Why Not? with Shania Twain."

"One thing that's really important to us is compelling storytelling, and Country Music is well known for that."

- Lisa Erspamer, CEO, Oprah Winfrey Network

something like this. When the opportunity for them to go on tour again arose, their team called and said they were ready to do a docu-series. The timing worked out perfectly because now there was a network," she said, noting the series' enthusiastic reception among OWN staffers, an encouraging sign that "The Judds" might connect with audiences of all ages. "Our internal team here, our younger group who may not have grown up with The Judds, really locked into the series. To see a younger generation get to know these great artists was a fun opportunity for us — and sort of unexpected too. It appealed to a very broad scope of people."

According to Hansen, that broad scope interested Team Judd from the beginning. "All along, we were hoping that OWN would be the home for this because of the relationship with Oprah and her audience and what that means," said Hansen. "I think there is a trust between The Judds and Oprah. Part of that is because of the way Oprah exposes the truth. It was obvious when she met with us she was going to care about their lives and what they are doing."

As does Erspamer, the apparent glue in the relationship between Oprah and The Judds, and Oprah and Twain. "Lisa and I have been doing business together for 10 years," Hansen said. "We all know each other so well, and Lisa and Wynonna are friends. It's a nice partnership."

Twain's Manager Jason Owen, who heads Sandbox Entertainment, credits Erspamer with not only

The Oprah Winfrey Network's Commitment to Country

by JOSEPH HUDAK

helping to get "Why Not? with Shania Twain" on the air, but also with the steady stream of Country artists that have been guests on "Oprah." One particularly dramatic moment followed Twain's appearance on May 3, after which Oprah stunned her studio audience with two-day passes to CMA Music Festival, free accommodations at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and a private brunch hosted by Twain during the Festival. Twain will also be autographing her new book, *From This Moment On*, on Friday during the Festival at Bridgestone Arena.

"Lisa deserves most of the credit," Owen said, praising her and OWN's commitment to Country Music. "She's an enormous music fan and has great relationships with some of the biggest

music superstars in the world. I have had a longstanding relationship with the 'Oprah' show primarily because of Lisa and her team. I think she knows that this is a market that is not really tapped. Yes, CMT and GAC are obviously the specific Country home, but no other network has really done anything like this and paid this close attention to what is really the heart of America — Country Music."

If the theme of "The Judds" was the mother-daughter bond, Twain's introspective series, which finales June 12, is about conquering fear. "Why Not? with Shania Twain" finds a vulnerable Twain struggling to regain the confidence to sing in public in the aftermath of her split from husband Robert "Mutt" Lange. That openness and willingness to expose herself so fully, Owen acknowledges,

she puts her stamp on things, it gives them legitimacy."

Not to mention momentum, as Twain will time the release of her first single in six years, the self-penned "Today Is Your Day," to the final episode of her show airing June 12.

Despite the occasional "OMG" water cooler moment, neither "The Judds" nor "Why Not? with Shania Twain" is stereotypically reality television. "The way you expose and talk about something can easily make for a train wreck," Hansen acknowledged. "None of us was interested in doing that. It's all in the way you present an idea. That is one of the things I respect about Oprah: She has created a network that gives out real information in an honest way and is not all about being negative. It's about being truthful."

Twain was concerned with the truth as well; that played a key role in inspiring her to do the project. "She was so closed off for so long and extremely private, but she wanted to tell her story the way she wanted to, instead of the way everyone else has been telling it," said Owen, surprised by the willingness of Twain, an Executive Producer on the series, to be so transparent on camera. "I really felt there were lots of things that she'd take out (during editing). But she didn't; she left it all in."

That honesty, coupled with the ability to tell a relatable, moving story, is a cornerstone of Twain's music specifically and Country Music in general. In fact, it was the main attraction for OWN and a component of the network's long-term goals. "One thing that's really important to us is compelling storytelling, and Country Music is well known for that," said Erspamer, who is open to the possibility of adding more Country-themed productions to OWN. "All of the music is about love, redemption and healing. That's the type of storytelling we are doing on OWN and plan to do more of."

"We would consider anybody who has a great story and is willing to let us go along for the ride," she concluded. "We have so many people in Country Music with whom we've loved working with over the years, and Country Music just gets bigger and bigger. It's the universal themes that run through Country that make people just love it."

Oprah.com/OWN



Naomi Judd and Wynonna Judd on "The Judds" docu-series, set against the backdrop of their 18-city reunion tour.

also came from Twain's trust in Oprah and Erspamer. "Shania fell in love with Lisa and loved her ideas and what she wanted to do with the network," he said, recalling the series pitch meeting, in which Twain herself gave a presentation.

"It was really unbelievable," said Erspamer, with a chuckle. "I was with Shania Twain in a hotel room watching her PowerPoint presentation. She has been extremely involved in the creative of her series. In the past, we've had her on 'Oprah' and she is notoriously private. I think what's so fascinating is to watch her open up. She talks about her fear of singing. For an artist like her to admit that is very big. I think it will help other people break through their own fears."

And possibly help Twain reach a new fan base? Owen believes so. "I think that people will see her in a much different way. When they see the realness and the honesty that she puts on in the series, it's really going to connect," he said, noting the nurturing sensibility shared by the series and the network. "The message OWN sends, from the marketing to the creative to obviously Oprah herself, is right in line with the series. It feels natural, safe and solid, all the way around."

Hansen believes The Judds can see a similar increase in fans, thanks to Oprah's broad appeal and reputation. "She's going to reach people that we don't necessarily reach as The Judds when they're touring or out promoting products," he said. "With the Oprah Winfrey Network, when

RONNIE MILSAP

by DONNA HUGHES

The term "legend" is bandied about quite haphazardly these days, but when applied to Ronnie Milsap there is one dissenter to the otherwise overwhelming acclaim.

"First of all, I'm not a star because I've been married to the same lady for 45 years," the iconic singer, pianist and entertainer insisted. "So right there, that tells you I'm no star. If I'd been married 20 times and had a whole lot of houses and cars, I'd be a real star, but I don't live my life that way. I always think legends are people who have been around a long time. I think of Merle Haggard or Willie Nelson or George Jones; they're definitely legendary to me. I don't think I'm in that category yet."

Consider the modest Mr. Milsap overruled on this one. One multi-Platinum album (*Greatest Hits*), one Platinum (*Greatest Hits 2*) and six Gold testify to the loyalty of his longtime fans. Beginning in 1974 with "Pure Love" (written by Eddie Rabbitt), Milsap singles would hit No. 1 some 40 times. He has won six Grammy Awards, all in the category of Best Country Solo Performance, Male. And his peers have honored him with 19 nominations and eight wins for CMA Awards.

This achievement retains special meaning for Milsap, going back to his first Award as CMA Male Vocalist of the Year in 1974. "It had really been a great year, but I was probably a little stunned by hearing my name called," he said. "Seems like (producer) Tom Collins and (manager) Jack Johnson came over, one got on one arm and one got on the other and they had to lead me up there. I think I was just amazed that would happen. And then, stepping off the stage, Jerry Reed grabbed my hand and shook my hand and said, 'Congratulations, Milsap!' That was a great Award."

Three years later, he took the triple crown of CMA Entertainer, Male and Album of the Year Awards. "Winning Entertainer of the Year, I never expected that to happen," he said. "It was still pretty early as far as developing my own career in Country Music. I thought it was too early on to win Entertainer of the Year, but if it happens, it happens. I wasn't going to quarrel with it."

These moments and all else that Milsap has accomplished are especially remarkable given the adversities he has overcome. Born with a congenital ailment that eventually left him blind, abandoned by his mother, he was raised by his grandparents in Robbinsville, N.C., until enrolling at The Governor Morehead School

for the Blind in Raleigh, N.C. He was 6 years old when he began traveling alone by Greyhound Bus from Raleigh to visit his grandparents twice a year, sleeping on a bench between legs of his journey and then walking several miles up a dirt road to his destination.

"To have gone through what he went through in his life, he is the most normal, well-adjusted person I know," said his longtime producer Rob Galbraith. "I told him, 'Man, if you hadn't been blind, I don't think you would ever have gotten out of those hills.' He would have probably been working in the sawmill."

Maybe not, given the talent he showed as a child. "Blind School taught him about Beethoven, Bach and Mozart, and the radio taught him about Ray Charles, Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard," said Galbraith. And though he was awarded a full scholarship to study law at Young Harris College in Georgia, Milsap changed his plans in part through a chance encounter with Charles, who urged him to pursue music. He released his first single, "Total Disaster" (Vicki Simmons), in 1963. In those early years, his music was more R&B-flavored; one single in that style, "Never Had It So Good" (Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson), reached No. 5.

The shift toward Country began with another chance encounter, between his wife Joyce and Charley Pride. They met in a hotel elevator, where she persuaded the future Country Music Hall of Fame member to call her husband in their room.

"I'm just up there waiting to find out what's for breakfast. The phone rings and I hear" ... Milsap breaks into the chorus from Pride's hit "Is Anybody Going to San Antone?" "I said, 'I don't know who you are but you do a great impersonation of Charley Pride.' He said, 'I am Charley Pride.'"

After dropping in on Milsap's gig that night and hearing him perform several Country songs, Pride encouraged him to move to Nashville. He did so in 1972, signing up with Pride's manager at the time, Jack Johnson, who began spreading word about his new client. "Eventually, when Jack talked to Jerry Bradley (then VP, RCA Records Nashville), he said, 'I know all about Ronnie Milsap,'" the singer remembered. "He plays down in Memphis. He's an R&B singer. He's not a

Country singer! Jack said, 'Well, you need to listen to this tape.' After he played the tape, to quote Jerry Bradley, he said, 'You know what? That S.O.B. can sing Country!' So Jerry Bradley signed me and I was on RCA."

Milsap released his first Country album, *Where My Heart Is*, in 1973, followed a year later by *Pure Love*, scoring his first No. 1 with the title track. He went to the top of the charts with "Daydreams About Night Things," (John Schweers) his first million-seller "It Was Almost Like a Song" (Hal David and Archie Jordan), "What a Difference You've Made in My Life" (Archie Jordan), "There's No Gettin' Over Me" (Jim Aldridge and Tom Brasfield) and "Any Day Now" (Burt Bacharach and Bob Hilliard), among many others. He scored numerous crossover hits and was even on MTV in the '80s with a video for the techno/pop "She Loves My Car" (Bill LaBounty and Roy Freeland), starring Mariska Hargitay of "Law & Order: SVU."

Milsap's ability to achieve success without following established recipes and his willingness to take chances changed many minds about what qualified as Country Music. "No other piano players really existed in Country, except for Jerry Lee Lewis," noted Phil Vassar. "You can still count them on 10 fingers. But I remember when everybody was telling me, 'Look, you need to throw a hat on and you need to play guitar. That's just how we do it here.' And I would always say, 'Well, what about Ronnie Milsap?'"

"And he was singing with so much soul," Vassar added. "He's a soul singer! That's what made it cool for me. I grew up on Ronnie Milsap and Ray Charles, guys who proved that Country and soul or R&B music are brothers."

"Crossover was kind of a dirty word," said Galbraith. "And then it became the only word. What Taylor Swift and other folks are doing would have been pure heresy except for Ronnie."

For Milsap, drawing from other genres enriched rather than diluted his feel for Country. This is clear on his latest album, *Country Again*, scheduled to be released July 26 on Bigger Picture Group. A few of its 12 songs were cut originally for *My Life*, released in 2006 by RCA Records, but most are newly tracked.

For the first single, "If You Don't Want Me

To" (Robert White Johnson and Jimmie Lee Sloas), Milsap revisits a song he had recorded many years ago. Here, he builds a crisp, dance-friendly groove on a keyboard riff reminiscent of the Doobie Brothers' "What a Fool Believes," with a vocal that defines the art of Country/pop fusion. "We never released it as a single and never put it on an album," said Galbraith. "We used it as a B side on three different singles. Ronnie was like, 'What are we gonna use as the B side? We don't want to waste one of the others. Well, let's put "If You Don't Want Me To" on there again.'"

But the rest of *Country Again* lives up to the title. Milsap caresses the lyrics to "A Better Word for Love" (Al Anderson and Gary Nicholson) with exceptional tenderness, does a down-home recitation leading to a dramatic change of texture, rhythm and feel on the chorus of the title cut (Carson Chamberlain and Anthony Smith), raises the spirits of old-school balladry on his remake of the 1954 Jimmy C. Newman hit "Cry, Cry Darling" (J.D. Miller and Jimmy C. Newman) and features chorus-sweetened Countryopolitan on "You're the Reason I'm Living" (Bobby Darin).

WSM on-air personality Eddie Stubbs, credited as Executive Producer, helped inspire the album through conversations with Milsap. "A lot of people don't know how deep Ronnie's background is in traditional Country Music," he said. "He grew up listening to this music on broadcasts out of Nashville on WSM and from Knoxville on WNOX. A lot of the Knoxville music was very, very traditional and it went into who he is, along with pop, rhythm & blues and all the other outside influences."

"I'm really excited about this new album," Milsap said. "The album is called *Country Again* and that's exactly what it was because it's predominantly a Country album."

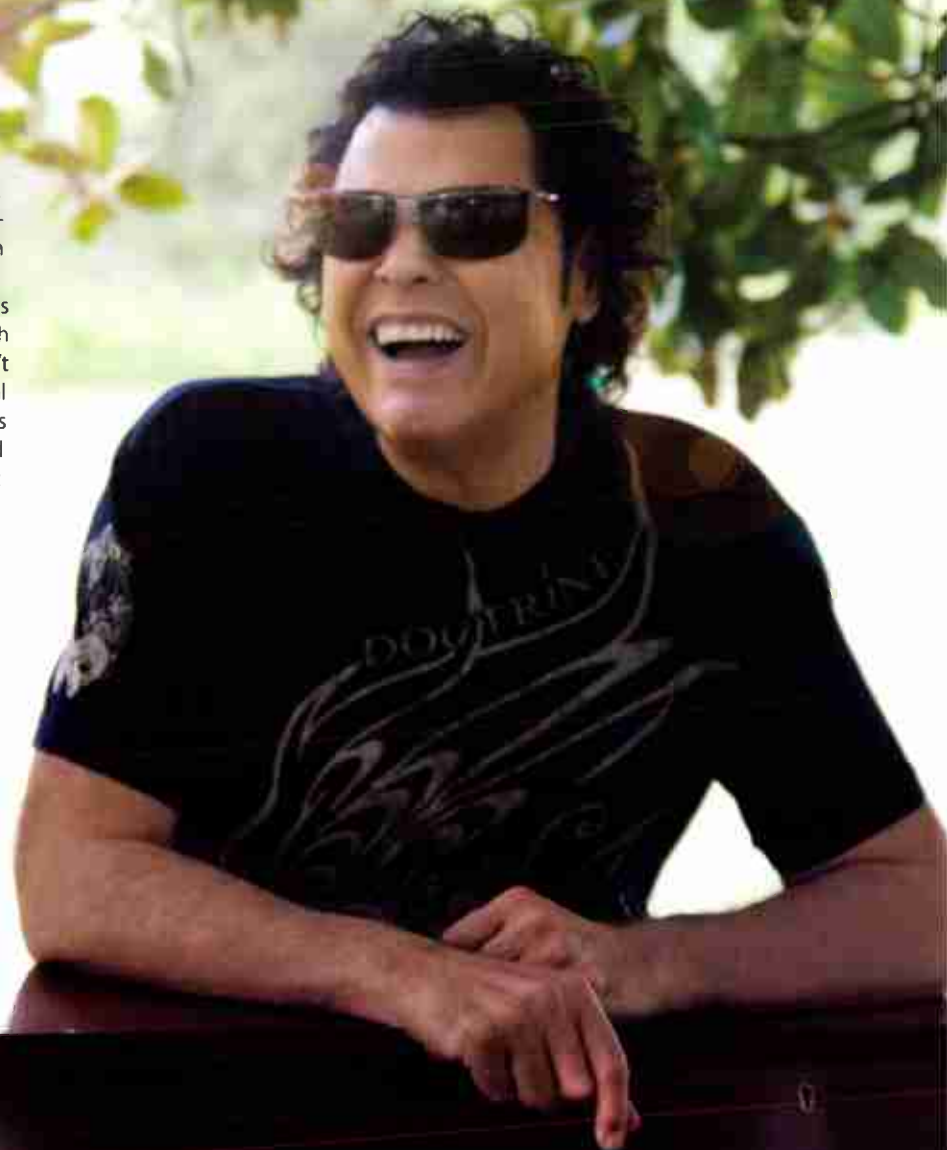
"He came to Nashville and started real stone Country because he really is stone Country," said Galbraith, who has commissioned some people to shop a screenplay about Milsap's life to the West Coast. "And he is stone R&B. That's a blessing and a curse at the same time because we tried to satisfy two masters. The Country audience over the years has given him an extra credit, extra leeway. They were proud of all that Ronnie could do."

"It's all about the fans and I certainly know that," Milsap concluded. "Fans have been so good to me over the years. They know me inside and out. I'm just happy I've been allowed to do something I love so much. What a way to make a living."

RonnieMilsap.com

"What Taylor Swift and other folks are doing would have been pure heresy except for Ronnie."

— Rob Galbraith, producer





by JEANNIE NAUJECK

The annual rash of holiday-themed albums occurs as regularly as changes of the season. Now, a variation on this practice is becoming popular and not just because of timing. Thanks in part to the shift toward digital delivery, artists as well as fans are benefiting from releases of EPs offering mini-bouquets of songs tied to special occasions, events and various themes.

Like full-length albums, many of these more compact products maximize their sales potential by mirroring some special time of the year, as Rascal Flatts did late in 2009 with *Unwrapped*, featuring their renditions of five Christmas standards.

"This kind of short-run, limited offering is perfectly suited for digital-only release," observed Wayne Leeloy, Senior Director of Artist Services Nashville, Topspin Media. "There's not as much riding on projects like these as there might be around a much larger, heavier-anticipated release, so a focus on digital is likely a safe one."

And it's adaptable to less traditional events, going beyond Christmas and Valentine's Day to other celebrations — spring break, for instance. That annual milestone dovetailed nicely with the rise of Luke Bryan; he had built a strong following on the college circuit by the time he signed with Capitol Records Nashville, so it was a priority for him to keep that connection alive.

"Luke had been playing on campuses and was singing songs that this rowdy crowd would sing back to him," said Cindy Mabe, Senior VP for Marketing, Capitol/EMI Nashville Records. "It took two years to do his first album and he felt the college crowd was moving on."

So Bryan suggested putting out some music with a spring break theme. The result was 2009's *Spring Break with All My Friends*, a three-song iTunes release that featured demos of "Sorority Girl" (written by Bryan, Dallas Davidson and Jim McCormick) and "Take My Drunk Ass Home" (Bryan and Jason Matthews) plus an unplugged version of "All My Friends Say" (Bryan, Jeff Stevens and Lonnie Wilson). Priced at \$2.49, it sold 416 units in its first week and has since sold more than 14,000.

He followed up in 2010 with *Spring Break 2: Hangover Edition* and in March with *Spring Break 3: It's a Shore Thing*. The latter's strong performance, with 15,000 sales during the first week and a peak of No. 1 on iTunes' Country album chart, kept Bryan in the spotlight and gave him a boost as he prepares to release his third album in August.

It's a strategy that works across genre lines. Americana artist Brandi Carlile released a Valentine's Day EP of love songs, *XOBC*, through iTunes for \$3.99, featuring three new songs and two covers. And Ryan Adams repackaged several of his previously released love songs on the tongue-in-cheek *Extra Cheese*, also on iTunes for \$3.99.

Although a holiday hook is helpful in that it provides a press angle, it isn't always essential. In January, Sunny Sweeney put out a five-song digital EP to preview her forthcoming album on Republic Nashville. It included "From a Table Away" (Bob DiPiero, Karyn Rochelle and Sweeney), released as a single to radio in June 2010.

Another point in favor of this EP series is that relative to full albums, they cost much less in overall production and come with a grass-roots feel. "We didn't do it for the money," Mabe explained. "From a profit and loss perspective, we're making money on these EPs, but it's really more of

a marketing tool. It's been a brilliant idea, and I credit Luke for it."

At the same time, Bryan kept building his career with "Do I" (Bryan, Dave Haywood and Charles Kelley), "Rain Is a Good Thing" (Bryan and Davidson), "Someone Else Calling You Baby" (Bryan and Stevens) and other radio-friendly singles. Even so, the EPs remain a significant part of his plan.

"It's grown to help us brand what he's about," Mabe said. "It puts another tent pole in his career. It's not what you'll find on his records but aimed at a young audience. He loves college audiences and that base is growing."

"Also, albums are taking so long at radio," she continued. "They may not fully represent who you are as an artist. They don't show your full body of work and what you're about. And for a new artist, it can be hard to find your place and where you fit."

Because it also takes so long for singles to scale the charts on Country radio, digital EPs allow the artist to keep offering new songs to fans. For example, when Jason Michael Carroll released *Christmas on the Farm* in 2010, containing four traditional songs and an original title track that was released to radio, he wasn't anticipating his new album, *Numbers*, release until July 26 on Cracker Barrel.

EPs also help artists stay in the public eye between full-length album releases. Bryan's third album, *Tailgates & Tanlines*, doesn't come out until Aug. 9, but in March he played to 4,000 spring breakers on Florida's Panama City Beach, performing the party songs as well as introducing some of his more mainstream music to them.

"I don't see why you can't release smaller pieces of product to keep yourself fresh in the marketplace," said Jules Wortman, President/Owner, Wortman Works Media & Marketing and a longtime proponent of EPs and mini-albums. "If you sell through the EP and then put an album out there, you've got constant presence and visibility. Once you go through your marketing budget, it's hard to maintain your presence. You can take a modified risk on iTunes and the price point is equivalent to the return. But it seems like an easier way to make a profit, as opposed to putting out a piece of product that becomes stale if you don't have the marketing dollars to work it for awhile."

CMA research has made it clear that more Country fans than ever are finding their new music online. It follows that EPs positioned strategically between album releases appeals to the expectations of the online consumer.

"I think the traditional cycles of album release and a tour lasting 18 to 24 months may be coming to a close," said Leeloy. "The kind of positive feedback and excitement surrounding acts who deliver new music more regularly — say every three to 12 months — is an exciting prospect to consider and a great case study to pay attention to."

"WE'RE MAKING MONEY ON THESE EPs, BUT IT'S REALLY MORE OF A MARKETING TOOL."

— Cindy Mabe, Senior VP of Marketing, Capitol/EMI Nashville Records

NASHVILLE TALENT

Finds Film Opportunity at CMA Speed Dating for Writers and Publishers

by **BOB DOERSCHUK**

Let's say you're a songwriter in Nashville. You're grateful for the album cuts you've received but you'd like to broaden your horizons by pitching to music supervisors in film and television. Problem is, most of them work on the West Coast.

What do you do? Simple: Go or have your rep go to a speed dating session ... specifically, the event known as CMA Speed Dating for Writers and Publishers, held at CMA headquarters in Nashville. After a one-year hiatus, the popular gathering returned in April as an official part of the Nashville Film Festival (NaFF) agenda.

CMA's lobby was laid out with eight handsomely set round tables, each accommodating 10 guests. One seat at each was reserved for a film supervisor; Nashville writers, publishers, managers, agents, song pluggers, record label personnel and other parties looking to connect filled the rest. Following an informal reception, Stacy Widelitz, former NaFF President and current Board member, invited everyone to find the table to which they had been assigned.

What followed were several hours of "speed dating," during which the music supervisors rotated from table to table, spending 25 minutes at each one. They talked, traded cards, joked, shared tips on how to contact people in their industry — and most important, got a feeling for those they met that is hard or impossible to achieve via e-mail.

The importance of this impact should not be minimized. Encounters at previous CMA Speed Dating events planted the seeds that led to HBO tapping Jace Everett's "Bad Things" as the theme for "True Blood" and even to Jack Ingram appearing and placing a song on the Lifetime series "Army Wives."

"I don't care what they say about Skype," said Widelitz as introductions and conversations buzzed throughout the CMA lobby. "Sitting down in a room with somebody is still a primal experience, and that makes all the difference in the world."

"It's very important," agreed Sheila Bauer, President of the Nashville-based music publishing firm Identical Entertainment. "We want to break into TV and film, but we're a small company and a lot of these guys come from L.A. So it's very helpful to be able to attend this event and ask questions that will allow us to gear our business toward writing the right songs for what they need."

CMA's Speed Dating event proved just as helpful to the out-of-town visitors. "I happen to have a good memory for people I meet, so face-to-face is the best thing," said Jon Ernst, an independent music supervisor from L.A., whose TV credits include "The City," "The Hills," "The World According to Paris" and, fortuitously, "Nashville." "I'm 100 percent more inclined to remember people I've met when it comes time to look for new songs and artists that haven't been heard before. Being able to discover an independent artist and blow them up in my world of TV and films is always something special."

"Last year, we did not do this event," Widelitz concluded. "But after the Film Festival, all these people said to me, 'Hey, why didn't you guys do the speed dating thing? That was fantastic! It was so useful and a great experience.' So we teamed up again with CMA because this is important for the community. We are very grateful to CMA."

Music supervisors at this year's event featured Andrea von Foerster ("500 Days of Summer"), Tricia Holloway ("3:10 to Yuma"), Jon Ernst ("My Name Is Earl"), Chris Mollere ("Vampire Diaries"), Jenée DeAngelis ("Cold Case") and Richard Glasser (Weinstein Co.).

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STARTING OVER... FROM THE TOP

by KIP KIRBY

After nearly 20 years in the music business, Martina McBride is starting over. It's a time of seismic change in the superstar's career — and nobody is more excited than she is. With a new record label, new management, new producer, newly-spotlighted songwriting prowess, new studio recording process and a brand new air of accomplishment, McBride's career is taking on a fresh patina.

"It really does feel like starting over for me — starting over but with a track record and with the success and experience I've had over the years. I feel more mature and more confident, which comes with knowing yourself better. But there are a lot of opportunities now that I haven't had in a long time."

When her contract with RCA Nashville expired in 2010, McBride revved up for new challenges ahead. "I have a lot of friends there and we obviously had a great run," she pointed out. "But there comes a time when you have to step back and say, 'I need something different.' It was a bit of a risk, but you have to do what feels right. It took me a long time to realize that it wasn't a marriage, it was a business relationship."

After weighing her options, McBride decided to join Republic Nashville, the label launched jointly in 2009 by Big Machine Records and Universal Republic. "We had a couple of offers that were really great," she noted. "But what really drew me in the end was (Big Machine Label Group President/CEO) Scott Borchetta and his reputation. Just sitting back and watching what he's been able to do with his artists, and then when I met with him, his enthusiasm and passion for music — not only for the business but for the music: The company is very music-centric. That was fascinating and inspiring to me. I really got the feeling that they get up every day and say, 'Wow, we get to be in the music business!' They're so excited by it. They're aggressive and passionate and doing innovative things, and it's contagious. I wanted to be around that positive energy."

At the same time, the Republic Nashville team was vocal about wanting to help McBride make a great career record. "It wasn't about, 'OK, let's sign her and we'll continue doing what she's done before or we'll see what happens,'" she said. "It was, 'We want you and we want this to be the biggest record of your career.' There was no sense of them signing me only to continue on the same path. Just to have that belief and confidence in me and to see a future that's even bigger than what I've had at this stage of my career was really exciting."

The feeling was mutual. "Scott and I are big fans of Martina's," explained Jimmy Harnen, President, Republic Nashville. "So when we found out she was looking for a new home, we didn't run after her — we *raced* after her. An artist of her stature is timeless."

Borchetta planted the seeds for another first. "We were talking and Scott said, 'Have you ever thought about recording outside of Nashville?' I said no," McBride recalled. "He said, 'Well, maybe you should think about it. I think you need to get out of your comfort zone a little bit and see what happens if you get away.' I think he understood that when I'm here (in Nashville), I wear a lot of hats. I get to be a musician part time, but I'm a mom first. I only get to focus on music a few hours every day before I have to pick up the kids from school and figure out what to make for dinner every night. For Scott to say that, I thought it showed a lot of insight. It was a respectful way to say, 'You need to focus on the music if this album is really important to you.'"

"When we found out she was looking for a new home, we didn't run after her — we raced after her." — Jimmy Harnen, President, Republic Nashville

With Byron Gallimore, who would co-produce with McBride, and a group of seasoned Nashville musicians in tow, she headed down to Atlanta's Southern Tracks Recording studio in January in the middle of an ice storm that shut the city down. "There was nothing to do there but make music," she said, laughing. "We couldn't go shopping. We couldn't go out to eat. Every day we'd slide across the parking lot from the hotel and work in the studio, making music all day." The proximity to Nashville allowed her to return home to see her daughters Ava, 5, Delaney, 16, and Emma, 13, mid-session, yet being away from home for several days at a clip furnished her the luxury of focusing totally on the music.

When McBride's album, as yet untitled, comes out in October, fans and industry alike might be surprised to find that most of the songs are co-written by the artist herself. For the first time in her career, she found herself with plenty of time on the front end to stretch her songwriting skills.

"I started writing and looking for songs between signing with my new management and signing the new record deal," she said. "While I was meeting with people to see what would happen, I began taking song meetings.

Then I thought, 'I've got this time and all three girls are in school all day,' so I didn't have to worry that I was taking time away from them. I decided I'm just going to see what happens. I love writers, and I'm not an artist who now thinks I have to write everything I record. But people were encouraging me to write and wanted to write with me, so I just started doing it. Because of it, I think this record shows a lot of different sides of my personality. I think the songwriting peels back a layer and shows a whole other part of me."

McBride's co-producer can't say enough about the singer's craft. "This was our first time in the studio together, and she was amazing," Gallimore enthused. "She has perfect pitch, delivers 100 percent, and the one thing that

slayed me was how she brought her songwriting in on a level that she's never done before. I think she may have written one or two things in the past for an album, but people are going to look at this album and go, 'Wow, she wrote that one? And that one? And that one?'"

Case in point: "Teenage Daughters," written by McBride, Brad Warren and Brett Warren. "The first time we all listened to it, we looked at each other and said, 'That's the first single!'" said Harnen. "The decision took all of about three seconds. A few weeks later, our entire promotion staff was running around the Country Radio Seminar with their iPods, saying, 'Hey, listen to this!' and playing the single for radio every chance we could get. Later that week, we invited radio and industry executives to an evening with Martina at her home, where we officially debuted the single. The reaction was over-the-top amazing. Radio was asking 'When can I get this' or saying 'This is an add right now!' It was like a fever and so much fun."

The label followed with a "Martina Live by Request" promotion in which 24 nationwide Country radio morning shows were given a list of McBride's hits to post on their Web sites so listeners could vote on which song they would most like to hear her perform live on the radio. McBride spent two different mornings on the

air with a full band, performing each market's biggest vote getter live. "Let me tell you this," Harnen said, chuckling. "We all knew Martina was an amazing vocalist, but when I witnessed her singing songs in full voice at 7 o'clock in the morning, well, kids, just don't try this at home."

As the fastest-rising McBride single since "This One's for the Girls" in 2003, "Teenage Daughters" fanned anticipation for the album. Plans are to spread the news through all levels of media over at least two weeks leading up to the release date. "Martina has stepped up her game with this record in a major way," said McBride's manager Clint Higham, President, Morris Artists Management. "My hope is to re-establish her as a headliner, to show more of her personality, to let the public and the industry see there's more to her than this great big voice. Every time Martina steps up to the plate, she delivers. Certainly her voice is what draws people in, but I want to show that she's much bigger than that. When you talk with her and see her enthusiasm for what's ahead and what she wants to do, it's obvious she's not complacent at all. This lights a fire under all of us."

As for McBride, she has high hopes at what she sees as first-time opportunities the second time around. Touched by the feedback "Teenage Daughters" is eliciting from parents and teenagers who tell her they recognize themselves in her lyrics, she can't wait to visit with fans at CMA Music Festival before starting her summer tour schedule and promotion for the new album.

Her bucket list includes one day singing the national anthem at the Super Bowl and perhaps having a song in a movie so she can sing on the Academy Awards. But these pale in comparison to what she wants most: "My biggest desire is just to keep making records and keep touring. I hope to get to do this for as long as I can because I love it so much."

MartinaMcBride.com



MARTINA MARTINA



THE PERFECT PARTY

HOW TO PLAN A MEMORABLE INDUSTRY SOIREE IN A TIGHT ECONOMY

by PHYLIS STARK

EVEN IN THESE DAYS OF INDUSTRY-WIDE BELT TIGHTENING, MUSIC ROW THROWS ITS FAIR SHARE OF CELEBRATIONS. ON ANY GIVEN DAY OR NIGHT, ARTISTS AND THEIR ENTOURAGES ARE BEING FETED WITH SHOWCASES, LAUNCH PARTIES, ALBUM RELEASE EVENTS, NO. 1 BASHES AND GOLD OR PLATINUM SALES CELEBRATIONS. WITH SO MANY COMPETING FESTIVITIES, THE CHALLENGE FOR THE PARTY PLANNERS IS TO MAKE SURE THEIR EVENTS STAND OUT AND ARE MEMORABLE.

The trick is to keep the artist's image and personality in mind — or, alternately, the theme of the album or single being celebrated — and build around those factors. For the release of Sugarland's *Enjoy the Ride* CD, UMG Nashville hosted a carnival-themed party at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds in Nashville, timed to enjoy the Tennessee State Fair.

Big Machine Label Group's high school prom-themed party for Taylor Swift several years ago was another great example of building a unique concept on details specific to the artist — in this case, Swift's age and actual interests — to create a remarkable event, complete with corsages.

More recently, when Capitol Records Nashville threw an 18th birthday party for Jennette McCurdy, the label invited other artists and industry executives to bring their children to the festivities, which drew about 200 attendees. Because McCurdy's trademark is wearing mismatched socks, the venue was decorated with a sock theme as well as the pinks and purples she favors. Guests also brought new socks for a charity helping victims of the Nashville flood of May 2010.

The key, according to Donna Hollie, co-founder with Britta Coleman of 7th House Productions, is to "theme it up a little," as we say." Hollie, who planned Alan Jackson's daylong 50th birthday festival at his home, works extensively with Curb Records, Sony Music Nashville, UMG Nashville and many publishing companies.

Hollie was challenged in July when Sony Music Nashville threw a party to simultaneously celebrate Florida native Jake Owen and introduce its new artist from Australia, Adam Brand. Step One was to instruct the caterers to blend Australian and Floridian themes for the food. She faced an equally vexing dilemma with the décor, which came together with tiki torches and "kangaroo crossing" signs at each table.

For Jason Owen, who launched his full-service management and entertainment company Sandbox Entertainment in 2010, two requirements for keeping parties fresh are to never have them in the same location twice and to come up with fun themes. While serving as Senior VP, Artist Development and Marketing, at UMG Nashville, he was instrumental in building parties along black-and-white, Mexican and Moroccan motifs.

But Owen acknowledged that with every budget line item under scrutiny these days, label parties are getting an especially hard stare. "We would look at resources in a different way," he said. "We say, 'Do we need to spend \$100,000 on a party? Or do we need to spend those dollars towards marketing our artists?'"

Sony Music Nashville has tightened its party budget by as much as 50 percent over the past few years, according to Britta Coleman, who was the label group's Manager of Marketing Operations at the time, and Cheri Cranford, Manager, Operations & Events. "You have to be more creative and think outside the box to maintain the same level of quality without as much money," said Cranford. "Sponsorships, relationships, favors — all of that comes into play."

"We're really conscious of budgets — a lot of people in our industry are out of jobs and you don't want to do anything that's too over the top. But then again, you want to celebrate

your artists' success," added Michelle Hall, Director of Creative Services, Capitol Records Nashville, who planned the McCurdy birthday event. "So when the label does throw parties, we really try and make them special and economical."

"We're very economy conscious around here because we want people to keep their jobs," agreed Coleman. "It's amazing what you can do with just LED lighting and fabric."

The secret to throwing great parties with smaller budgets, Hollie insisted, is to "focus in on the most important pieces of the puzzle for the client and make sure those things are taken care of first and foremost." That, coupled with a lot of negotiation with party vendors, does the trick: "You just get out there and you end up finding someone who will work with you within that budget."

For BMI, cost savings come from doing all of its party planning in-house and from having close ties with multiple vendors who are willing to negotiate prices. Two point people make this happen: Glenda Hart, Assistant VP, Special Projects, and Nancy Moore, Director, Writer/Publisher Relations. Hart oversees numerous marquee BMI events, including the organization's eight annual award ceremonies, which vary in genre and locale. Moore directs the plethora of BMI's signature events hosted by the company's Nashville office, from No. 1 parties to key industry mixers and gatherings.

"As a not-for-profit company, we have a responsibility to honor songwriters while watching our bottom line," said Hart. "It's an important balance. Relationships with vendors have been invaluable. They know that times are tough for everyone, and they graciously step in to help."

Moore agrees and also points to BMI's investment in versatile resources. "Because we host so many events, we have go-to supplies on hand here that we try to imaginatively reuse," she said. "Really, we all have to be creative not only with what we design, but how we spend money as well."

Perhaps one of the most creative and significant responses to the tightening economy has involved setting up sponsorships for parties. In its monthly "Pickin' on the Patio" series of summer parties, Warner Music Nashville enlisted help from multiple sponsors, including the Aramark professional services provider, Buffalo Trace Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, local liquor store Frugal MacDoogal and the Otter's Chicken Tenders restaurant.

BMI has also worked with Coca-Cola and Hennessy; their involvement has been, as Hart put it, "really helpful." And Sony has worked with sponsors including the Baltimore Cupcake company, Bob Evans, Cracker Barrel, Cruzan Rum, Hershey's, Margaritaville and Diageo.

While potentially critical in making an industry get-together a hit, Owen insisted that "the branding has to make sense. It can't be some obscure thing that no one has heard of and no one wants to drink. If it requires just a minimal amount of signage, and you can have other things there that don't conflict with what the label or the brand is proposing, then I think it's a good fit for everyone."



IT'S AMAZING WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH JUST LED LIGHTING AND FABRIC.

— Britta Coleman,
Co-founder, 7th House
Productions

WHEN PLAYERS GO M.I.A.

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH PERSONNEL ISSUES ON THE ROAD

THE NIGHT HAD THE MAKINGS OF A POTENTIAL DISASTER.

by TED DROZDOWSKI

Just a few hours before Patty Loveless was set to open for Vince Gill in Memphis, Tenn., her guitarist found out his wife was going into premature labor 200 miles away in Nashville. And he was out.

"We found a pretty unusual solution," recalled tour manager Dan Waters. "Patty walked back to the headliner's dressing room and asked Vince if he'd fill in. He learned the show in 45 minutes and took the stage with the rest of Patty's band. We never told the audience and it took a while before they even noticed."

Turning that potential nightmare into a dream show was pure luck — and another example of why Gill is an MVP in every sense of the word. But replacing musicians and crew members when emergencies take them off the road is seldom that simple. So road managers and music directors on top of their game will have a list of hedges they can use to make sure the show goes on. The methods vary, but in general they boil down to six strategic points.

Have a Deep Contact List

"I have at least two or three players from Nashville in the back of my mind for every instrument in Keith Urban's touring band," said Chris McHugh, a veteran session drummer and Urban's music director. "There's such a huge pool of talent here that it's easy to fly somebody out on short notice and have them fit in seamlessly."

"I would never pick up somebody local, or any other unproven player, on the road," said producer/keyboardist Mark Oliverius, music director for Lorrie Morgan. "Everybody I need is already in my iPhone or in the iPhone or BlackBerry of somebody else in the band."

"Because there's such a strong studio scene and so many artists touring out of Nashville, there's a high concentration of extremely good, responsible musicians who are capable of picking things up without missing a beat," noted Waters. "And this is such a Country town that most of them are on the same wavelength. Only once in 20 years have I flown a guy out from L.A., for Olivia Newton-John's band. It's always Nashville. I know the town and I know the players."

And it's not just the players that make Music City the best talent pool. "Once I had to replace a lighting tech for Vince on a day's notice, so I flew one in from Nashville," Waters continued. "Was it the best lighted show we've ever done? No. But it was still really, really good."

Use Utility Players

"The three other guys in Keith's band all play multiple instruments, so if somebody couldn't play at the last minute I'd only need to shift roles around," said McHugh, whose credits also include touring and studio recording with Garth Brooks, Billy Ray Cyrus, Rascal Flatts and Carrie Underwood. "I chose the two newest members, Brian Nutter and Danny Rader, specifically because they play multiple instruments, from electric and acoustic guitars to the banjo and the bouzouki. Honestly, Keith welcomes the challenge when things need to be switched up on rare occasions."

Know the Score

"I travel with copies of all of Keith's charts," McHugh said. "I can send Keith's music to any player anywhere in a minute, so when they hit the stage, they're ready to go."

Waters, who also manages Gill's roadwork, carries reams of written music for Newton-John's tours, since she often employs local orchestras and string sections at concert stops. "I've also seen Patty's band members write songs out in the Nashville studio number system for subs and new members," he added, "like a family taking care of its own."

Delegate

"A bandleader is like a CEO or manager, which means you have to surround yourself with a good team," said Oliverius. "I like to use self-motivated musicians who can cover their own chairs. Using the best players possible means they're going to want to take more lucrative offers on occasion and that they're going to get calls for master sessions. Letting them play on those sessions and take other offers keeps them happy and is good for their careers. When that happens, it's their responsibility to get a sub for you who is rehearsed and can fill in for them without missing a note."

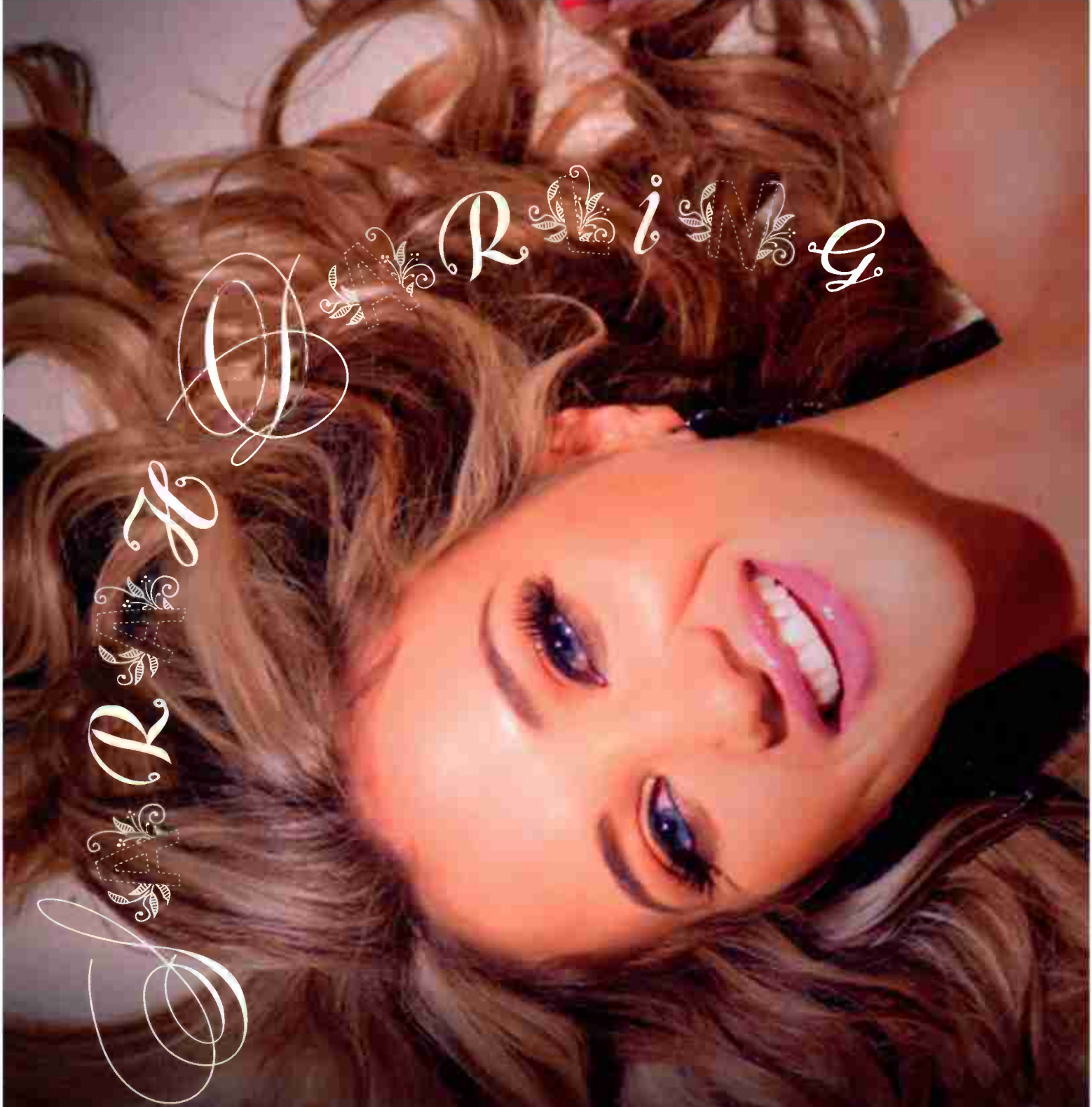
Be Proactive

"If you see a potential issue developing with one of your players, like a health issue or family issue, have two or three musicians in the wings who can take their place if necessary," said McHugh. "Be aware of everything involving your band. There's a lot to manage on these big tours, but look ahead and think ahead."

Ask a Ringer

While producer/musicians and first-call session players are usually tied down to projects back home in Nashville, they'll sometimes come out on the road to pinch-hit for an artist they've worked with when a last-minute problem with personnel develops. "In 2006, Chris Rodriguez, who played guitar with Keith for five years, had a serious issue," said McHugh. "His father was dying and Chris had to be available for his family. It was very sudden. So we asked Dann Huff, who produced Keith's albums, to come out and play three shows with us. He did and it sounded great."

No matter what the crisis is, good communications skills are at the core of keeping a tour on track. "You've got to lead by example, by keeping yourself together even if there's an emergency," McHugh asserted. "That requires a certain level of maturity and experience. You need to be great at administration but also a great networker and listener, with sensitivity and flexibility — someone who your band feels they can talk to. If you've got all that happening, you know your people, and any personnel issue that develops is going to be easier to solve."



Sarah Darling

It's often said that the landscape in music has shifted from album to singles format, thanks to the ease of downloading digital tracks and the explosion in use of mobile phones and other portable media players as the channel of choice for listening.

This transformation is still underway in Country, where albums continue to make strong impacts. But even in that genre all sorts of experiments have been undertaken, from abbreviated six-song packages to having fans select artwork and track lists to deluxe products with various bells and whistles. Basically, these changes reflect differing strategies for marketing albums to a new generation of consumers.

With *Angels & Devils*, her second album on Black River Entertainment, Sarah Darling tackles this question more from an artistic than a commercial perspective. It is, first of all, a double-disc release — essentially, a pair of EPs, featuring nine songs co-written by Darling. The one disc titled *Devils*, offers seven songs. These vary in mood from “Thank You,” written by Darling and Odie Blackmon, with a slamming,

Two Discs and New Twists with *Angels & Devils*

by BOB DOERSCHUK

guitar-powered chorus, to the album's first single and video, "Something to Do with Your Hands" (Darling and Jason Deere), with a catchy melodic motif cycling through the verse and chorus. There are more introspective pieces as well, including "The Boy Never Stays" (Darling, Josh Osborne and Brandy Clark), a wistful lament built on a litany of images of a lost love, and "Bad Habit" (Darling, Osborne and Shane McAnally), with duet partner Vince Gill. All are presented with a rhythm section, steel and other familiar elements.

In contrast, *Angels* offers five songs that center on Darling with piano accompaniment by producer Jimmy Nichols. (Adam Shoenfeld co-produced two of the tracks with Nichols.) Now and then another player contributes — Jonathan Yudkin on cello for "Waiting on You" (Darling, Will Doughty and Shaunna Bolton) and Paul Franklin on steel for a haunting cover of "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word" (Elton John and Bernie Taupin) — but these additions are almost felt more than heard.

The novelty of this approach is in its rejection of accepted formulas for sequencing. Most albums mingle ballads and up-tempo material while trying not to make the transitions too jarring. *Angels & Devils* takes an opposite approach by immersing listeners in two distinctive environments, each one deepening as one song gives way to the next.

"You're getting an entire album but we wanted to give people two different sides," Darling explained. "You can really catch different things in my style of singing if you don't have me behind a band."

Nichols' wife Tonya Ginnetti, who was then VP/Director of Artist Relations at the label, came up with the *Angels & Devils* concept. "One of the things I tried to do while over at Black River was to press the boundaries because I feel like the format has gotten a bit stale and predictable," said Nichols, who was President of the label at the time. "And I could see there is something unique about Sarah. I thought to pigeonhole her into a certain type of regimented sound would do her a great injustice because she's a multi-level artist capable of doing totally exposed intimate songs and then elevating to another level with a band behind her. She's very much a finesse singer, not a yeller."

Impressed with her from their first meeting, Nichols committed to the two-disc idea one day when he and she were in the studio together. "We were just clowning around," he remembered. "I was telling her, 'I think it would be fun to cover an Elton John song as a Country thing.'"

Specifically, Nichols suggested "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word." "I'm a big Elton John fan, but I wasn't really familiar with that particular song," Darling said. "But Jimmy said, 'Let me play this song. Let's just go in old-school. I'll get on the piano, you get on the mic and we'll cut it.' I heard it literally two times when I recorded it. I didn't have a chance to learn the way Elton sings it; I sing it the way I would sing it. It was a one-pass take. And it turned out magical."

She tackled a similar challenge with another well-known song, U2's "With or Without You," by Bono and The Edge, on the *Devils* disc. "It's a huge song by one of the biggest bands in the world," Darling said. "Bono sings it perfectly, which is why I didn't want to copy it. To me, this song is sad. The way I interpret this song, this person is struggling. Vocally, I felt that struggle; I just made it more intimate so you'd feel it in a whole different way. That side of my voice, the airiness and the breathiness, needed to come through."

Darling's reading of that song is suited equally to the *Angels* EP, which is as much about producer/accompanist/artist relations as it is about her performance on its own. "Faith Hill once told me, 'If you can work with a producer who's musical, it can be really great,'" she said. "You also get

vocal freedom when you're just singing with a piano. You can speed up and slow down and get really creative. Jimmy plays with a lot of emotion and dynamics, and I'm a dynamic singer. I like getting really soft and I like really singing out. So this was a very musical experience."

Musical, yes, but in terms of marketability, was it also a little risky? "We know the industry is going toward a single-driven format," said John Alexander, VP, Strategic Marketing and Artist Management, Black River Entertainment. "But it's refreshing to give the consumer 12 songs on two different discs, so they can pick the songs they really love. We're getting individual songs downloaded equally from both sides. And with this side featuring acoustic songs, we're getting three or four songs deeper in being featured in the Sirius XM Coffee House format, and that's broadened Sarah's audience base."

The songs selected for *Angels* also offer insight into Darling's artistry that might be harder to discern in a more traditional song sequence. The opener, "Stop the Bleeding," which she wrote with Joe Perreault and Shaunna Bolton, was the song that won her a contract with Black River; it was included on her first album, *Every Monday Morning*, as a medium-up, dance-friendly song, contrasting dramatically with the new, more nuanced version. Also, both discs include "Something to Do with Your Hands," with the acoustic arrangement done a cappella over a doo-wop vocal backup, finger snaps and a little mouth percussion.

"You're getting an entire album but we wanted to give people two different sides." — Sarah Darling

"I wanted it on both sides because Jimmy came up with this idea that stemmed from when I wrote this song at a writer's retreat," she said. "Every night, we would show the songs we wrote for that day, and it just so happened that I sang this song on the night they had this doo-wop thing going. And now, whenever I play it out, I make everyone snap their fingers. You have to have those finger snaps!"

The creative reach of *Angels & Devils* owes much to Darling's background. Born in Des Moines, Iowa, she expressed herself initially through poetry before venturing into songwriting. "Being an only child, I spent a lot of time listening to everything from the Eagles to Patsy Cline in my bedroom. I also listened to Mariah Carey, Sarah McLachlan — if you shake 'em all up in a bag, that's me," she said, with a laugh. "I grew up on folk music and pop music, but I loved Country Music. It runs deep, Country Music. I remember my grandpa driving with me; he would always play Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard, and I just fell in love with it. Then when I saw artists like Shania Twain and the Dixie Chicks crossing over, it inspired me because that was what I wanted to do."

Being open to other styles while staying rooted in Country explains much about the breadth and expressiveness of Darling's writing and performance. "I would consider it a risk if you're talking about what people always do," Darling said. "People do have a formula and it works for a lot of them. Everybody wants to hear a great radio song, and I have some of them on this album. But I also want to show myself in a way that lets the fans see a different side of me. I'm hoping that every part of *Angels & Devils* will take somebody somewhere and make them feel some emotion. There's a lot of up and down, happiness and sadness. That's what this is: You play it when you want to feel something."

SarahDarling.com



ITEMS FOR YOUR PERSONAL TIME CAPSULE BOTH "Our laptops, Keifer's Harley boots, tape recorder, lyric sheets and photo albums." **FAVORITE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION BOTH** "Motorcycle." **MOMENT YOU'D LIKE TO RELIVE KEIFER** "The proposal." **SHAWNA** "The day we got married." **SOMETHING WE'D NEVER GUESS ABOUT YOU KEIFER** "I buy book after book because I love the idea of going to bookstores and reading, but most never get finished." **SHAWNA** "I'm obsessed with Hello Kitty."

ThompsonSquare.com

THOMPSON SQUARE

Every vocal duo is a story still being told. And when the members have a personal as well as musical bond, it's often about two roads starting at different places before joining as one highway of song.

So it is with Keifer Thompson and Shawna Thompson, a.k.a. Thompson Square. His path began in Miami, Okla., where he grew up on Merle Haggard, Roger Miller, Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen as well as heavy metal and even punk. Meanwhile, Alabama, Reba and Shawna's guitarist father's music nurtured Keifer's future wife in tiny Chatom, Ala.

Fate guided them to Nashville during the same week, where they met at a vocal competition days after they'd arrived. When she beat him at pool, their plans of solo success began giving way to dreams of finding it as a duo.

Shawn Pennington of Matchless Management became their manager after hearing them at a local club. Days later, he arranged a showcase for the staff at Stoney Creek Records, who put them in the studio with producers Kurt Allison, David Fanning, Tully Kennedy and Rich Redmond of New Voice Entertainment. They would emerge with their self-titled debut, featuring 12 songs, nine of them co-written by one or both Thompsens.

Each pushes the other toward a middle ground where their aesthetics merge. Their first single, "Are You Gonna Kiss Me or Not" (written by Jim Collins and David Lee Murphy) is a great example of their process, exploding at the top like a Springsteen power lick, yet when they hit the chorus, Shawn's pristine voice hardens to complement Keifer's gig-toughened delivery. This mirrors what they do on "Glass" (Ross Copperman and Jon Nite), where Keifer's harmony nestles next to Shawna's fragile, heartfelt lead. In performance as in life, their union is obviously meant to be.

BRETT ELDRIDGE

Some people were born Country. Brett Eldredge came to it a little late — but once he got there, he dug in deep and made it his home.

Growing up in Paris, Ill., Eldredge spent a lot of time hanging out at the local lake. He played baseball, basketball and football in high school. He enjoyed all music, especially big-band swing. Hearing Brooks & Dunn when he was 16 put Country in the center of his map, but the full-blown conversion didn't occur until his sophomore year at Chicago's Elmhurst College, when he visited Nashville for the first time.

Eldredge went to the Station Inn to hear his cousin Terry Eldridge, now a member of The Grascals, with The Sidemen. Called to sit in, he sang "Amarillo by Morning"; when he stepped down from the stage, his dreams, his passion and his future had all transformed.

Transferring to Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Eldredge spent his spare time going to songwriter circles and hooking up with other writers. Two years after graduation, he found his break when Byron Gallimore caught a performance. Soon afterwards, he became the first artist signed to the newly revived Atlantic Records Nashville imprint.

Eldredge's self-titled debut, produced by Gallimore, connects a wide range of moods through the excellence of his co-writing on 10 of 12 tracks as well as his extraordinarily communicative vocals. His first single, "Raymond," exemplifies all that's right in modern Country: Written by Eldredge and Brad Crisler, it shares a deeply emotional narrative with sensitivity and power. This quality persists in the evocative small-town imagery of "Signs" (Eldredge, Bill Anderson and Crisler) and every other moment created and captured here.



MUSICAL HERO "Ol' Blue Eyes, Frank Sinatra." **PHRASE YOU SAY OVER AND OVER** "That's just one of them deals." **FAVORITE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION** "Nikes — I love to run." **LUCKY CHARM** "Socks that don't match — it's a weird new lucky charm I discovered after playing my first Grand Ole Opry show in mismatched socks. It went great." **TITLE OF YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY** "I'm Just as Surprised as You Are."

BrettEldredge.com



CD IN YOUR STEREO "Maroon 5's *Songs About Jane*." **DREAM DUET PARTNER** "Frank Sinatra. This is a dream, after all." **PET PEEVE** "When people say 'irregardless' or criticize the strange foods that I like to eat." **BOOKS ON YOUR NIGHTSTAND** "Christopher Moore's *A Dirty Job* when I want a laugh and William P. Young's *The Shack* when I want to be introspective." **TITLE OF YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY** "I Shouldn't Have Written This Yet." MargaretDurante.com

MARGARET DURANTE

It seems incongruous for Margaret Durante to include "Whiskey and a Gun" on *Maybe Tonight*, her four-song, digital-only debut EP, co-produced by James Stroud and Stephony Smith and released in April on Emrose/R&J Records. (Her full album debut follows later this year.) Written by Lisa Carver, the song tells a tale involving murder, revenge, prison and other grim topics. It even ends on Death Row, right after the hapless protagonist's execution has begun.

After all, Durante is an engaging personality onstage, with a playful lilt often brightening her vocals. She grew up not in the shadows of Sing Sing but in Potomac, Md., where her entertainment career began at age 5 as she played Tinker Bell at a Peter Pan Bus Company promotional party. She heard and learned from her father's Frank Sinatra albums and her mother's Mary Chapin Carpenter and Bonnie Raitt discs, and eventually left Clemson University in South Carolina to seek her fortunes in Nashville.

These experiences instilled in Durante a mix of professionalism and upbeat demeanor, which serves her well on her first single, the title track to this EP. She wrote "Maybe Tonight" with Blair Daly and Rachel Proctor, and sings it with a buoyant feeling of light-hearted romance.

But Durante's voice adapts well to other types of lyrics. "Paper Chains," by Durante and Connie Harrington, applies her knack for writing and phrasing a strong melody to a medium-tempo, four-beat groove and a story about breaking free from a shattered relationship. And on the ballad "Better," by Dave Berg, Deanna Bryant and Candy Cameron, she peers through shades of despair and finds hope on the horizon, far away but guiding her along.

That takes us back to "Whiskey and a Gun," where Durante ingeniously invests the story with a touch of humor — dark, to be sure, but enough to establish that as a lyric interpreter, she knows what she's doing and she does it well.

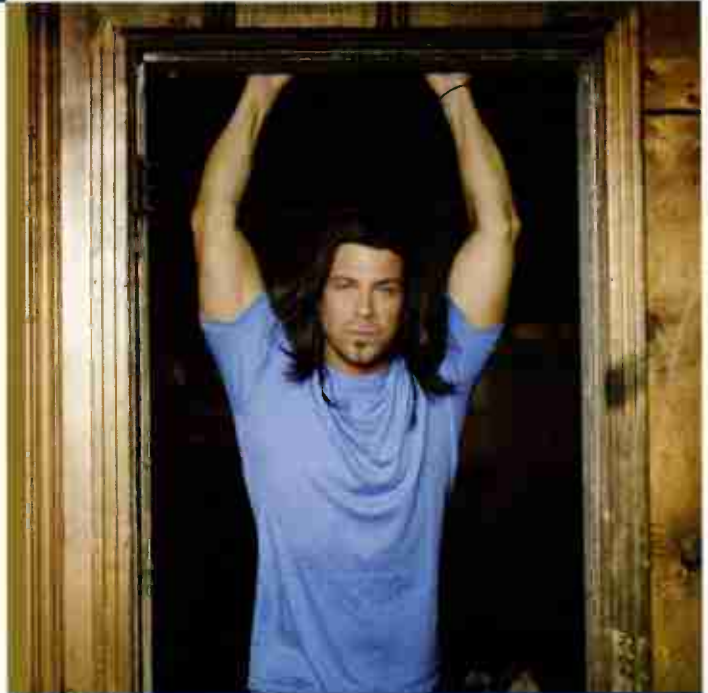
CHRISTIAN KANE

Before getting into the often raucous heart of *The House Rules*, jump ahead to the last track, one of only two not written or co-written by Christian Kane. If his cover of Tracy Chapman's heartbreaking masterpiece "Fast Car" is all you heard from this album released on Outlaw Saints in partnership with Bigger Picture Group, you'd know that Kane possesses depth as a lyric interpreter that stands him apart from many of his peers.

It's important to understand that from the top, because it lets us hear more clearly that on the riff-slaming single and title track (written by Kane and Blair Daly), the banjo-studded swagger of "Callin' All Country Women" (Kane, Jerrod Niemann and Jimmie Lee Sloas), and the steel-sweetened rocker "American Made" (Kane, Wayd Battle and Steven Carlson), his connection to the material is unusually insightful. As a singer, Kane knows how to bring each of these songs to life, whether an intimate narrative or a call to party fast and hard.

Produced by Kane, Bob Ezrin and Sloas, *The House Rules* combines the rough, raw edge that comes from being born in Dallas and raised in Oklahoma, with the sophistication Kane picked up after moving to Los Angeles and landing the lead role of Ryan "Flyboy" Legget in the MGM syndicated television series "Fame L.A." He appeared in other TV productions as well and stars today in his fourth season as tough guy Eliot Spencer on TNT's "Leverage." But over time more of his energy went to KANE, a band he founded with Carlson. After they'd built a following in Hollywood clubs and a spot on local Country radio playlists, Kane and Carlson cast their lot entirely with music and moved to L.A.

With his good looks, stage and camera charisma and genuine Country feel, Kane has already gone far and is well positioned to go much further still.



SONG YOU'D LOVE TO COVER "The Rooster," by Alice in Chains." **DREAM DUET PARTNER** "Pink." **FAVORITE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION** "My '67 Bronco." **FAVORITE FOOD ON THE ROAD** "I'm a sucker for Taco Bell." **LUCKY CHARM** "My momma." **PET PEEVE** "People that abuse authority 'cause they got beat up in high school." ChristianKane.com

Debut Spotlight compiled by BOB DOERSCHUK



CMA CEO Steve Moore; CMA Board Chairman Steve Buchanan; Jamie Cheek, President, Board of Directors, Leadership Music; Karen Oertley, Executive Director, Leadership Music; Bill Denny, President, Denny Properties; former CMA Executive Director Jo-Walker Meador; Joe Galante; former CMA Executive Director Ed Benson and CMA Board President-Elect Pat Collins

LEADERSHIP MUSIC PRESENTS DALE FRANKLIN AWARD TO CMA

by BOB DOERSCHUK



Loretta Lynn sings "Coal Miner's Daughter."

Keith Urban performs "Somebody Like You," followed by a solo acoustic version of "Wichita Lineman."



Little Big Town's Jimi Westbrook, Karen Fairchild, Phillip Sweet and Kimberly Schlapman join Martina McBride and Brad Paisley on "Will the Circle Be Unbroken."



Ronnie Milsap performed "Legend in My Time," "Not What It Used to Be" and a Ray Charles medley.

Martina McBride sang "Independence Day" and Tammy Wynette's "Til I Can Make It on My Own."

On May 17, approximately 500 Nashville music industry luminaries gathered at Nashville's Renaissance Hotel to celebrate Leadership Music's presentation of its Dale Franklin Award to CMA.

Named for the first executive director of Leadership Music, this honor has been presented each year since 2004 to a music industry leader who exemplifies the highest quality of leadership and leading by example.

The event was doubly significant in that it marks the first time an organization was selected to receive this distinction. Previous honorees include Tony Brown (2004), Gerry House (2005), Emmylou Harris (2006), Frances Preston (2007), the Bradley family (Connie, Harold, Jerry, Owen and Patsy, 2008), Garth Brooks, Jim Foglesong and Allen Reynolds (2009) and Fred Foster, Kris Kristofferson and Willie Nelson (2010).

Following a welcome from Karen Oertley, Executive Director, Leadership Music, emcee Martina McBride came to the stage to offer a brief history of CMA, noting in particular that the CMA Awards was launched at Municipal Auditorium in 1967.

"Unfortunately, it was not recorded for television," she noted. "Although there are a few of us tonight who were there for that historic occasion, most of us were not. But if we all use our imaginations, it might have looked and sounded something like this."

Smiling, McBride announced, "The nominees for Female Vocalist of the Year are Lynn Anderson, Connie Smith, Dottie West, Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette. And the winner is ... Loretta Lynn!"

With that, Lynn swept onto the stage and sang her immortal "Coal Miner's Daughter," accompanied by the house band for the evening: Eddie Bayers on drums, J.T. Corenflos on electric and acoustic guitars, guitarist and music director Steve Gibson, John Hobbs on keyboards, Larry Paxton on bass and Tommy White on steel guitar, with backup vocals from Joe Chemay and Kim Parent.

More appearances were interspersed by videos recounting CMA's story, acknowledgments of former CMA Executive Directors Jo Walker-Meador and Ed Benson along with other dignitaries, and remarks by distinguished guest speakers. The first of these, Nashville Mayor Karl Dean, noted CMA's role in contributing to music education through its Keep the Music Playing (KTMP) program as well as efforts to recover from last year's flood through donations of half the net profits from the 2010 CMA Music Festival.

"As mayor, on behalf of all the people of Nashville, thank you to CMA for all you do to make our city Music City, to make our schools better and to keep us at the forefront of being one of the best cities to live in in the world," he summed up.

Later, Dr. Jesse Register, Director of Schools, Metro Nashville Public Schools, expanded on the role played by artists in facilitating CMA's donation of half of its Festival proceeds to music education via KTMP since 2006. "We built music labs and bought supplies and put instruments in the hands of our students, thanks to the hundreds of artists who perform free at CMA Music Festival each year. We have 78,000 students in Metro Schools, and CMA and the artists who donate their time give our students new resources and opportunities."

After Lynn, a stellar sequence of artists took their musical turns and shared their thoughts. Ronnie Milsap recalled the thrill of winning the first of his eight CMA Awards. "It was 1974," he said. "I certainly remember it well. I had three No. 1 records that year, and at the end of the year CMA gave me the Male Vocalist of the Year Award. Thank you! God bless. It's tremendous what that will do. It'll boost your career. What a special time, no doubt, and I want to thank CMA for all they've done."

Milsap was followed by Little Big Town, the Nashville School of the Arts' Swing Thing ensemble (bassist Mina Burnside, lead singer and guitarist Sam Hunter,



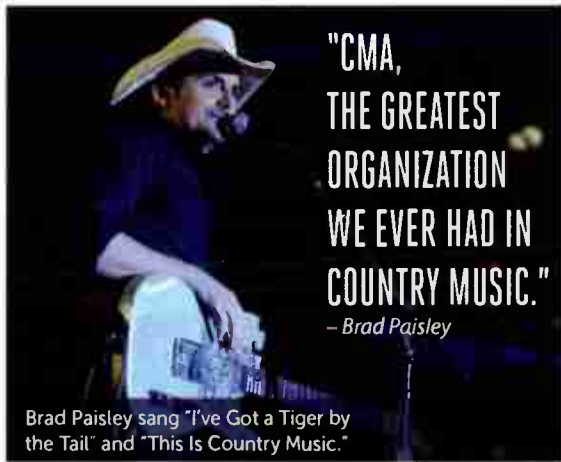
Nashville School of the Arts Swing Thing ensemble (bassist Mina Burnside, lead singer and guitarist Sam Hunter, mandolin player Madeline McHaelis, guitarist Duncan McPherson and cajon player Austin Valentine)

mandolin player Madeline McHaelis, guitarist Duncan McPherson and cajon player Austin Valentine), Keith Urban and Brad Paisley.

"I'm so proud to be here as one of those people that represents CMA, the greatest organization we ever had in Country Music," Paisley said between songs. "I'm so proud of what it stands for, the work that it does. ... It's an honor of a lifetime to be in this town and be a member and an ambassador for CMA."

Jamie Cheek, President of the Leadership Music Board of Directors, made the formal presentation of the Award. "It is with tremendous pride that we salute one of the most extraordinary and accomplished music industry organizations of all time," he stated. "Tonight we honor CMA for its groundbreaking efforts at bringing Country Music to the world, shaping a better, stronger music community in Nashville and beyond."

Accepting on behalf of the organization, CMA Board Chairman Steve Buchanan began with a "shout out" to his



"CMA,
THE GREATEST
ORGANIZATION
WE EVER HAD IN
COUNTRY MUSIC."

— Brad Paisley

Brad Paisley sang "I've Got a Tiger by the Tail" and "This Is Country Music."

Leadership Music Class of 1994 and recalled Dale Franklin's vision and initiative before observing, "CMA is here to serve our industry, to increase the prominence of Country Music and to award excellence. That organizational mission has changed little from the beginning. What has changed is the national and international profile of Country Music." Then, citing the generosity and sense of community shared by Country artists, he cited McBride as "the prime example of that giving spirit, and the night would not be complete without a performance from our host."

Singing Wynette's "Till I Can Make It on My Own" and ending with "Independence Day," McBride confirmed Buchanan's assessment with a style and artistry that said much as well about the best of the genre long upheld by CMA.

Honorary Chairs included Joe and Phran Galante and Bill and June Denny. Robert Deaton produced the tribute show.

LeadershipMusic.org

photos: John Russell

BOBBY BRADDOCK, JEAN SHEPARD AND REBA McENTIRE

Welcomed into
CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame



Steve Turner, Museum Board Chairman, and Kyle Young, Director, The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum; Jean Shepard; Bobby Braddock; Reba and CMA CEO Steve Moore

by BOB DOERSCHUK

A long Lincoln Town Car glided to a stop outside the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. The driver hustled to open the back door, and Reba McEntire with her husband Narvel Blackstock emerged into a flurry of cheers and camera flashes. As they waved to hundreds of onlookers, Blackstock chuckled, patted the luxury vehicle and quipped, "It's a cheap car."

This was just one of many red carpet moments that symbolized the bonds between artists and fans in the hours leading up to the 2011 Medallion Ceremony, marking the induction of three new members into CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame: Bobby Braddock, the first in the new rotating Songwriter category; Jean Shepard in the Veterans Era Artist category; and Reba in the Modern Era Artist category.

In fact, fans were more engaged than ever with this annual event. Thanks in part to CMA's outreach via Facebook, Twitter and e-mail alerts, the turnout along Demonbreun Street was bigger than ever before. To accommodate these numbers, the Museum extended the red carpet beyond its usual straight line to the curb and ran it about halfway toward Fourth Avenue. And as special thanks, staff members ran trivia contests and handed out rewards to the winners, including a grand prize of admission to the pre-ceremony reception in the Museum's lobby. (The winners were Alan and Mary Harrison of Perth, Australia.)

That reception, as always, was a glittering and festive affair, where music industry leaders, special guests and Hall of Fame members mingled until the doors to the Ford Theater opened and the inductions began. There, following a welcome from Kyle Young, Director, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and the traditional President's Hymn, featuring Vince Gill and the McCrary Sisters in a spirit-raising rendition of "Down by the Riverside," the Museum's Board Chairman, Steve Turner, and CMA CEO Steve Moore reflected on the evening's honorees.

Over the next several hours, the highlights were many as Young recounted each honoree's story and great artists paid their musical and personal tributes. All performances were backed by the Medallion All-Star Band: John Hobbs (musical

continued on page 26 ...

photo: John Russell



Tracy Lawrence



Garth Brooks



Members of CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame and guests sing "Will the Circle Be Unbroken"



Reba McEntire



"Ranger Doug" Green



Billy Currington



Martina McBride and Kelly Clarkson

director and keyboards), Eddie Bayers (drums), Paul Franklin (steel guitar), Steve Gibson (electric guitar), Michael Rhodes (bass), Deanie Richardson (fiddle and mandolin) and Biff Watson (acoustic guitar), with backup vocals by Dawn Sears and Jeff White.

Preceding Braddock's induction, newlyweds Miranda Lambert and Blake Shelton performed the George Jones/Tammy Wynette No. 1 hit "Golden Ring" (written by Braddock and Rafe Van Hoy); Tracy Lawrence sang one of two Braddock compositions he had taken to the top of the charts, "Time Marches On"; and Billy Currington delivered the Braddock/Troy Jones hit "People Are Crazy."

Later, Shepard would hear some of her landmark songs, with Bill Anderson and Elizabeth Cook recreating her classic recording with Ferlin Husky, "A Dear John Letter" (Billy Barton, Fuzzy Owen and Lewis Talley); Vince Gill masterfully delivering "I Want to Go Where No One Knows Me" (Ken Grant and Jerry Jericho); and Doug Green, Ranger Doug of Riders in the Sky, applying his virtuoso yodeling to "Second Fiddle (to an Old Guitar)" (Betty Amos and Guy Willis).

Reba's induction was heralded by Trisha Yearwood, who was joined by Reba's sister Susie McEntire Eaton on "How Blue" (John Moffatt); Gill returned to do the sadly eloquent "Somebody Should Leave" (Harlan Howard and Chick Rains); Garth Brooks offered "Whoever's in New England" (Kendal Franceschi and Quentin Powers); and Kelly Clarkson and Martina McBride turned "Does He Love You" (Sandy Knox and Billy Stretch), which Reba had cut with Linda Davis, into an ovation-triggering *tour de force*.

Only at Medallion Ceremonies, though, does wonderful music meet its match in personal recollections. Anderson shared stories of his long friendship with Braddock. One conversation came to mind, where he was regaling his colleague about the genius of Roger Miller. "I said, 'Bobby, can you imagine a man writing a song called "The Last Word in Lonesome Is Me?" Roger Miller wrote that.' But Bobby never missed a beat," Anderson noted. "He said, 'Yeah? And the last word in Kroger is Roger.'" Then Anderson elicited moments of hushed emotion and waves of laughter by simply reciting lyrics from Braddock compositions before calling up his friend to accept his Medallion.

Characteristically self-deprecating but also evidently moved, Braddock observed, "As I look out here and see my beloved family and close friends, leaders in the music community and the people here who have been singing my songs and singing my praises, it's like getting to go to your own funeral without having to die. How awesome is that?" Then he joined the band on keyboard and vocal for "He Stopped Loving Her Today," his immortal ballad written with Curly Putnam, with George Jones unobtrusively slipping onto the stage to sing the final



Vince Gill with the McCrary Sisters (Ann, Deborah, Regina and Alfreda)



Bobby Braddock and Bill Anderson



Blake Shelton and Miranda Lambert

verse and the band augmented by three more participants in the original recording session: guitarist Jimmy Capps, harmonica wizard Charlie McCoy and backup singer Millie Kirkham.

Jones then took to the podium to introduce Shepard with a brief anecdote of going on his first tour with her at age 22. When she joined him as the room filled with cheers and applause, she opened with her own nod to the past. "George," Shepard said, deadpan, "thanks for showing up." She then looked back to her early years in the business. Female headliners were scarce in Country at the time; even so, Shepard said, "I hung in there like a hair on a grilled-cheese." Then, noting that "there have been a lot of changes in Country Music – I love some of them," Shepard asserted. "I'm strictly a traditionalist and I make no bones about it. I love my music. I love what I do and I do what I love." She then joined the band for a beautiful and touching performance of the Joe Hayes and Jack Rose song, "A Satisfied Mind."



George Jones



Dolly Parton

The final segment belonged to Reba, who was delighted by the surprise appearance of Dolly Parton to introduce and induct her. Calling her one of her three closest friends in the music business along with Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette, she assured Reba that "we have a lot in common. We've both, over the years, had enough hair to stuff a mattress." They embraced onstage as an image of Reba's plaque lit the backdrop screen, prompting Dolly to laugh, "Yours looks like mine and mine looks like you!"

Reba's comments were deeply felt as she thanked her many friends and family. She lauded her fellow inductees and then, fighting back tears, spoke for all who have worn the Medallion and would receive Country Music's highest distinction in the future.

"What an institution, that we can honor the folks that have kept all this together. You know, there are lots of memories to come, and I just pray that the good Lord allows me to be a part of these memories in the future. Thank y'all very much, from the bottom of my heart, for being my friends, my helpers along the way, my singing partners. I couldn't have done it without you — and by God, I wouldn't have wanted to."



Jean Shepard

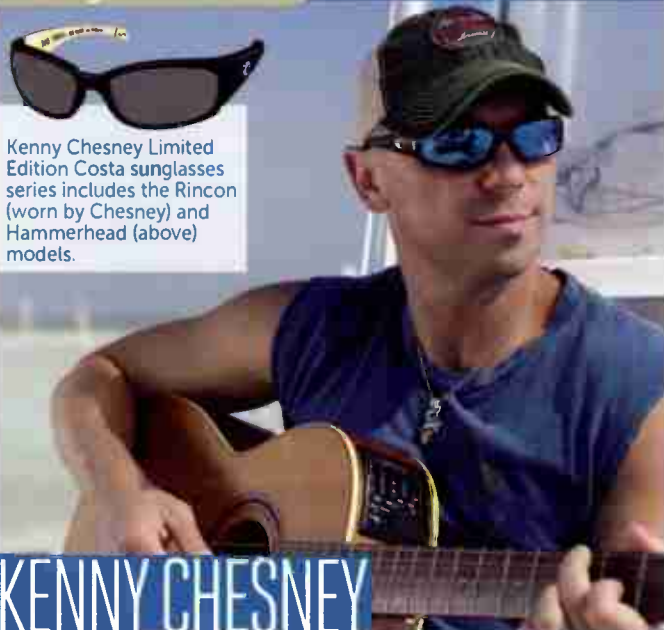


Trisha Yearwood and Susie McEntire

All three inductees took robust choruses of the traditional closing number, "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," joined by fellow members Bill Anderson, Harold Bradley, Ralph Emery, Jim Foglesong, Jimmy Fortune of The Statler Brothers, Vince Gill, Sonny James, George Jones, Brenda Lee, Barbara Mandrell, Charlie McCoy, Dolly Parton, Billy Sherrill, Gordon Stoker, Ray Walker and Curtis Young of the Jordinares and Jo Walker-Meador.



Bill Anderson and Elizabeth Cook



Kenny Chesney Limited Edition Costa sunglasses series includes the Rincon (worn by Chesney) and Hammerhead (above) models.

KENNY CHESNEY

Sees Eye to Eye with Costa Del Mar

Everything gets hotter when the sun goes down. But for those who don't wear their shades at night, Kenny Chesney and Costa Del Mar sunglasses share a vision of how to heat things up in the daylight hours too, while also benefiting coastal conservation.

As Chesney might have sung it, Costa sells no shoes, no shirts — just sunglasses. But these aren't just any sunglasses. The five handcrafted Kenny Chesney Limited Edition Costa sunglasses feature Chesney's signature and unique hand-drawn artwork etched into each frame style, illustrating some of his favorite song lyrics and past tours. (His design work adorns the packaging too.) With a portion of each pair's sales presented to the Coastal Conservation Association, they range from \$149 to \$249 and are available from CostaDelMar.com, various retailers and at Chesney's shows.

"The relationship with Costa and what they stand for goes hand in hand with the music I make," said the six-time CMA Awards winner, whose current BNA Records album *Hemingway's Whiskey* features the No. 1 hits "The Boys of Fall," "Live a Little" and "Somewhere With You." "It's important for all generations to be able to enjoy the ocean like I did."

Costa agrees. "Our partnership with Kenny and Costa actually stretches back to late 2009, when Costa came onboard as the official partner to launch NoShoesRadio.com," said Brett Palmer, President/CEO, AbiJack Management.

According to Palmer, Chesney mentioned at that time how he'd love to help design his own line of Costa sunglasses. Then, in 2010, Al Perkinson, Costa VP of Marketing, approached AbiJack and Chesney about that very idea. This led to talk of how to integrate Costa with Chesney's 2011 tour. And now? They're "Goin' Coastal" together.

"What's really cool is all our partnerships have happened organically," said Chesney's manager Clint Higham, President, Morris Artists Management. "None are forced."

Word has spread through e-mail blasts, special tents set up at all of Chesney's 2011 "Goin' Coastal" tour stops and Facebook pages for both Chesney and Costa. All seems to be going swimmingly: At Tampa, Fla., one of the first dates of the tour, Costa sold more sunglasses than they ever have at a one-day event, according to Palmer. Plus, Perkinson noted, radio stations are giving away prize packs of tickets and Costas at each tour stop.

"We're traditionally geared more toward men and toward fishing, and Kenny has helped broaden our audience to more women and more of a coastal lifestyle," said Perkinson. "And we're helping get him more into the conservation side of things. So I think it's a real mutually beneficial partnership."

KennyChesney.com; CostaDelMar.com; JoinCCA.org

The New Mexico Lottery's counter card showcases the three Darius Rucker Scratchers.



Bets on Education with the New Mexico Lottery

Since its launch in 1996, the New Mexico Lottery has raised in excess of \$477 million to benefit education in the state (\$70+ million for public school construction and repairs and \$407+ for college tuition). More than 68,000 students have received Legislative Lottery Scholarships.

Impressive, yes, but so is the potential for this program to benefit even more recipients. So to widen their outreach, Lottery administrators looked to the Country Music community. Specifically, they came to Darius Rucker with a proposition. Would he be interested in being the face and name on a new \$5 Scratcher, with a second-chance drawing for two grand prizes that include an autographed guitar, air travel, five-day deluxe hotel accommodations, \$750 in cash and two four-day tickets to this year's CMA Music Festival in Nashville, with a Rucker meet-and-greet?

"When my manager brought the idea to me, I thought, 'Wow, that's a long way from home,'" said the South Carolina-based artist, whose sophomore Country album on Capitol Records Nashville is titled *Charleston, SC 1966*. "But when I learned that education was very important to them, I was like, 'Yeah, cool,' because it's very important to me too."

"We wanted to reach a different audience," explained Tom Romero, CEO, New Mexico Lottery. "Here in New Mexico, Country Music is very popular. Once we saw that Darius was at the center of what's hot in Country entertainment, we felt his star power and his music would be a really good fit for us because it would draw more attention to all our games and help us raise more money for our state college scholarship program."

Nathan Gregory, head of Strategic Marketing and New Business at McGhee Entertainment, which represents Rucker, brought the parties together, having worked on previous projects with the Lottery. The singer recorded voiceovers for television and radio spots, posed for photos that would appear on the Scratchers and devoted Feb. 10, the day the Scratcher released, to doing interviews for print media throughout New Mexico.

For Rucker-branded Scratchers that didn't win instant cash or a new ticket, the ticket could be replayed for the CMA Music Festival "second-chance drawing." "We've had a tremendous amount of entries," noted Romero in April. "It's been in our Top 5 best-selling Scratchers for weeks. And we still have a month to go!" (In May two winners were drawn from 13,600 entries: Deborah Howden of Los Ranchos and Christopher Williams of Las Cruces.)

Rucker is looking forward to presenting the Lottery winners with an autographed guitar and, as the Lottery rules indicate, "three autographed items." Will the victors be expected to bring these items with them? "No, we'll supply them," Rucker answered, with a laugh. "But if they want to bring some other stuff, I'm sure I'll sign it too!"

DariusRucker.com; NMLottery.com

JUNE 7

Matt Bauer / *The Jessamine County Book of the Living* / Crossbill
Mike Bloom / *King of Circles* / Little Record
Grayson Capps / *The Lost Cause Minstrels* / Royal Potato Family
Country Mice / *Twister* / Wao Wao
Ronnie Dunn / *Ronnie Dunn* / Arista Nashville
The Grascals / *Dance Til' Your Stockings are Hot and Ravelin'* (A Tribute to the Music of the Andy Griffith Show) / BluGrascal/Saguaro Road
Justin Haigh / *People Like Me* / Apache Ranch
Jimmy Bowen & Santa Fe / *Single Down in San Antonio* / Santa Fe
Jason Jones / *Six Pak* (digital EP) / Warner Bros.
Brendan McKinney / *Best They Can* / Adroit
Nick 13 / *Nick 13* / Sugar Hill
Rod Picott / *Welding Burns* / Welding Rod Music
The Pine Needles / *The Pine Needles* / TBA
Rhonda Vincent and Gene Watson / *Your Money and My Good Looks* / Upper Management Music
Shawna Russell / *Shawna Russell* / Way Out West
Randy Travis / *Anniversary Celebration* / Warner Bros.
Jason D. Williams / *Recycled* / Indie

JUNE 14

Jonathan Edwards / *My Love Will Keep* / Appleseed Recordings
Marissa Nadler / *Marissa Nadler* / Box of Cedar
 various artists / *NOW That's What I Call Country Vol. 4* / UMe

JUNE 21

David Adam Byrnes / *Premium Country* / Better Angels Music
Shelly Fairchild / *Ruby's Money* / Revelation Nation
The Greencards / *The Brick Album* / Darling Street
John Paul Keith / *The Man That Time Forgot* / Big Legal Mess/Fat Possum
Jim Lauderdale / *Reason and Rhyme* / Sugar Hill
LiveWire / *Live Wire* (EP) / LiveWire Band, LLC
Justin Moore / *Outlaws Like Me* / The Valory Music Co.
Gary Nicholson / *Texas Songbook* / Bismeaux
Corey Smith / *The Broken Record* / Average Joe's Entertainment
 various artists / *Moody Bluegrass Two... Much Love* / indie

JUNE 28

Billy Ray Cyrus / *I'm American* / Buena Vista
Michael Martin Murphey / *Tall Grass & Cool Water* / Rural Rhythm
Dolly Parton / *Better Day* / Dolly

JULY 5

Jackie Johnson / *Memphis Jewel* / Catfood
Robert Ellis / *Photographs* / New West
Old 97's / *The Grand Theatre Vol. 2* / New West

JULY 12

David Bromberg / *Use Me* / Appleseed
Kasey Chambers / *Little Bird* / Sugar Hill
Reluctant Saints / *Long Drive* / INIO Music
Blake Shelton / *Red River Blue* / Warner Bros./Reprise
Ashton Shepherd / *Where Country Grows* / MCA Nashville
Chris Young / *Neon* / RCA Nashville

JULY 19

Suzy Bogguss / *American Folk Songbook* / Cracker Barrel
Cody Canada and the Departed / *This Is Indian Land* / Apex/Thirty Tigers
Roadside Graves / *We Can Take Care of Ourselves* / Autumn Tone
Ricky Skaggs / *Country Hits Bluegrass Style* / Skaggs Family

JULY 26

Jason Michael Carroll / *Numbers* / Cracker Barrel
Eric Church / *CHIEF* / EMI
Cumberland River / *The Life We Live* / Rural Rhythm
Ronnie Milsap / *Country Again* / Milsap Music Group/Bigger Picture Group
Randy Montana / *Randy Montana* / Mercury

AUG. 2

John Hiatt / *Dirty Jeans and Mudslide Hymns* / New West

AUG. 9

Luke Bryan / *Tailgates & Tanlines* / Capitol Records Nashville
Riders in the Sky / *The Land Beyond the Sun* / Riders Radio

AUG. 16

Jeff Bridges / *Jeff Bridges* / Blue Note/EMI Music Group
Eli Young Band / *Life at Best* / Republic Nashville
Wagons / *Rumble, Shake & Tumble* / Thirty Tigers

AUG. 23

Sunny Sweeney / *Concrete* / Republic Nashville
 various artists / *The Best of Times Sara Hickman Tribute* / indie

AUG. 30

Alana Amram & the Rough Gems / *Snow Shadows: Songs of Vince Martin* / Kingswood
Jason Cassidy / *My Redemption* / A-Blake
Robert Earl Keen / *Ready For Confetti* / Lost Highway

SEPT. 6

Tyrone Vaughan / *Downtime* / indie

SEPT. 13

Kristin Chenoweth / *Some Lessons Learned* / Sony
Lady Antebellum / *Own the Night* / Capitol Records Nashville
Lydia Loveless / *Indestructible Machine* / Bloodshot



New CD Releases compiled by ATHENA PATTERSON

A Centennial Celebration

BILL MONROE

by ROBERT K. OERMANN

Sept. 13, 2011, marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of the father of bluegrass music, and one of his longtime friends has honored him with a musical tribute.

Banjo player and producer Mike Scott often played, dined and shared stories with CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame member Bill Monroe. Scott was never a member of the master's famed Blue Grass Boys band, but he was closer to him than many musicians who were.

"I had my idols," Scott recalled with a smile. "Bill was the Man, and I knew it. I met him when I was just a kid, back in East Tennessee. After I moved to Nashville, we'd get backstage and jam. We'd hang out on his tour bus. Bill and I fell into the habit of buying each other breakfast. He'd call me out of the blue and we'd talk on the phone. I wouldn't take anything for my memories of Bill Monroe. I wanted to do something to capture the feeling and spirit of Monroe."

The result is *Blue Moon of Kentucky: Instrumental Tribute to Bill Monroe*, produced by Scott and released by Rural Rhythm Records to commemorate his centennial year, the set consists of 18 performances by a who's-who cast of bluegrass instrumentalists. Scott is seen regularly on RFD-TV's "Reno's Old Time Music Festival" series as a member of Ronnie Reno's band. Bryan Sutton has been named Guitarist of the Year five times by the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA). Dobro player Rob Ickes won the same recognition in his category 12 times and mandolinist Adam Steffey seven times in his. Bassist Ben Isaacs is a mainstay of his family's bluegrass/gospel band The Isaacs as well as an in-demand Nashville session player. Mike Compton plays mandolin in the acclaimed Nashville Bluegrass Band, named IBMA's Vocal Group of the Year annually in 1990-'93 and Entertainer of the Year in 1992 and '93. Guitarist Tim Stafford won a Grammy Award as a member of Alison Krauss & Union Station and two 1996 IBMA awards with his group Blue Highway. And fiddler Aubrey Haynie has been a first-call studio player since 1994; IBMA honored his third solo album, *The Bluegrass Fiddle Album* as Instrumental Performance of the Year for 2003.

"All these guys are artists in their own right," said Scott. "Each instrument stands alone, yet it is a blend. The sessions were live and very exciting. I

wanted to get people on this who really, really knew the music."

This all-star instrumental album is one of several celebrations of the Monroe centennial. "There will be a tribute at the IBMA Awards, which takes place, fittingly, in September," said Dan Hays, Executive Director, IBMA. "There is going to be an album released later this year of some previously unreleased Bill Monroe recordings. The Bluegrass Music Museum (in Owensboro, Ky.) is planning an event to fall on or near the actual birthday. There will be an event in Rosine, Ky., where he was born and where he rests. We have urged our members around the world to do something to dedicate the year to Bill. This means that hundreds of

(bluegrass) festivals will have tributes. On the radio front, we're seeing broadcasters doing something every week, all year long. Kyle Cantrell programs the Bluegrass Junction channel on Sirius XM, and he is working on a tribute."

And then there is the movie, an upcoming biographical film, also titled *Blue Moon of Kentucky* and featuring Del McCoury as the voice and his son Ronnie McCoury as the mandolin of Bill Monroe. Ronnie McCoury co-produced the soundtrack with T Bone Burnett, with the script by Burnett's wife Callie Khori ("Thelma and Louise" screenwriter) and Finn Taylor.

The man being honored in these various ways was born William Smith Monroe near Rosine, Ky. He rose to fame initially in a duo with his older brother Charlie. Their "What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul" became a major hit in 1936. After The Monroe Brothers broke up in

1938, Bill formed The Blue Grass Boys and came to Nashville to audition for the Grand Ole Opry. He joined the WSM show's cast in 1939 and remained with until his death in 1996.

"You know, he used to joke that they named the radio station after his initials, WSM," Scott recalled. "He was very proud to be on the Opry."

Mandolinist/singer Monroe recruited guitarist/singer Lester Flatt and banjo player Earl Scruggs as Blue Grass Boys in 1945. Along with fiddler Howdy Forrester and bassist Howard Watts, they created the style now called "bluegrass" in honor of the band's name. Many sources pinpoint



The album cover includes the image of a replica Monroe mandolin that was made for singer-songwriter Mark Newton by Wade Instruments of Osaka, Japan.



Adam Steffey, Aubrey Haynie, Tim Stafford and Rob Ickes lay tracks for *Blue Moon of Kentucky*



photos: left - Brenda Scott; Monroe - courtesy of The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

its birth to Dec. 8, 1945, when this lineup made its debut at the Opry. With Chubby Wise replacing Forrester on fiddle, the "classic" lineup first recorded on Sept. 16, 1946, cutting the immortal "Blue Moon of Kentucky" among other songs.

"Bill Monroe birthed an entire style of music," Hays noted. "You have an entire music community that has sprung from him — record labels, festivals, organizations, publications and radio shows. He was one of the most prolific songwriters of his time. In the bluegrass world, there is a long list of (Monroe) standards that are part of the canon of this music, 60 to 70 years after they were penned."

Hays also observed that the majority of the first-generation bluegrass stars were former Blue Grass Boys. Vassar Clements, Flatt & Scruggs, Jimmy Martin, Del McCoury, Sonny Osborne of The Osborne Brothers, Peter Rowan, Carter Stanley of The Stanley Brothers and Mac Wiseman are all "graduates" of Monroe's bands.

"(Blue Grass Boys) Kenny Baker and Bobby Hicks were big influences on me," said Haynie, the only instrumentalist other than Scott and Isaacs to play on every track of the tribute album. "I met Kenny when I was 9 years old. I still call him every two or three months. Kenny's fiddling really matched Bill's phrasing. Bill Monroe wrote his songs on mandolin, but they work really great as fiddle tunes. And I did get to play 'Uncle Pen' with him one time. It was at The Station Inn around 1993 or 1994. What a thrill.

"I took my family up to Rosine two years ago," he continued. "We walked around Jerusalem Ridge and I kept hearing all these melodies in the wind. Bill Monroe's music is more than just notes; there's a lonesome feeling to it."

Scott also first encountered the legend when he was around 10 years old. A banjo prodigy, he began touring the bluegrass festival circuit at 11. When he was 15, Monroe offered him a job, but Scott declined the opportunity in order to finish his schooling. He moved to Nashville in 1983 to join Jim & Jesse's Virginia Boys. The band often traveled alongside Monroe's en route to shows and festivals.

"Bill was a night owl," Scott said. "One night we got off the buses at a truck stop on (Tennessee's) Monteagle Mountain. He goes, 'Let me buy you some hen eggs.' I said, 'No, it's my turn to buy.' But after we ate, he grabbed the ticket. While he was paying, I could see him buying something and

putting it into a little bag.

"Now, back when I was 14 or 15, I was backstage at a festival and not paying attention to my instrument. My dad came up behind me where I couldn't see him, grabbed my Gibson banjo and locked it in the trunk of the car. So when I turned around

"BILL MONROE'S MUSIC IS MORE THAN JUST NOTES; THERE'S A LONESOME FEELING TO IT."

— Aubrey Haynie

and reached for my banjo, it was gone. I was in a panic. I looked everywhere. Finally, my dad opens the trunk and says, 'There it is. Don't leave it settin' around or somebody is going to walk off with it.' After that, I made a habit of putting my foot on my banjo case.

"So at the truck stop, Bill comes out with this little bag. He said, 'Go get your banjo.' I thought, 'Does he want to pick at 2:30 in the morning?' I got the banjo. He reached into the bag and pulled out this sticker. It said, 'Keep Feet Off.' He pulled the backing off and stuck it right on my banjo case. So that was his humor. It's still on my case.

"Another time, he called me up early in the morning. Of course, I knew who it was right away; there was no mistaking his voice. He said, 'Hang on just a minute.' I heard the phone bumping and banging. He gets his mandolin and plays me this instrumental tune he had just written. I thought, 'I have got to try to remember this.'

"After a few minutes, he laid the mandolin down and picked the phone back up. He said, 'Did you hear that? Do you know who this is?' I just fell out. I said, 'Yes, sir.' He said, 'I was just thinking about you. I wrote this tune and I want you to hear it.' I'd give anything to have recorded it.

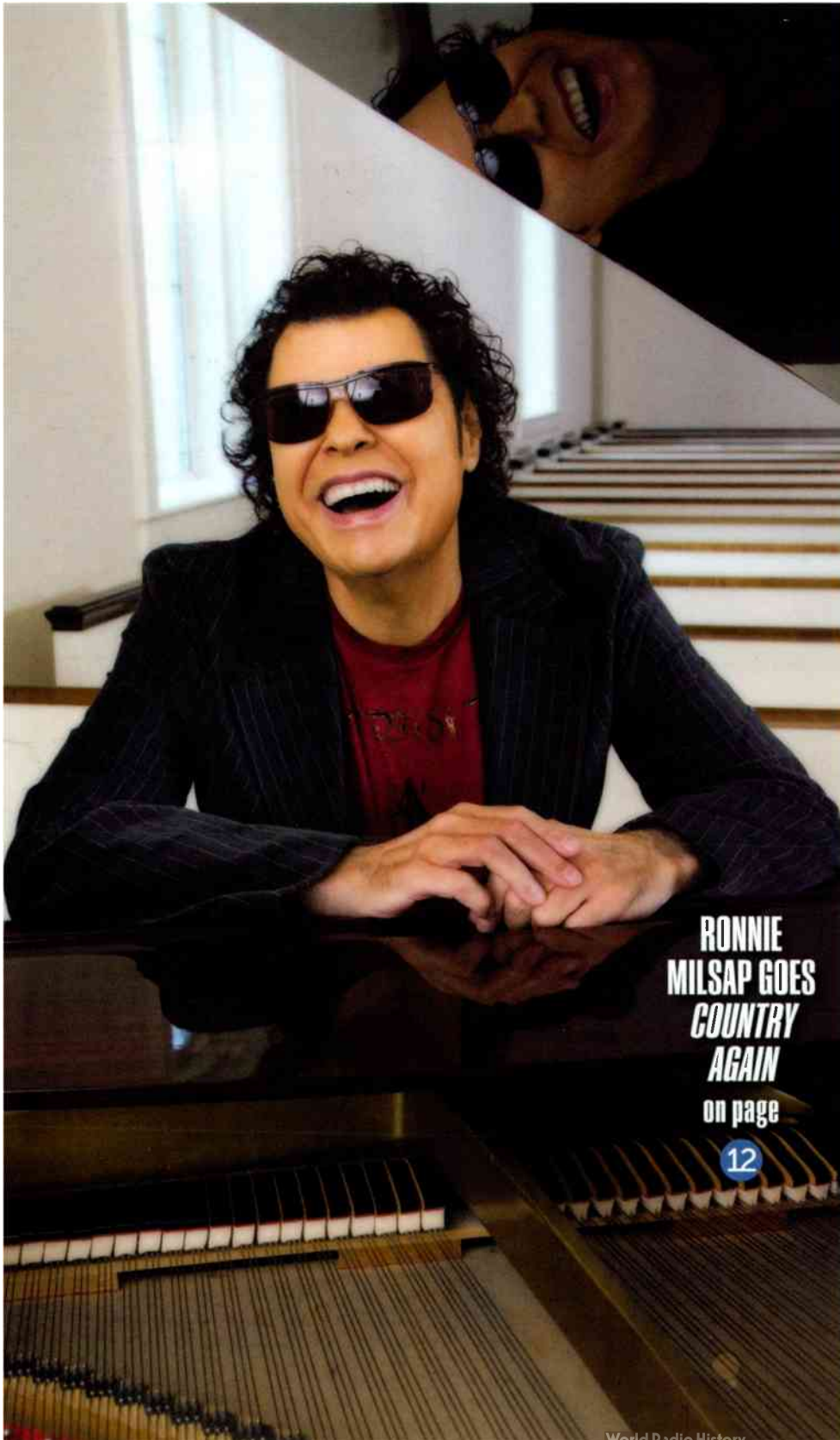
"He was a genius. He was a motivator. He is the creator of a music. He left a mark. I feel very fortunate to have known him."

MikeScottMusic.com

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

CMA Close Up

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RONNIE MILSAP GOES COUNTRY AGAIN
on page

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World Radio History

cma events

JUNE

MONDAY, JUNE 6 – TUESDAY, JUNE 7

Billboard Country Music Summit | Renaissance Nashville Hotel | Tickets: CountryMusicSummit.com | CMA is a proud sponsor.

MONDAY, JUNE 6

CMA Global Artist Party | The Stage on Broadway | Nashville | 6:30 PM | FREE

TUESDAY, JUNE 7

AristoMedia Global Showcase | The Second Fiddle | Nashville | Noon | FREE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8

CMA Music Festival Kick-Off Parade | Broadway | 11 AM and CMA Music Festival Block Party | Riverfront Park | 1PM | Nashville | FREE

Marty Stuart Late Night Jam | Ryman Auditorium | Nashville | 10 PM | Tickets: 1-800-745-3000, Ticketmaster.com or Ryman (615) 889-3060

THURSDAY, JUNE 9 – SUNDAY, JUNE 12

CMA Music Festival | Downtown Nashville | Tickets: 1-800-CMA-FEST, CMAfest.com, 1-800-745-3000 or Ticketmaster.com

SATURDAY, JUNE 11

Gildan's World's Largest T-Shirt | Centennial Park | Nashville | Noon – 3 PM | FREE

City of Hope Celebrity Softball Challenge | Greer Stadium | Nashville | 9 AM | Tickets: Ticketmaster.com

TUESDAY, JUNE 11

CMA Songwriters Series | Joe's Pub | New York | 6:30 and 9 PM | Carson Chamberlain, Easton Corbin, Bob DiPiero and Mark D. Sanders | Tickets: JoesPub.com

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22

CMA Songwriters Series | Joe's Pub | New York | 6:30 and 9 PM | Carson Chamberlain, Bob DiPiero, Mark D. Sanders and Clay Walker | Tickets: JoesPub.com

FRIDAY, JUNE 24

Applications for new CMA members due to vote on second and final CMA Awards ballots.

MONDAY, JUNE 27

First CMA Awards ballot e-mailed to eligible voting CMA members.

THURSDAY, JUNE 30

Deadline for CMA Broadcast Awards submissions accepted at Broadcast.CMAawards.com.

JULY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13

Voting for first CMA Awards ballot ends at 5 PM/CT.

TUESDAY, JULY 19 – THURSDAY, JULY 21

CMA Board of Directors Meetings | Chicago

