

# CMA Close Up

AUGUST | SEPTEMBER 2012

## CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Unforgettable Days and Nights

### JOSH TURNER

Broadens His Base on HSN

## BILLBOARD COUNTRY MUSIC

### SUMMIT

State of the Industry

### SOLO FLIGHT

Tips on Recording Alone

## LOVE AND THEFT

Back for Act Two

## GIANTS OF COUNTRY GUITAR

Players Pick Their Favorites

## LITTLE BIG TOWN

ADVENTURES  
in  
HARMONY  
and  
PRODUCTION

"CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL: COUNTRY'S NIGHT TO ROCK"

MONDAY SEPT. 17 8/7c ABC

CMA AWARDS ONLINE VOTING

SECOND BALLOT AUG. 9 - AUG. 21

FINAL BALLOT OCT. 4 - OCT. 22



16



22 20



30



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august | september 2012

cma close up

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Part of the CMA Mission Statement dedicates this organization to "providing a forum for industry leadership dialogue toward its goals." How do we do that? According to our Vision Statement, "we will take risks, embrace change and always exceed the expectations of those we serve."

Those last eight words are the seed from which has sprung our long history of working to inform and empower membership. Information is the engine that drives that initiative. And that means that research — the pursuit of information that will empower and inform our colleagues in the Country Music world — is fundamental.

We've taken several steps forward in accelerating the acquisition of timely, high-value insights into our industry. Within our Marketing Department, a dedicated Market Research team is working to broaden and deepen CMA's repository of information and get it to you quickly, clearly and efficiently.

To help spotlight these results, *CMA Close Up* will highlight some of their most recent findings in each issue, on a recurring "CMA Research" page. The first installment, on page 9, examines the demographics, buying patterns and other characteristics of attendees at this year's CMA Music Festival. But this is just one among many findings that recent efforts have uncovered.

For example, at the Billboard Country Music Summit, held in June just before the Festival, Karen Stump, CMA's Senior Director of Market Research, gave a presentation titled "The Country Music Consumer: A Force to Be Reckoned With." The data she shared were gathered through 12 topical studies with the CMA Insider Fan Panel, consisting of nearly 13,000 Country Music enthusiasts; an updated segmentation and market-sizing analysis that focused on the core versus growth-targeted Country Music opportunities; and event research, which included the findings noted in this issue.

Among the topics addressed were how fans felt about their financial future, how they planned to spend in the upcoming year in areas ranging from groceries to Country CDs and where they seek financial advice. The report presented today's fans as very family-oriented, with more interest in entertaining friends at home than the average consumer. Eight of 10 of those surveyed are planning actively for their retirement. Every generation of respondents has crossed the digital divide, with 96 percent owning a cell phone, 89 percent on Facebook and 74 percent describing text messaging as "an important part of daily life."

Important as these numbers are, it's the perception of the fan base's humanity that's most intriguing. Our artists, and those who support them, have always worked to build a loyal audience. In upcoming issues of *CMA Close Up*, and in the more detailed findings available to members at [My.CMAworld.com](http://My.CMAworld.com), we're helping to make that easier.

**Correction:** In our June/July article on Gene Watson, producer Dirk Johnson was incorrectly identified as music director. We regret the error.

**BOB DOERSCHUK**  
Editor, *CMA Close Up*



A volunteer with CMA's Market Research team interviews CMA Music Festival attendees.

photo: Stephanie Mullins

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**cma**  
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THIS MAGAZINE



## CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL New Adventures Honor an Enduring Commitment

**With each year, the CMA Music Festival experience builds on its history. Its essence remains as it was when the event debuted in 1972, when fans filled Nashville's Municipal Auditorium to hear and meet the giants of Country Music. Great live music, and personal encounters between stars and those who enjoyed them, were the hallmarks of what was known then as Fan Fair.**

Today, you can add adventure, engagement of attendees in multiple experiences and through social media, and the thrilling spectacle of the LP Field concerts that close each of the Festival's four days. By measure of magnitude, CMA Music Festival has achieved far more than even its founders could have anticipated.

This year, for example, attendance set a new record, topping 71,000, a 9.2 percent increase over the 65,000 attendees in 2011. Eighty percent of those who held four-day tickets came from outside of Tennessee. All 50 states were represented as were two dozen countries, and Country Music enthusiasts from Asia, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Middle East, North and Central America and elsewhere made the trek.

Many came connected, thanks to CMA's digital outreach. There were 17,000 downloads of the CMA Awards & Music Fest App. Fans could create customized schedules with the app or on **CMAfest.com** or its mobile phone-optimized counterpart **CMAfest.mobi**. CMA MOB members received text alerts throughout the Festival. New this year was the Social Media Team, which tweeted, posted live happenings and held daily games and contests. And at the LP Field shows, more than 31,000 tweets and 22,500 texts were sent to the Jumbotrons that flanked the stage; the huge screens also announced promotions with prizes that included seat upgrades and backstage meet-and-greets. By the end of the Festival, CMA MOB membership climbed to nearly 165,000 and CMA's Twitter followers rose by almost four percent in just four days.

Corporate partnerships were up too, with nearly 50 brands generating more than 1.25 million combined activations and consumer engagements, topping the 2011 figures by nearly 40 percent. Fifteen of those brands were new at the Festival, including AT&T, Bad Boy Buggies, BIC, Cabot Cheese, Cracker Barrel, Emerald Coast Vacations, Hunt Brothers Pizza, Jelly Belly, Jack in the Box and Pepsi. Many others returned, including Chevrolet, who once again hosted a pre-Festival Industry Test Drive at CMA; for every test drive, the company donated \$25 to the Keep the Music Playing program, CMA's initiative to fund public school music education.

So, yes, the Festival has become an immersive mega-event. But that's not what makes it stand out from other large-scale happenings. Two things make it unique. For six years, half of the total proceeds have been donated to Keep the Music Playing. To date, that adds up to \$6.1 million invested in instruments, facilities and, bottom line, the future of Nashville's music education for children.

The second item? It's that mission of bringing fans and artists together, just as it was back in 1972. From intimate venues to a sold-out stadium, from photo and autograph opportunities to fans being able to thank their favorite stars for how they've touched their lives, this hasn't changed. And no matter what new paths CMA Music Festival will open in the years to come, it never will.



Rascal Flatts



Miranda Lambert

Blake Shelton



The Mavericks



Bill Anderson

Dierks Bentley



Little Big Town



Brad Paisley and Hank Williams Jr.



Fans thrill to the nightly concerts at LP Field.



Alan Jackson



Jason Aldean



Lady Antebellum



Brantley Gilbert



Faith Hill

### All-Star Performers Ignite the Nights at LP Field

Thirty-eight superstar acts thrilled the audiences that filled LP Field for all four sold-out nightly concerts. Rodney Atkins made a surprise appearance, as did Hank Williams Jr., who joined Brad Paisley onstage. Little Big Town's Karen Fairchild also sang an unannounced duet with Dierks Bentley.



Eric Church



Kenny Rogers



Zac Brown Band



Martina McBride



Ronnie Milsap



Scotty McCreery



Carrie Underwood

### It's a Bird, It's a Plane ...

... It's a dog! The famous Ultimate Air Dogs competition spotlighted canine competitors as they soared over and into a pool. The longest leap went to Trout, a 3-year-old Chesapeake Bay Retriever, who covered 26 feet and 4 inches before splashdown.



### Student Journalists and Photographers Cover Festival

The CMA Close Up Award of Merit program entered its sixth year of giving student journalists and photographers opportunities to sharpen their skills by documenting Festival events nightly on the **CMAfest.com** blog.

back row: Michelle Fisher, Cory Woodroof and Leslie Schichtel. front row: Lindsey Elkin, Abigail Bobo, Caitlin Selle, Lacey Printz and Amy Vandivort.



### International Artist Showcases Launch Festival Week



Country artists from around the world performed on Monday night, June 4, during the Chevrolet Presents the CMA Global Artist Party at The Stage on Broadway. The following afternoon, another lineup of international performers entertained at the CMA Presents the Aristo Global Show.

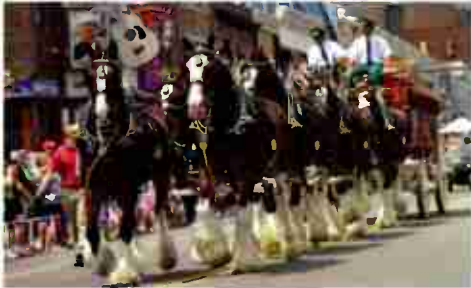
left: Artists and industry gather at the CMA Global Artist Party. (Back row) AristoMedia President/CEO Jeff Walker, Chevrolet National Promotions Manager Phil Caruso, Curtis and Brad Rempel (High Valley), Jay and Mark O'Shea, Vickie Evans, Morgan Evans, Gene Watson, Craig Morrison, Bob Corbett, Jess Moskaluke, CMA CEO Steve Moore. (Front row) Gary Quinn, Bryan Rempel (High Valley) and Joe Robinson. (Missing: Rick Caballo)

right: An array of international talent performed at the CMA Presents the Aristo Global Show. (Back row) Pete Kennedy, Adam Gregory, one member of Raintown and Adam Harvey. (Middle row) Travellin Rose, Baylou, one member of Raintown and Jessica Ridley. (Front row) Colm Kirwan and Josh Macumber.



## The Adventure Begins at the Kick-Off Parade and CMA Block Party

Twenty thousand cheering onlookers lined Broadway from 10th to First Avenues to witness the annual CMA Music Festival Kick-Off Parade. CMA Country Music Hall of Fame member Glen Campbell served as Grand Marshal. Little Big Town provided a special highlight by riding a flotilla of four Premier pontoon boats with 40 fans, then disembarking at the Chevrolet Riverfront Stage to open the CMA Music Festival Block Party by performing their hit single "Pontoon" before 11,400 spectators.



Budweiser Clydesdales



Glen Campbell



Rhonda Vincent



Eric Lee Beddingfield

## CMT Invites Fans to Get Social

Fans followed online clues to track down the CMA Fan Social Presented by CMT, held on Saturday, June 9, at Limelight. A Q&A with Kix Brooks and lots of live music filled the afternoon.



Kix Brooks

Sunny Sweeney

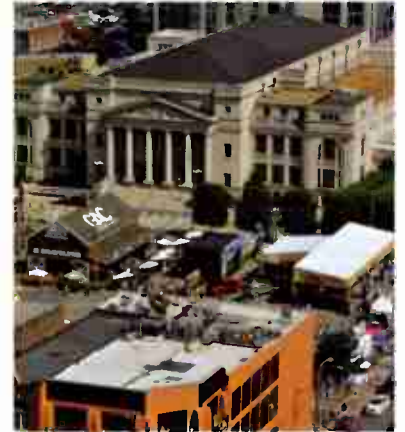
## David Nail Readies for Opening Night

David Nail and the Nashville School of Arts Chamber Choir, directed by Walter Bitner, practice Nail's "The Sound of a Million Dreams," which they performed on Thursday night at LP Field.



## Chillin' and Thrillin' in Fan Alley

From a cool escape courtesy of Caesars Palace to barstool seats at the Chevrolet Roadhouse Stage, Fan Alley had a little bit of everything.



Fan Alley featured live music, refreshment and more.



Fans rode Fan Alley's mechanical bull.

## The Sky's the Limit on the Hard Rock Acoustic Stage

O'Shea was one of the many acts that heated up the Hard Rock Acoustic Stage.



Lipton offered cool drinks and a spot to enjoy the Chevrolet Roadhouse Stage.



Caesars Palace provided a place to unwind.



Phil Vassar



Jo Dee Messina



Corey Smith



Craig Morgan



James Wesley



Montgomery Gentry



Laura Bell Bundy

### Attendance Records Shatter at Chevrolet Riverfront Park

On both Friday, June 8, and Saturday, June 9, records were set as more than 25,000 fans gathered on the banks of the Cumberland River to catch performances on the Chevrolet Riverfront Stage. The other days were busy too, beginning with an announcement from opening act Montgomery Gentry's Eddie Gentry: "The party is here, baby!"



Neal McCoy lights up the Chevrolet Riverfront Stage.

## Relive CMA Music Fest on ABC!

Tune in to ABC on Monday, Sept. 17, 8-11PM/ET for "CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock," featuring hosts Luke Bryan and The Band Perry's Kimberly Perry along with highlights from this year's festivities.

### Fresh Features Fill Fan Fair Hall

The AT&T U-verse® with Cisco® Technology Fan Fair Hall offered opportunities to collect autographs from more than 250 artists and celebrities, as well as an array of new attractions, including the Wrangler Fashion Show, the Fan Fair Hall Red Carpet and the Durango Acoustic Corner, relocated from its former location outside the Hall.



The Band Perry



The Oak Ridge Boys



Sara Evans



Gwen Sebastian at the Fan Fair Hall Red Carpet



Celebrity models flaunt creations by designer legend Manuel at the Wrangler Fashion Show.



Jason Michael Carroll entertains on the Durango Acoustic Corner stage.

### The Lodge Brings Fans and Favorites Together

Designed and erected by a master barn builder, the HGTV Lodge presented a bevy of popular artists, including Luke Bryan (bottom), in live sets while also providing real and virtual photo ops, HGTV's The Hookup for phone recharging and app downloads and more within a handsome, 2,400-square-foot space.





Eric Paslay



Hayden Panettiere, Sam Palladio and Clare Bowen of the ABC series "Nashville."

### ABC Rocks the Block Party

The two-day ABC Summer Block Party mixed live music, autograph sessions, games and much more.

### The Buckle Shines in Downtown Nashville

Plenty of free activities, meet-and-greets and more drew fans to The Buckle along Lower Broadway.



Casey James hosts the Guitars of the Stars Benefit Auction.



Channing Wilson performs in the ASCAP Presents show.



The McClymonts entertain at the YWCA Celebrity Auction.



### BIC Soleil Bella Beach Offers Everything But The Ocean

A volleyball court, food trucks, interactive exhibits, cabanas and a real sand beach with lounge chairs and umbrellas beckoned visitors to the BIC Soleil Bella Beach. Music proved a draw too, with 39 performers, including Cuban virtuoso guitarist Pancho Amat on his debut visit to the U.S.



Pancho Amat

### Cool Breezes and Great Views

The CAO Cigar Lounge offered attendees a great place to relax and take in the sounds and sights of Chevrolet Riverfront Park.



### Catch a Break -- Catch a Chevy

Festival visitors enjoyed free rides throughout the Festival grounds, courtesy of the Catch a Chevy service.



### New Stage Debuts at CMA Music Fest

Fans on their way to the evening shows at LP Field enjoyed performances by Florida Georgia Line and other artists at the new BMI Tailgate Party stage, just south of the stadium.

### Fans Flock to the Bud Light Stage

Attendance at the Bud Light Stage on Bridgestone Arena Plaza topped the figures from the 2011 Festival.



Robin Meade



Katie Armiger

### Artists Shoot for Glory and Good Times

Julie Ingram (l) and Matt Kennon were among participants in this year's Field & Stream Celebrity Total Outdoorsman Challenge. Events include fly casting, air rifle and archery, with Ty Brown winning top honors.



CMA Music Festival is organized and produced by the Country Music Association. Fan Fair® is a registered trademark of CMA. Chevrolet™ is the Official Ride of Country Music. American Airlines is the Official Airline of the CMA Music Festival. BIC is an Official Partner of the 2012 CMA Music Festival. Bad Boy Buggies is the Official UTV of the CMA Music Festival. CMA Music Festival wrap-up written by Bob Doerschuk; photo edit by Amanda Eckard. Connect with CMA online at [CMAfest.com](http://CMAfest.com), [Facebook.com/CMA](http://Facebook.com/CMA) and [Twitter.com/CountryMusic](http://Twitter.com/CountryMusic). CMA Music Festival photos: Abigail Bobo, Christian Bottorff, Bennett Farkas, Michelle Fisher, Jim Hagans, Karen Hicks, Donn Jones, Theresa Montgomery, Stephanie Mullins, John Russell, Jamie Schramm and Caitlin Selle.



# RESEARCH UPDATES INSIGHTS INTO CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL ATTENDEES

by BOB DOERSCHUK and KAREN STUMP

A study by CMA's Research Department has sharpened the focus on CMA Music Festival engagement, general music listening and demographics among 2012 Festival attendees. Data were compiled from more than 3,800 survey responses, gathered online and at the Festival. The results paint a revealing picture of today's Country Music enthusiast.

## ATTENDANCE

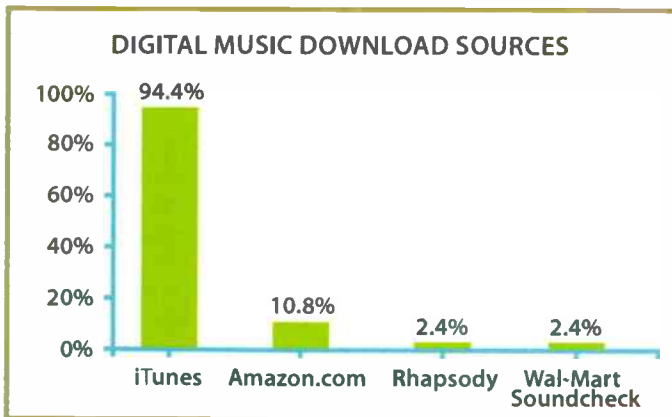
Nearly 44 percent of this year's queried attendees were coming to their first CMA Music Festival. The size of the average party — friends and/or family — averaged 3.81 members, an increase over the 2011 figure of 3.2. And an impressive 94.3 percent of respondents indicated plans to return for next year's festivities. This figure has been consistently high for years and serves as an excellent indicator of attendee engagement and satisfaction with the CMA Music Festival.

## LISTENING PREFERENCES

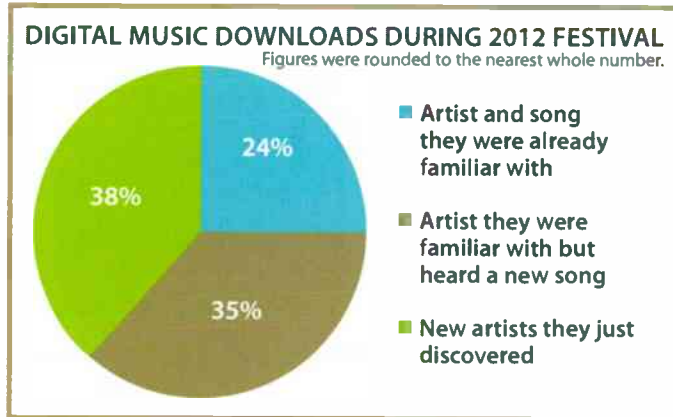
More than half (53.2 percent) of attendees said they listen to more Country Music than they did two years ago. More than a third (34.1 percent) listen only to Country Music. The rest (65.9 percent) listen to a variety of genres in addition to Country, with affinity for rock and pop/soft rock/contemporary.

## MUSIC PURCHASE PATTERNS

Judging from survey results, Country Music fans have embraced digital downloads. Nearly three out of four who were surveyed at the Festival indicated they had bought digital music from an online store, with iTunes decisively leading the list of sources.



Nearly a third (31.3 percent) had bought music at the Festival specifically, most of them opting for physical CDs (76.8 percent). Digital albums were purchased at the Festival by 13.4 percent of respondents and digital singles by 22.8 percent. Most of these digital music purchases were for new artists and/or new music that the buyers discovered while attending the Festival.

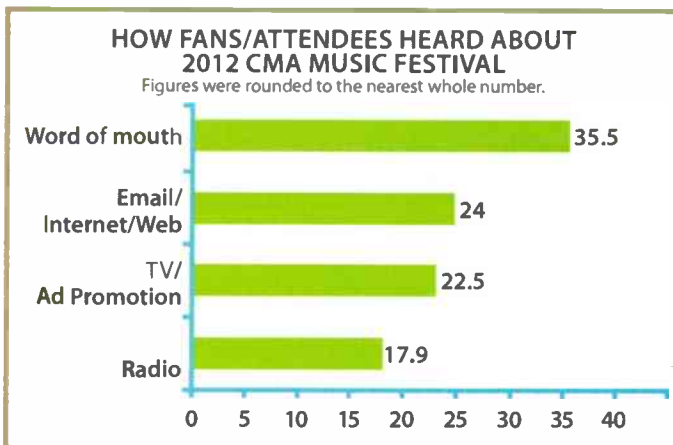


## CONCERT ATTENDANCE

The CMA research determined that Festival attendees went to an average of four Country Music concerts within the past year — and 49.6 percent noted that they were attending more Country Music concerts than they had two years ago.

## CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL AWARENESS

Though word of mouth was frequently cited as a means by which attendees indicated they had become aware of CMA Music Festival, other channels of media outreach were quite effective as well.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Exactly who were this year's Festival attendees? Based on input from interviewees, though unified by their support for Country Music, they are diverse in a number of respects, with particularly strong representation among younger and upper-income fans, especially among first-time attendees. Briefly, their average age was 42.8. Most — 71 percent — were female. Fifty-four percent were married, 31.7 percent single and yet to marry and 9.4 percent had divorced. They're doing materially well too, with 31.4 percent earning \$100,000 or more and 35.7 percent having completed college.

Each issue of CMA Close Up will feature timely new findings from the CMA Marketing Department's ongoing research into areas of interest to our membership. The overall goal is to analyze and derive useful insight into forces that influence consumer behavior, to understand industry trends and extend educational opportunities. More information is available at [My.CMAworld.com](http://My.CMAworld.com).



Luke Bryan with manager Kerri Edwards, Red Light Management.

## Billboard

# COUNTRY MUSIC SUMMIT

## Finds Signs for Industry Optimism

by NANCY MORAN and FETT

The third annual Billboard Country Music Summit, presented in association with CMA, took place on June 4 and 5 at The Cannery Ballroom in Nashville. The consensus among panelists was optimistic and enthusiastic, not only about the current state of Country Music but also about its future. Since the first Summit in 2010, the industry's pervasive viewpoint has gone from "How do we survive?" to "How do we use the many new tools at our disposal to thrive and grow the format?"

**C**ommitment, having a strategy and long-term thinking were the key takeaways that reverberated throughout the panels, roundtables, case studies and Q&A sessions. Live Nation's President, Country Touring, Brian O'Connell stated emphatically that Country Music touring is "absolutely on fire!" While agreeing with that assessment, Rob Light, Managing Partner, Creative Artists Agency (CAA), cautioned that the touring market in the United States will not always be super-hot and suggested that Country artists need to commit to going overseas, not just for their own careers but also for the genre as a whole.

Perhaps the biggest example of commitment came at the beginning of the second day, when Clear Channel announced it had struck a deal with Big Machine Label Group to pay performance royalties to Big Machine's artists. John Hogan, Chairman/CEO, Clear Channel Media and Entertainment, discussed this groundbreaking decision during his Q&A, saying simply that it is a marketplace-driven solution rather than a legislative one. "It's the right thing to do long-term to grow our digital business," he emphasized.

Willie Nelson and Dwight Yoakam were the featured celebrity interviews. Luke Bryan and Thompson Square provided artist development and song case studies. Both days ended with a cocktail reception, networking opportunities and live music. And the panels lived up to expectations as sources of insight and strategic ideas, as these highlights illustrate.

### Touring, Part 1: Buyers (and an Artist) Talk Business

#### Touring, Part 2: The Agents

Both touring panels focused on the ticket-selling process and the marketing it requires. According to Live Nation's O'Connell, there are currently 11 "major" Country headliners, meaning they can fill more than



Billboard Executive Director Ray Waddell (r) interviews Willie Nelson.

10,000 seats per night. In 2013, there will be about 18 "majors." With their support acts and openers, that's a total of about 54 acts on headliners tours, which consist of typically 60 to 70 dates, including 20 amphitheaters, 15 fairs and festivals and the remainder indoor concert halls and theaters.

When the economy slows, Country Music concerts do well, partly because of their lower ticket prices. Fairs and festivals also thrive because more people stay home rather than go on vacations. They perceive spending money on a festival or fair ticket as a good value because they get to see multiple artists for one low price.

CAA Agent Marc Dennis noted that the biggest issue in promoting these shows is to make people aware of them. Ray Waddell, Executive Director of Content and Programming for Touring and Live Entertainment, *Billboard*, remarked that half the people who don't attend a show don't do so because they don't know about it, even with all the promo and social media. "People aren't necessarily paying attention," he noted. "They have lives. You need to get in their way, to get in front of them in their daily lives."

Kevin Neal, President, Buddy Lee Attractions, added that promoters need to be more current with their marketing techniques and not rely solely on old methods. "Jason Aldean's fans don't read the paper," he pointed out. "So newspaper ads don't help him (sell tickets)."

### Follow the Money: Who Is Investing in Country Music and Where

Music is a cash-intensive business. You may never recoup your investment, but that doesn't seem to deter people and companies from

plunking down their money and coming up with creative ways to invest in Country Music.

Paul Brown, Legal Counsel/CFO, Broken Bow Records, remarked that Broken Bow invests in artists, not marketing plans. On the other hand, Rick Stevens, CEO, Y Entertainment Group LLC, said that “institutions don’t invest in artists. They invest in companies and entrepreneurs to take them up to the next level.” David Robkin, CEO, Bigger Picture Group, explained that his organization sets up a separate joint venture company with each artist and becomes the managing partner that provides money. But BPG and the artists make decisions together regarding careers, promotion and other issues. Mark Montgomery, Founder, FLO {thinkery}, clarified that artists and companies looking for investors “must understand what the capital brings besides the money.”

Artist Mike Farris added an independent perspective by describing his Kickstarter campaign in 2011. His goal was to raise \$6,000 to record his CD; he ended up with \$14,500. (Farris also raised an even more impressive \$27,738 for another Kickstarter campaign in 2012, with a \$10,000 goal.) “Fans are so passionate about giving you money because they want your music to have a chance to be heard,” he insisted.



**“You can create art alone, but you have to have someone who takes what you do and delivers it to the people. The distribution chain is still important.”**

– Dwight Yoakam

### Dwight Yoakam Interview

After years of being independent, Yoakam explained why he has returned to the majors by signing with Warner Bros. Nashville. “Art generally is a medium whose delivery depends on collaboration,” he reflected. “You can create art alone, but you have to have someone who takes what you do and delivers it to the people. The distribution chain is still important. Record labels in particular provide the all-important role of distribution.”

### Artist Development: Luke Bryan

The strategies behind Luke Bryan’s career were detailed in a panel that included Bryan, manager Kerri Edwards of Red Light Management, agent Jay Williams of William Morris Endeavor Entertainment and Dustin Eichten, Director, Marketing, Capitol Records Nashville.

Early on, Bryan had his own strategy. Rather than solicit money to make CDs and sell only handfuls at each gig, he spent \$1,000 of his own money to make as many as he could carry. Then, he gave away 500 CDs in college towns so that he could leave his music behind and help build an audience. The next time he came back, people knew who he was and had loaded his songs into their iPods.

Since then, Bryan’s rise has been deliberate and steady. He’s currently playing sold-out shows with Jason Aldean. His team is now testing secondary and tertiary markets and expecting him to start headlining in 2013.

### Corporate America: What Brands Like about Country

Sheri Warnke, CMA Senior VP, Marketing and Communications, emphasized that research shows about 96 million people in the United States call themselves “Country Music fans. It’s a broad, diverse base of potential customers for corporate America.” And Philip Caruso, National Promotions Manager, Chevrolet, stressed that “music is key to the growth of our business. There are over 1,000 songs containing the word ‘Chevrolet’ or one of its brands. And many of them are Country songs. It’s a natural fit.”

### The International Panel

It was virtually unanimous throughout the conference that Country acts should go global. Particularly in Europe, there’s a spillover effect to multiple countries. New artists can now hit it big overseas and ride that momentum back to the United States. “You only have to be a star in one country to have a really nice career,” said John Lomax III, President, Roots Music Exporters.

“Don’t try to conquer the world,” added Tom Lord, VP, Marketing, UMG Nashville. “Instead, focus on places where you’ll fit best. Festivals are also a good option.”

Social media are an important tool to help artists build an audience before going abroad. Paul Zamek, President Paul Zamek Enterprises/Global Consulting, even suggested that a “digital strategist” is an artist’s first and most important person to hire, even before an agent, manager or publicist.

Tim Holland, A&R/Label Manager, ABC Music at Australian Broadcasting Corp., noted that his label generates interests in U.S. Country artists by shooting and distributing “day in the life” documentaries prior to their arrival.

### Artists and Social Networking: How Effective Is It Really?

Two conclusions stood out from this panel’s discussion: Email is still the king and YouTube is still the top streaming source for music online — bigger than iTunes or Spotify — and the most underutilized social network.

### Country Music from an Aerial View: A Conversation with Rob Light

The role of the agent has changed significantly, according to CAA’s Rob Light. Agents are more immersed in an artist’s career. In fact, Light sees CAA and its agents as an extension of the management team, with enormous reach, not only to other musical opportunities but also to sports, acting and other industries.

The industry’s role has changed too. It’s not just about selling music anymore. It’s about music selling something else. As a major strategic effort, before even talking about a deal for any artist on its roster, CAA spent an entire year talking to corporate America about the power of music and convincing people that music needs to be a part of their marketing matrix.

To improve, Light feels that Country needs to move singles through radio faster and that, because of the genre’s close association with radio, it’s been slow to capitalize on the digital realm. He predicts that the next generation may turn the radio off altogether. But he also concedes that he’s never been more optimistic about the music industry than he is today.

“People will always love music,” he noted. “It will never go away. It brings you back to a place and time and defines you as a generation. Nothing else does that.”



Stephen Barker Liles and Eric Gunderson

## Love and Theft is about to make its big debut — for the second time.

The band's self-titled album, released July 24, is a showcase of its evolution in recent years. Members Eric Gunderson and Stephen Barker Liles approached their latest effort very differently from their first album, with a new team of players boosting their careers.

The band has experienced a reincarnation of sorts since its first album, *World Wide Open*, was released in 2009 by Lyric Street's Carolwood Records. Member Brian Bandas exited the group and Lyric Street shuttered, but Liles and Gunderson rallied.

The duo signed to Sony's RCA Records Nashville and entered agreements with Vector Management and EMI Music Publishing. They teamed with producer Josh Leo and recorded songs by writers other than themselves for the first time. And today, Love and Theft is ready to be reintroduced to Country Music fans.

Just like any other rising artist, the band recently took to the road to share its new music. They gladly spent 12 weeks visiting radio stations to promote the lead single, "Angel Eyes" (written by Jeff Coplan, Gunderson and Eric Paslay). But unlike most new acts, Love and Theft is already familiar with this routine.

"We've been on radio tour for six years," Liles said, with a laugh.

He and Gunderson were casual and unpretentious on this May morning at the Sony Music Nashville offices, swapping stories as easily as they trade lead vocals. Liles is extra cozy, taking meetings in a pair

of fuzzy house slippers. They get along well and seem to have a blast everywhere they go. Both laughed hysterically while watching a cell phone video of one of their favorite recent adventures — a trip to the Caribbean, where they discovered a herd of beer-drinking hogs.

They've grown close since being introduced several years ago by a mutual friend who is also an up-and-coming artist, Mercury Nashville's Canaan Smith. Liles and Smith met while competing in the Colgate Country Showdown in their home state, Florida. They ended up in Nashville, where Smith eventually introduced Liles and Gunderson. The future members of Love and Theft bonded over their similar backgrounds.

"We have a lot of things in common," Liles explained. "We were born the same year, 1984. Our mothers were born on the same day and year within 200 miles of each other. We both went to private schools and are both preachers' kids. We grew up singing harmonies in church."

With the cell phone videos put away, Gunderson and Liles grew more serious when discussing their new music. Platinum plaques line the Sony walls, and the duo was in awe while checking out those commemorating Josh Leo's work. His hit track record includes 21 No. 1 albums, with clients including Alabama, Emerson Drive, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Restless Heart.

"Working with him, we got to make a record like we always wanted to

# LOVE and theft

## back for act two

by SARAH SKATES

make," Liles said. "A classic producer like that, he does it the old-school way, playing live with the band in the studio and not adding a bunch of tracks later on."

Gunderson and Liles joked that they met Leo through **Match.com**, but it was actually Jim Catino, VP, A&R, Sony Music Nashville, who paired them with the producer. "I suggested Josh because he has a good track record with groups," Catino said. "So I thought he'd be a great match. Josh and I had been on the lookout for a project to work on together. We've been friends for a long time and I'm a big fan of his work. I introduced Josh and the band, and they hit it off creatively and personally. It ended up being a perfect match."

Leo and Catino helped guide the band through the recording process, following a very different blueprint than that of its debut release. On *World Wide Open*, Love and Theft was a trio that wrote or co-wrote every song. The group turned the finished project in to Lyric Street, which then released it. Its debut single, "Runaway" (Liles, Canaan Smith and Rob Blackledge) went on to become a Top 10 hit as well topping the *Billboard* Heatseekers chart.

A longtime fan of Love and Theft, Catino enjoyed following the band's success with Lyric Street. "I've been aware of them for several years," he noted. "We tried to sign them the first go-round. I've always loved their music and dug the guys from the first time I met them. When we finally had the opportunity to work together, Gary Overton (Chairman/CEO, Sony Music Nashville) and I looked at the roster. We didn't have a duo, so we had room for Love and Theft. The timing was good for us as a company, plus I had a good gut feeling."

Equipped with more music business experience, stronger songwriting skills and a new label and producer, Gunderson and Liles recognized the importance of cutting the best available songs for the new album. "For the first time in our career, we did song pitch meetings," Liles said. "It was really fun because we got to hear hundreds of songs from all across Music Row. There are so many good songs out there, and I can't believe we got to record some of them."

"For whatever reason, we didn't even give other people's songs a shot back when we made our first album," Gunderson added. "We knew the caliber of songs that were out there, but we just didn't know how to get our hands on them. We've made so many friends over the years here that are incredible writers, so to embrace that this time around was really amazing."

"It was a little perplexing that they'd never recorded outside songs," Catino said. "They are great writers, but when we started working together, they were very excited to hear what the town had to offer. They just wanted to cut great songs, which is always a smart move on an artist's part, as long as they creatively fit what their brand is and what they are trying to accomplish with their music. We found some great things for the project that fit their sound and the direction we were going for. They also wrote about half the record, so it all married up great."

In fact, Gunderson and Liles are focused on songwriting like never before. They say they are devoting more time to it and taking greater pride in the craft. The results speak for themselves: Between the two of them, they have scored cuts by Bucky Covington ("Baby Run," written by

Gunderson, Liles, Bandas and John Kennedy), Martina McBride's "Wrong Baby Wrong" and Sawyer Brown's "Ain't Goin' Out That Way" (both by Liles, Robert Ellis Orrall, Brad Warren and Brett Warren) and Canaan Smith's "We Got Us" (Liles, Smith and Tommy Lee James).

In addition to the focus on quality songs, Love and Theft wanted to create a new sound for themselves. "We are older and more mature now," Gunderson pointed out. "We wanted to get away from that slick, polished sound of the first record. I wouldn't say our sound was ever really what was portrayed on our first record. People would come to our live show or see us when we were on tour with Tim McGraw, and they'd say we were way better live than on our record."

"We had a lot of creative talks shortly after signing them, talking about what direction we wanted to take this album," Catino added. "They wanted to go back to the sound they had early in their career, when they were playing clubs. They wanted to go back to an organic feel, which was more about their vocals and harmonies."

The production on "Amen" (Derek George, Neil Thrasher and Bryan White) embodies the sound Love and Theft wanted to capture. Actually, it set the tone for the entire album. "It was one of the songs we cut early on," Catino said. "The rest of the project filled in around that track. There are some really fun songs on the record, but there are some pretty deep lyrics too. We covered all the bases."

One of the serious tracks, "Town Drunk" (Natalie Hemby and Daniel Tashian), is a standout. The story of an alcoholic father and his neglected daughter is one of the outside songs that caught the band's attention and helped add dimension to the album.

"When we were looking for a song to round out the record, something with a cool, almost artistic feel, that's when we found 'Town Drunk,'" Catino recalled. "When the album was finished, it turned out to be everyone at the label's favorite song."

"I expected it to be a drinking song," said Liles, remembering the pitch meeting. "But halfway through the demo, I started crying. I've never had a relationship with my mom's dad because he was an alcoholic. At the end of the song, when the little girl is grown up and happily married and has a baby, it's like that baby is me."

This summer, the band is meeting plenty of new fans and reconnecting with old ones on Brad Paisley's Virtual Reality tour, which continues into the fall. Throughout their journey, Love and Theft are savoring the opportunity to reclaim their position in the Country Music spotlight.

"We feel very confident and passionate about the team of people we have around us," Gunderson reflected. "It's a well-oiled machine. Everybody knows their job and does it really well. It allows us to focus on what's important: performance, songwriting — the music."

**LoveandTheft.com; @LNTweet**

*Sarah Skates is Senior News Editor of Music Row magazine.*

"I wouldn't say our sound was ever really what was portrayed on our first record."

— Eric Gunderson,  
Love and Theft

# TAKE YOUR PICK!

Back in 1966, John Sebastian noted in his song "Nashville Cats," that "there's thirteen hundred and fifty-two guitar pickers in Nashville," each of whom "played clean as country water." Years later, he recalled, with a laugh, someone "with too much time on their hands" went through the local AFM book from 1966 and found out "I was only 30 off."

In the 46 years since The Lovin' Spoonful made history for themselves and for Music City with that song, that number has obviously grown. Many guitarists have come and gone, dreamed and died, which makes the task of deciding a consensus "best ever" picker to play Country Music a tough one. Still, it's worth trying to do, particularly with the aid and counsel of some of those heralded Nashville Cats themselves.

## Hank Garland

Almost everyone interviewed put Hank Garland at the top. The young South Carolinian hit it big when he debuted at the Grand Ole Opry at the age of 15, back in 1945. For the next 16 years, he was an A-Team session guitarist and an inventive and influential musician, unafraid of blowing right past musical boundaries. Sadly, a bad car wreck in 1961 robbed him of much of his facility. He died in 2004.

"He's the guy who all the Nashville guys thought was the best guitarist besides Chet (Atkins), who was Mr. Elegant," **John Sebastian** noted. "He was the guy you could hang a whole session on. His style was so solid."

"There's no question it's Hank Garland," said **Kenny Vaughan** of The Fabulous Superlatives when asked who is No. 1 in Country guitar. "His technique was generally unsurpassed and his harmonic knowledge was far advanced beyond what you'd hear today. He had quite a loose, playful feel that seemed to be spot-on. Never sloppy, he played some wild licks. Hank Garland was also a fiddle player, and he could burn a fiddle tune pretty fast on a guitar."

"Hank was rare in the fact that he was equally comfortable playing jazz or Country," added **Steve Wariner**. "He was so sought after by producers in Nashville for the Country sessions, but he could play any style and lightning fast. He would play just the right thing on any session. We've all heard hundreds of the hits he played on and yet may not know it was him. So goes the life of a session musician!"

"Because of his jazz playing, Hank Garland was revered by everyone in the world," agreed **Harold Bradley**, a member of CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame. "Although his career was short, it was incredible work he did in a short period of time. On 'Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree,' that's Hank and myself playing the intro — and then he borrowed my guitar and played it on Elvis' 'Little Sister.'"

# TODAY'S GREATS REFLECT ON THE ALL-TIME TOP COUNTRY GUITARISTS

by TIM GHIANNI

## Grady Martin

Some say Garland would have to wrestle Grady Martin for the No. 1 spot. Coming from rural poverty near Lewisburg and Chapel Hill, Tenn., he played with an encyclopedia of greats, from Buddy Holly to Roy Orbison to Willie Nelson to Country Joe and the Fish.

"I first became aware of him as a kid through Ray Price and Marty Robbins recordings," said Wariner. "He created a style that is much imitated. His use of tape echo in the studio was awesome. He was equally brilliant on acoustic guitar. I guess my favorite Grady recording is still the Marty Robbins classic, 'El Paso.'"

Martin "was a consummate guitar player and studio hero," said **Richard Bennett**, member of the Notorious Cherry Bombs, sideman for Neil Diamond and Mark Knopfler, producer for Steve Earle, Emmylou Harris and Marty Stuart, and first-degree studio ace. "The guy could play anything. I was told by one of his studio contemporaries that he could hear a song for the first time and 'hear it' completed, like an interior decorator walking into an empty room and imagining it perfectly appointed and furnished."

"He defined the styles on Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty recordings," Bradley observed. "He also defined the Tex-Mex sound with 'El Paso' and played the fuzz on 'Don't Worry' by Marty Robbins. He was huge, and because Hank Garland was injured, he became the major voice in the recording studio."

"Hank Garland and Grady Martin are the two top guys," Vaughan insisted. "At that time in music, people were generally more educated about more advanced harmonic structures. They were incorporating elements of bebop into their playing. These two guys were not hillbillies. They were able to 'hillbilly it up' when called for, and they were able to play rock 'n' roll and tear it up. But I listen to them and say, 'Wait a minute. You're playing a note there that nobody has been able to do.' You don't notice it because it's so well done and the melodies are so brilliant."

## Chet Atkins

"You have to include Chet Atkins," said Bradley. "He did so much internationally, not only for the guitar but for Nashville. While we were the A-Teamers, the 12 guys who were digging the coal every day, Chet was like my brother Owen: They turned out to go on to bigger and better things. Chet went on to become a concert player. He wasn't a guitar-for-hire after he became an executive. But he kept getting better and better. There was a progression to the stuff that he was doing in those last 10 years. It was very musical and easily absorbed because it was so tasty."

"Along with Owen Bradley, he has been called the architect of the Nashville Sound," Wariner added. "It was partly because of his producing, but a big part, in my estimation, was his guitar wizardry. He may be the most imitated guitarist ever. He was a brilliant innovator, rightfully called 'Mr. Guitar.'"

"Chet Atkins was an iconic original from the 1940s until his death," said Bennett. "You always knew who it was when Chet was playing the instrument. His conception, tone, humor, dignity and elegance all came bursting from his fingers. Genius is no exaggeration when talking of his musicianship and record production."

"There was something about Chet that humility came with the act," reflected **John Knowles**, who nurtured his fingerstyle chops and has worked with Chet Atkins, Jerry Reed and countless others. "I think Chet knew he had worked hard, gained ground and accomplished something.

Chet was like the biggest iceberg guy: There was way more going on than he'd ever reveal. I used to kid him that when you look at pictures of great Country artists, Chet was always in the picture, playing guitar. He was the Forrest Gump of Country Music."

More briefly, in the words of contemporary session giant **Brent Mason**, "Chet Atkins was definitely the cat-daddy of them all."

## Jerry Reed

If not for his on-screen performances, his friendship with movie star Burt Reynolds and his "When You're Hot, You're Hot" and "Amos Moses" novelty hits, Jerry Reed might have been viewed primarily as a virtuoso guitarist — possibly the top player of his time. After all, Wariner remembered, "I heard Chet say several times that Jerry was the best guitarist. Period."

"It was funny," he continued. "Jerry really came to town as a songwriter, but he was probably the most naturally gifted player I've ever been around. I'm not even sure Jerry knew how good he was. Young players fawning over him would ask, 'What guitar did you play on this record or that?' And Jerry would say, 'Oh, I don't know. It's just wood and strings, son.'"

"Jerry Reed was one of the most original guitar players to come out of Nashville," Knowles said. "He grew up on Merle Travis and Chet Atkins and those guys, and he turned it inside out. He's had influence in the studio too. He played on a couple of Elvis records. Nobody else could sound like him. He was so aw-shucks about himself, but his whole career had size and scope. He's got the talent, the songs and the showmanship."

*"Jerry Reed was one of the most original guitar players to come out of Nashville." — John Knowles*

## James Burton

"Where to start with James?" Wariner asks himself. "He is famously known as Elvis' guitarist, having toured and recorded with him. He played on so many Ricky Nelson and Elvis hits as well as tons of Country recordings too numerous to mention. The highlights for me are the West Coast Capitol recordings: Merle Haggard's 'Mama Tried' and 'Workin' Man Blues,' to mention a few. For me, he is one of the fathers of twang. He had every young player in the world trying to get their hands on a Fender Telecaster. He is famous in the rock 'n' roll world and Country for bending those strings on his paisley Tele."

"You gotta remember James," Vaughan insisted. "He was huge playing with Emmy (Emmylou Harris) and the Hot Band. He was very influential with everyone. He sort of changed the electric guitar, with his teenage stylings."

Bennett more than agrees. "James Burton stood at the crossroads of hillbilly, rock, R&B and swamp. A stalwart of the Wrecking Crew, L.A.'s esteemed studio musicians of the 1960s, James brought his distinctive style to any kind of music and made it work."

*Tim Ghianni's most recent book, When Newspapers Mattered: The News Brothers & Their Shades of Glory, is a no-holds-barred memoir of life as a newspaperman.*



# LITTLE BIG TOWN

by BOB DOERSCHUK

**ONE GREAT SINGER IS A PRODUCER'S DELIGHT. WHEN GEORGE JONES, TONY BENNETT OR ANDREA BOCELLI IS BEHIND THE MICROPHONE, THE POSSIBILITIES FOR ONE-OF-A-KIND BURSTS OF INSPIRATION ARE WHAT SPARK THE STUDIO MAVEN'S IMAGINATION.**

Does this mean that when you gather four terrific singers, the opportunities for such moments quadruple? Not exactly, but it does tweak the dynamic in an intriguing way. Group vocals reach out differently, in blends made smoother by toning down individual idiosyncrasies. Even where one member takes the spotlight for a chorus, the group is fundamentally, well, a group. To producers with a particular sensitivity to sonic nuance, this suggests a different set of possibilities than a single voice on its own — possibilities related to texture and timbre, similar to working with strings or synth pads.

Jay Joyce is that type of a producer. With Cage the Elephant and Patty Griffin as well as Country artists Eric Church, Emmylou Harris,

Jack Ingram and Ashley Ray, his trademark has been to frame the performer in vivid and often surprising colors. It sounds on paper like a perfect match for Little Big Town, whose versatility, precision, emotional expression and shimmering harmonic presentation seem ideal for this type of treatment.

It sounds that way on disc too. The meeting of Little Big Town and Jay Joyce on *Tornado*, scheduled for release Sept. 11, delivers on its promise of mutually inspired creativity. Working together, artists and producer have come up with a milestone, each casting the other in a new light and bringing forth something unlike anything either has produced before.

"We just knew that we needed to do something new," explained Little Big Town's Karen Fairchild. "We've had great success with our longtime producer and friend, Wayne Kirkpatrick. But even in discussions with Wayne, it was like, 'How do we continue to inspire each other?' You do find new ways of doing it with a longtime collaboration, but we felt like we needed a fresh perspective in a way. We had a great, open,

PHOTO: PHILLIP SWEET, KIMBERLY SCHLAPMAN, KAREN FAIRCHILD AND JIMI WESTBROOK AT THE "PONTON" VIDEO SHOOT.



## new adventures in harmony and production

honest dialogue with Wayne. He could not have been more supportive. That's just the kind of person he is."

With his blessing, the band — Fairchild, Kimberly Schlapman, Phillip Sweet and Jimi Westbrook — reached out to Joyce. They'd already met him when he laid down some guitar tracks on their 2010 album, *The Reason Why*, so when they invited him over to dinner, everyone showed up eager to trade ideas.

"He respected what we had done in the past and he knew we didn't want to completely leave that behind," Fairchild recalled. "But he also said, 'You know what? I think I can make a new record on you guys — something different. I've got some ideas about the way we're going to record your voices.' And that's what we wanted to hear."

"I really like the classic vocal bands — that '70s/Eagles/Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young kind of thing," Joyce elaborated. "I thought that if we spent enough time in pre-production, they'd know what to do and we could go in and nail it. So we worked really hard in pre-production. We even got a couple of players to come in and rehearse — I don't know why that's so unusual here in Nashville, but pre-production is pretty key especially with vocal bands because you can constantly change singers and keys. The options are endless."

Those options stretched beyond replicating old-school vocal styles — though on "Can't Go Back" (written by Natalie Hemby, Kate York and Rosi Golan), for example, the voicings sung and doubled by Little Big Town do clearly evoke the classic CS&N sound circa "Helplessly Hoping." "We did a lot of bouncing. We did duets. We did a lot of things they never did," Joyce noted. "The guys would sing a line and the girls would sing the harmony, as opposed to everybody going at once. We experimented with a lot of old-school effects. I even had them get inside an echo chamber when they sang some of the parts of 'Night Owl.' And that's Kimberly inside the echo chamber at the end of 'Tornado.'"

That vintage echo chamber at Nashville's Sound Emporium Studios was just one resource employed by Little Big Town and Joyce. Special attention was paid to the drums. "Jay was very particular about cymbals getting in the way of the vocals," Fairchild reported. "He wanted a clean pathway, but the foundation underneath should be heavyweight and full. That's the kind of record that Jay makes anyway, but that's also what we were looking for."

"When you have four main vocalists, that's a lot of real estate in the two-speaker area," Joyce added. "A lot of times, people cram the vocals on top, so my idea was to carve out that niche right from the beginning. It might feel a little strange and empty at first, but once we put the vocal right there, they didn't have anything to fight with. They can live without competing against anything else in the mix."

Using the drums more sparsely also allows them to speak with a greater presence. They underscore the space and intimacy of "Sober" (Liz Rose, Hillary Lindsey and Lori McKenna). The ominous imagery of "Tornado" (Hemby and Delta Maid) is lit by a snare backbeat that cracks like lightning and anchored on the downbeats by a kick drum that stalks like footsteps in the dark. And the four-beat rhythm on the verses of "On Fire Tonight" (Luke Laird and Little Big Town) ignites a sizzling, Sly Stone-like party groove.

But rules are made to be broken too. On one track, "Self Made," the formula is reversed during choruses, where the voices are buried within a thunder of drums, washes of cymbal and squalling electric guitars. Powerful on its own, "Self Made" packs an even bigger punch through its contrast with the rest of *Tornado*.

"'Self Made' is a really special song," Fairchild said. "Jimi and I were writing with Natalie Hemby. She played us this thing that she and Jedd Hughes had started, called 'Self Made.' We knew the band would flip

out over that lyric. It's not just our story, it's the story of every working man and woman in this country that has to try to do something for themselves the hard way. It's about perseverance and believing and looking ahead.

"When we went in to track this song, we saved it for the end. It was like the culmination of all the work we'd done," she continued. "Jay was literally standing on top of the (Hammond) B-3 in the middle of the room, almost conducting and inspiring us to give more. It was something I'll never forget. I know you can feel it when you hear that song. We wanted it to be about that moment, and if you push the vocals too forward, you're not going to feel the way everyone was playing. It felt like it should just sit inside that band moment because what everyone was doing was necessary."

"A lot of Country Music vocals are shoved up front automatically," Joyce added. "I like to hear what a vocalist is saying, but I also like the Rolling Stones. So it was intentional not to do the typical thing on 'Self Made.' With a rock song, if you're going to jam four beautiful, big-sounding voices to the front, the song is not going to rock. No matter what you do, it's going to sound like karaoke. To keep the rock feel, I balanced the vocals just above what I would do for a rock band."

On this track in particular, that energy stemmed from how everyone configured in the studio. Little Big Town lined up as they do onstage, on individual microphones in a row. The musicians surrounded them, pushing the music into them from all directions. "We weren't worried about bleed-over into the mics," Fairchild insisted. "We worried about the energy of what we were doing. We even invited some of the writers to drop by because we wanted them to make us nervous. It ups the energy when someone walks into the room to listen as you track. We could see everybody; it felt very in the moment with them. Jay would go, 'All right, let's go. Bring your A-game. Sing!' He'd count us in, and we were in the moment, bringing it."

That was true on the album's antithesis to "Self Made" too. The most delicate moments on *Tornado* come at the end, with "Night Owl" (Hemby and Little Big Town). Accompanied by acoustic guitar, with vibraphone and electric guitar adding a glistening sheen, it presents the singers in an unusual configuration, the male and female voices answering each other in a dreamlike dialogue of imminent reunion. Listening, one hesitates even to breathe, for fear of disrupting its fragile, floating beauty.

Amazingly, it took just seven days for Little Big Town to track *Tornado*. After a short rest, they came back to listen with some perspective and tighten a few details. "Jay said, 'You guys sing every night. You're good singers. There's no reason why you're not just laying this down live in the studio all the way,'" Fairchild remembered. "I'm not saying we didn't cut and paste some things together. But what you're hearing is a moment in time of about seven days of rehearsing and then singing live at night, just as we would in a show: The boys have a shot of whiskey, we have a little glass of wine, and we're off. We worked at a fast pace because we were so excited, we wanted not only our label and management to hear these songs; we were ready for the world to hear them. We're ready now!"

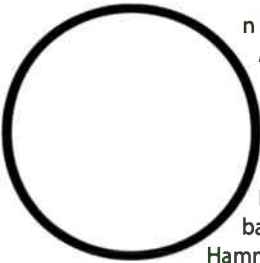
[LittleBigTown.com](http://LittleBigTown.com); @LBTMusic

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— Karen Fairchild, Little Big Town

# the ups and downs of recording alone

While recording his major label debut album, Hunter Hayes clashed occasionally with his studio musicians. Problem is, they were all named Hunter Hayes.



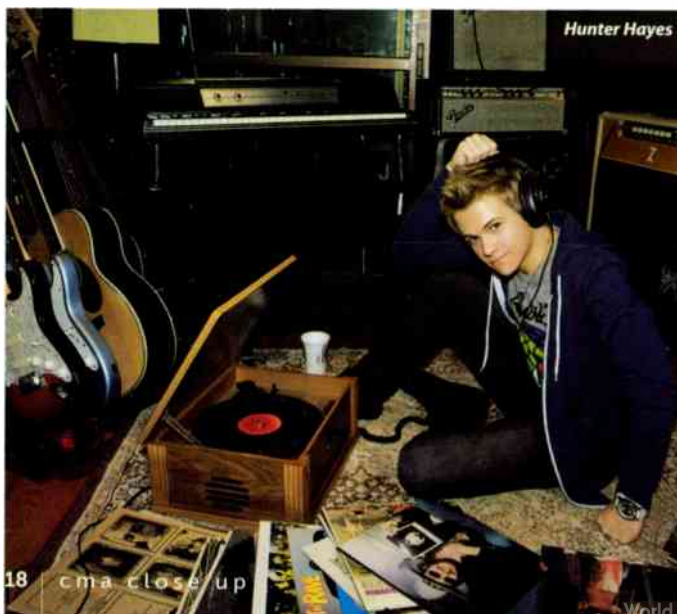
In his self-titled project, released last October on Atlantic Records, the artist, then just 20 years old, not only co-produced with Dann Huff but also sang every note and played every instrument. That included accordion, bass, bouzouki, Hohner Clavinet, drums, Fender Rhodes, guitars (acoustic, 12-string acoustic, baritone, electric, slide, resonator and steel), Hammond B-3, loops, mandocello, mandolin, piano, sitar, synthesizer and Wurlitzer.

This is *not* common practice. "I've never heard of it done in Country at all," Huff admitted.

Such extreme displays of DIY musicianship are more common in pop and rock, where John Fogerty, Paul McCartney, Prince, Todd Rundgren, Bruce Springsteen, Stevie Wonder and other icons have flown completely or nearly solo. But Country has also seen some impressive demonstrations of self-reliance, though none as expansive as Hayes'. In the 1950s, for example, Chet Atkins developed a "mad scientist" reputation for his home studio experimentation. Last year, Shelby Lynne released *Revelation Road*, a stripped-down independent album on which she wrote, played and sang everything as well as produced. Others, including Anita Cochran and Steve Wariner, have replicated the feat to lesser degrees.

## Why? Why Not?

For Hayes, that's how he's always done it. After getting an 8-track TASCAM recorder for Christmas in seventh grade, as he recalled, "I didn't come out of my room for months." Surrounded by gear, equipped with a little studio know-how and a bunch of unfinished songs, he dived into his work, both sides of his brain engaged, figuring out parts he'd never played and eventually creating his first demos.



"I saw it as an extension of the songwriting process," he said. "It just became the way I worked. I love that I can see a song through from start to finish."

"I love Hunter Hayes," said Anita Cochran. "I know where he's coming from. He and I started the same way with little recording devices in our bedrooms. I hope the best for this talented guy!"

"In my opinion, an artist gets a record deal because they can sing and they sing on their records," she added. "If the artist is a musician and plays their instrument onstage, why don't they play on their records? There are a lot of really good bands that have been signed over the years that never got to play on their own records and I never understood that. If I saw an artist onstage playing an instrument when I was a child, I just assumed they played on their records as well. I'm glad to see that some things are changing and more people are actually playing on their records now."

Cochran's 1997 debut album, *Back to You*, made her apparently the first female Country artist to produce, sing, write the songs and play multiple instruments, including lead guitar, on her own album. Necessity paved the way. She had honed her chops in a family gospel/bluegrass band, but she ran into problems when she tried to assemble her own Country band in South Lyon, Mich.

"There were really no Country Music players — steel guitar players, mandolin players or even piano players," she said. "They were all rock 'n' rollers. I need to record a piano and I don't see a piano player, so I guess I'll learn to play it. It led from one instrument to another."

*Back to You* included the No. 1 hit "What If I Said," which she'd written and then recorded as a duet with Steve Wariner. The respected singer/guitarist was also an advocate for playing multiple instruments, thanks in part to encouragement from his first producer, Chet Atkins, who signed him to RCA in 1967 and with whom he also toured.

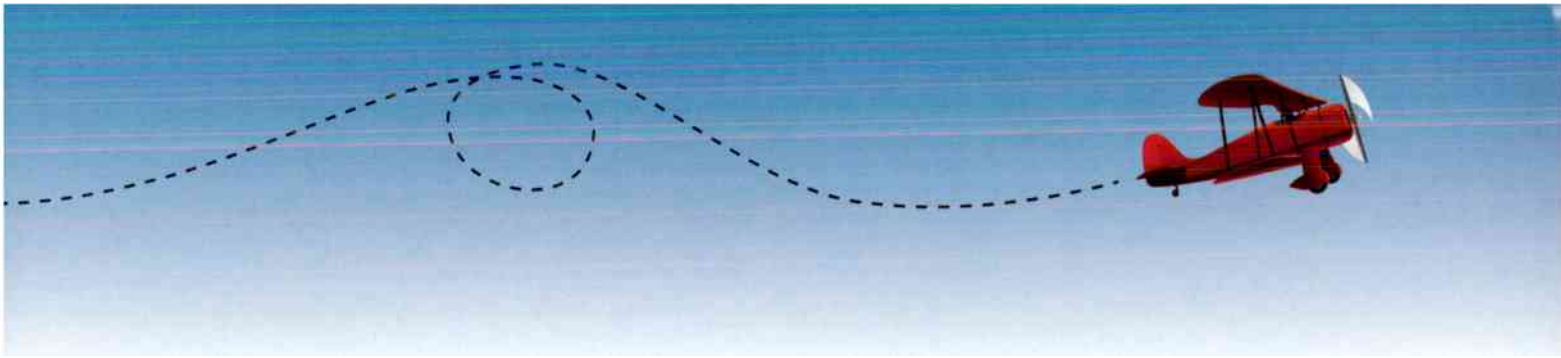
"He had a mini RCA Studio B at his house and we would record there," Wariner said. "He knew I played bass and steel guitar, and of course he knew my guitar playing and singing. He urged me, 'Hey, play this and then play that, and then we'll overdub those guitars.' He was having a blast. He'd have me play some parts, and then he'd jump in and play some parts. He'd even have me playing parts on a little black Wurlitzer (electric piano). I'd say, 'Chet, I'm not a piano player.' And he'd say, 'Aw, you can do it. Just play something in the chorus.'"

## From Demos to Albums

Home demos are a world removed from major-label projects. But as Hayes' Atlantic sessions neared, the idea to have the Louisiana phenom play everything and co-produce was, in his words, "carefully mentioned." The eventual decision: Give it a shot.

It was a first for a young artist and veteran producer. Hayes had never worked with another producer. Huff had, as he put it, "worked with people who've done several instruments, but never somebody that's done everything, top to bottom, including singing all the parts. So I had no blueprint."

Much time was spent getting acquainted. Huff welcomed Hayes'



by JEFF WALTER

suggestions — where to record, who would engineer, details of the process itself — and let him surround himself with friends. They took a relaxed approach. Huff noted, “I basically said, ‘How do you want to do this? It doesn’t really matter to me. I just know what the results need to be.’ It (recording solo) didn’t intrigue me until I heard his songs. Just doing it for the sake of doing it doesn’t really mean anything.”

Hayes chose The Castle in Franklin, Tenn., where Brad Paisley and Keith Urban, among other Country luminaries, had recorded. Louisiana homeboy Tony Daigle got the engineering gig.

It took a couple of weeks to lay down the first song (and ultimately lead single) “Storm Warning” (written by Hayes, Mike Busbee and Gordon Sampson). By then, the team had agreed that the process was working. Hayes described a “back-and-forth” collaboration in which Huff would “paint all over the canvas” of the original demo. Often, artist and producer would begin replacing individual tracks on the original Avid Pro Tools demos, progressively capturing stronger performances. Some guitar and vocal parts from the original demos survived to the final mix. Other songs morphed significantly.

“It’s the X factor in music – collaboration – that makes things special.” – Dann Huff

“There was really no single way that worked for every song,” Huff said. “We kind of felt it out as we went.”

“It was about the song, about the performance — Dann was adamant about that,” Hayes agreed.

For Anita Cochran, producer Jim Ed Norman’s confidence in her encouraged her to broaden her role on her debut. She had done it all on her home demos, which Norman loved. “So he was like, ‘I want you to play as many instruments (as you can) because you created the songs and I love the parts you played,’” she remembered.

As the project progressed, Norman was often out of town, so he made Cochran co-producer. Supported by session aces that included drummer Eddie Bayers, guitarist Brent Rowan and pianist Matt Rollings, Cochran contributed guitar (including lead), Dobro, banjo and mandolin in addition to her vocals.

“Jim Ed lets the artist be who the artist is,” Cochran said. “If you’re a musician, he wants you to be a musician on your record. And if you’re a songwriter, he wants you to be a songwriter on your record. He wants to capture everything within.”

### The Band Dynamic

Artists who play every part must compensate for the loss of the band dynamic — the magic that can happen in a roomful of talented musicians feeding off each other’s playing.

“That’s the main challenge,” said Huff. “It’s the X factor in music — collaboration — that makes things special. When it all comes through the funnel of one person, that person is going to tend to react the

same way. The trick with Hunter was to let him be Hunter Hayes each time. Sometimes it wasn’t that what he was playing wasn’t good, but it sounded too much like the guy playing drums or bass. We’d get to the end of a track and realize, ‘Hey, you’re playing better and more intuitively now. Let’s go back and cut that part again.’”

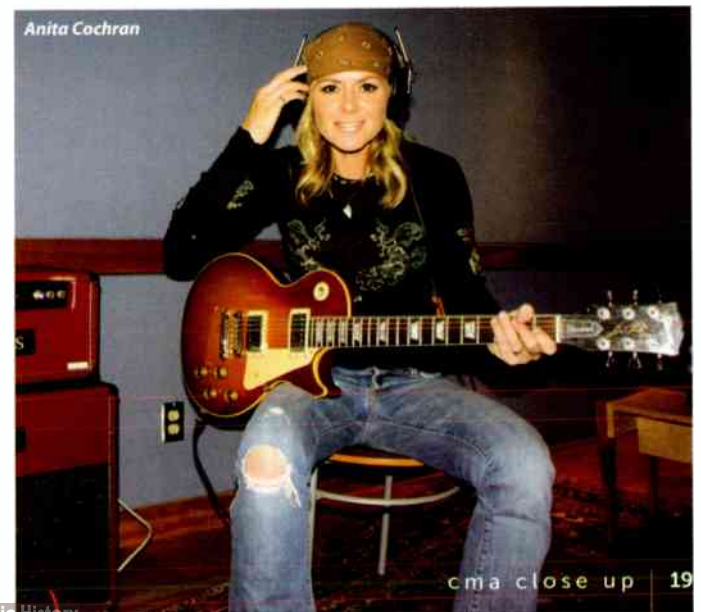
At times, the tapestry took shape slowly. But Huff’s instincts and Hayes’ abilities compensated for the lack of a band. “I’ve been doing acoustic parts for two days and they sound really stupid,” Hayes explained. “And then all of a sudden, I’m doing piano parts and it’s like, ‘Wow, that’s a magical thing! It’s making sense.’”

Wariner has felt the tug of competing impulses: self-indulgence and collaboration. For his 2011 album, *Guitar Laboratory*, “on three or four tracks I played everything, including upright bass and steel,” he reported. “It is really fun, as an artist. But what makes a great record, in my humble opinion, is when you have a bunch of great musicians and you turn them loose. Every player is turning in a performance that’s awesome, and you capture that on tape. One of the things I learned from Chet is to get the best players in the world, just get them in the room and let them do what they do. Let them create.”

For the do-it-yourselfer, there can be other drawbacks. For one thing, it takes a lot longer to record an album. “To be honest, it took me seven months to make this record,” Hayes said. “I really don’t want to spend quite that much time making the second one.”

So is he giving up his practice of going it alone? Not entirely, he admitted. “I consider myself very lucky to get to work that way, that I have a label that allows me to and a team that supports that process and understands it too.”

*Jeff Walter has had numerous bluegrass and independent cuts as a songwriter and music publisher.*



# BURNING RUBBER

**J**errod Niemann had just climbed aboard his tour bus after a March benefit show in Chattanooga, Tenn., for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital when his friend and fellow artist Lee Brice smelled something all too familiar — the acrid odor of a bus beginning to burn.

"It smelled like a heater kicking on," recalled Niemann, who took Brice's advice and stepped outside to investigate. "I turned the corner and there were flames coming out of this little vent in the back. They were maybe 10 inches long. I thought we could put it out with the fire extinguisher, but then all of a sudden the whole back end was on fire."

Cell phone footage on YouTube captured the blaze, culminating with both the tires and windows exploding. "The windshield blew out with the blinds still stuck to it," Niemann added.

Scary stuff. But when considering that Niemann's was the fourth bus to catch fire in less than two years that was carrying a Country singer, it's particularly troubling. In February 2011, Justin Moore's coach suffered a minor fire. A month later, Randy Houser lost clothing and personal effects when his bus burned. And in January, Brice's ride caught fire after a 10-hour drive from California to Mesa, Ariz.

"It was about lunchtime and I was still sleeping," Brice said. "All of a sudden I heard, 'You gotta get off the bus!' I thought it was a prank. But then I got out of bed and there was smoke in the back of the room. And that isn't campfire smoke. Those fumes are toxic. When I walked outside of Jerrod's bus I saw the exact same smoke. As soon as I saw that smoke in the same spot, I knew something was happening."

In all four instances, the artists, their bands and their crews escaped safely. But the fires do raise the question of what artists can do to prevent such near tragedies and, just as importantly, how they can soldier on if a fire does occur while on tour.

Chip Huffman, co-founder of The Celebrity Bus Drivers Academy, which trains and places drivers throughout the touring industry, says

that the top priority of any bus company should be to ensure the mobility of the act. "You do *whatever* you have to do to move the artist or the crew," he emphasized. "Any reputable company is going to scour not only their own fleet but also the fleets of other companies to get the artist another bus. If there is a fire or a breakdown, the company is responsible for getting you home. And that's one of the reasons almost every artist leases (rather than buys) a tour bus."

Steve Emley, Niemann's manager at Fitzgerald Hartley — who was on the bus during his client's fire — agrees that it's best for artists to lease their vehicles. "I'm a big proponent of leasing," he said. "It's a lot of work to maintain a bus and own it. And the bus is the most important vehicle on the tour. In Jerrod's case, after we called the fire department, we called the bus company and they immediately dispatched another bus to pick us up."

Randy Houser's bus company did likewise after his fire in South Carolina. But unlike Niemann, who didn't have any gear or possessions on his bus when it burned (he was simply road-testing it on a short hop to Chattanooga), Houser lost the bulk of his clothing and some of his band's equipment.

"We'd been on that bus for over a year, so we had all our stuff on it," Houser said. "I lost all my stage clothes. That night, I ended up playing in crappy little shorts and a dirty T-shirt. And it's not like any of us are rich. When we lose something, it's a real loss, because everyone saves every dime to buy every piece of equipment they've got."

Houser noted that he is still waiting for the insurance company to do its part. "We haven't gotten anything back from the insurance and it's been over a year," said the singer/songwriter, whose single "How Country Feels" (written by Vicky McGehee, Wendell Mobley and Neil Thrasher) was released in May. "I'd just like to be able to replace the things we lost."

To that end, Huffman advises all artists to have their own coverage.

**"I HAD A BUS THAT  
BURNED TO THE  
GROUND BECAUSE  
THE ARTIST LIT A  
CANDLE IN A CUP  
HOLDER."**

— Nick Audino, CEO, Superior Coach Interiors

# HOW TO PREVENT - AND SURVIVE - TOUR BUS FIRES

by JOSEPH HUDAK



Jerrod Niemann's bus is immobilized in Chattanooga, Tenn.

While the bus companies do carry insurance, it seldom covers the possessions of those who lease the vehicle. "The safest thing is to have your own insurance," he said. "The bus insurance is going to say that no personal items are covered. Most bus companies' policies do not insure for personal effects, musical instruments or gear. It can get a little sticky with the different insurance companies blaming one another."

Insurance questions might be more readily resolved if the causes of the fires were known. But Emley says that he and Niemann have yet to hear what sparked the blaze. "The bus has just gotten back to Nashville, actually," he noted. "It was in Chattanooga for a few weeks until they figured out how to get it back. It couldn't be driven or towed; it had to be lifted. I talked to the bus company again and we still don't know what the cause is. In that case, it's hard to figure out what the next step is to protect somebody."

"The problem is that it burns so hot that it totally ruins everything," concurred Brice. "So there's no way to really tell the cause."

"It's just scary as hell," Houser admitted. "You think you're safe on a vehicle like this, and then you're sitting there and all of a sudden your stuff is on fire."

Any number of things can spark a bus fire, but wary travelers might find some solace in the fact that these disasters almost never happen while wheels are in motion. "Most of the buses that catch on fire and burn to the ground are stationary," said Nick Audino, CEO of Superior Coach Interiors and a former driver himself. "If they're rolling, it'd be a chassis issue, like a hole in an exhaust pipe or a brake fire."

According to Audino, the three most likely causes of a coach blaze are a mechanical fire in the chassis, a fire in a component of the bus, such as an air conditioner, or a poor decision on the part of a client.

"I had a bus that burned to the ground because the artist lit a candle in a cup holder," he said. "The candle burned down into the plastic holder and ignited the bus."

There are plenty of ways to cut down on the probability of a bus fire, beginning with installing smoke detectors in the cabin and storage bays. "The main thing I would suggest is that before you leave on tour, make sure that you are dealing with one of the reputable bus companies," Huffman advised. "Ask other artists or tour managers in the business what companies they have dealt with and how they have reacted when there was a fire or a breakdown. Make sure you get with a company that values customer service, because there are some out there that don't."


And, said Niemann, when in doubt, always listen to your pals. "When Lee said to get off the bus, I said, 'You're just paranoid. There's no way this bus is on fire too.' But I grabbed my guitar and my backpack and walked off."

Stopping to reflect on the worst-case scenario, he concluded, "I'm just so thankful that it didn't happen when we were driving, because that would have fanned the flames and we wouldn't have smelled it. It might have been *adios*."

"A lot of things are out of the artist's control when it comes to the nuts and bolts of something like a bus fire," Emley said. "It can be scary for artists. Everybody's livelihood — it doesn't matter if it's the label or a booking agent or a publicist or management — depends on the artist. So we have to keep those guys and girls safe."

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Joseph Hudak contributes regularly to *Country Weekly* and is a respected bio author for artists in Nashville.



GIVEN THE TITLE, IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT JOSH TURNER PULLS NO PUNCHES ON HIS LATEST ALBUM. *PUNCHING BAG* IMPACTS WITH SOME OF THE MOST AUTHENTIC, STIRRING MUSIC OF HIS DECADE-LONG CAREER.

As a fan of boxing's glory days, Turner looked toward some of his heroes from the ring for inspiration. "I'm definitely a fan of fighters like Muhammad Ali, George Foreman and Evander Holyfield," he said. "To me, they were the greats. People considered them gods in some ways. They were so iconic in the ring, and everybody made such a big deal about each fight they had. With this record, I wanted to express the idea that life is tough. You get a lot of punches thrown at you and you have to take those punches and keep moving forward. So I just kind of channeled all of that."

The results draw from despair on "Pallbearer" (written by Turner), which features Marty Stuart on mandolin and Iris DeMent on harmony vocal in a lonesome account of a longtime family friend's death. They also bubble over with joy on "Find Me a Baby" (Turner and the album's producer, Frank Rogers), on which the voices of his wife and kids appear, along with their new baby's gurgling laugh.

Turner wrote eight of its 11 tracks and is particularly proud of the two he created on his own, "Pallbearer" and the upbeat, gospel-infused "For the Love of God." It also powerfully affirms his roots in classic Country, from the keening steel and weeping fiddle of "Cold Shoulder" (Turner

and Mark Narmore) down to Ricky Skaggs' vocal and instrumental contributions to "For the Love of God."

"The inspiration behind asking Ricky to be on this record was from a record he had done called *Solo*," Turner noted. "It was a record of songs his daddy had loved. Ricky had sung everything and used all kinds of crazy instruments on it. It was really earthy, very traditional old-timey bluegrass. You don't hear those kinds of records anymore, especially new records. And I fell in love with that record. So when I wrote 'For the Love of God,' I thought it would be great to have Ricky come in and play some of those instruments that nobody else can play. And we wanted him to sing on it too because he's got such a great voice, so that was a dream come true too."

Even at this stage of the game, Turner admits that it's not easy to come up with a song that completely satisfies him. "It's never been easy for me, from day one," he said. "I guess I'm more critical of each song I write because I try to make each one better than the last. Sometimes that's a hard thing to do. It's a constant challenge. I started writing at 17, so I feel like I got somewhat of a late start at that, but I've always worked at it and tried to get better. I've always been in love with words; I love word

# JOSH TURNER

SCORES A KNOCKOUT ON "HSN LIVE"

Josh Turner performs on "HSN Live" in May.

by LORIE HOLLABAUGH

games and crossword puzzles, and I'm always looking for new ways to use words and rhymes and little twists on titles. A lot of times, certain words will mean something totally different to me than they would to a normal person," he added, laughing.

"But when I go in to make a record, I don't necessarily have a direction I want to go in. I just write the songs that come from my heart. I listen to thousands of songs in preparation for a record and choose the ones I really feel strongly about. When I put this record together, I noticed right off that this was probably one of my most Country records I've ever done," he reflected. "I didn't start out with that in mind; it just kind of happened that way."

In many respects, then, *Punching Bag* is Turner's most personal as well as most traditional effort to date. That's one reason why Cracker Barrel is sponsoring his current tour and also releasing its own Turner CD, *Josh Turner – Live Across America* on Aug. 27 for sale exclusively in Cracker Barrel Old Country Stores. The company had previously issued another Turner concert album, *Live at the Ryman*.

"With Josh we looked at his success, his authenticity, his country roots and family values, and all of that obviously was a brand fit for Cracker Barrel," said Julie Craig, Marketing Manager, Cracker Barrel Old Country Stores. "We knew that his success as an artist was going to marry up wonderfully with what we could do on projects and his tour sponsorships as well."

Though steeped in Country tradition, *Punching Bag* represents a departure from tradition in marketing through its use of the multi-channel retailer HSN.

When Turner called in as a guest in 2011 during an HSN broadcast in May 2011, he had no idea he'd be starring someday in an HSN special of his own. In May this year, he appeared on the network's "HSN Live" show to promote a bundle that included *Punching Bag* and a best-of CD, *Icon: The Best of Josh Turner*. Like Lionel Richie, whose previous appearance on HSN helped build awareness of his Country Music album *Tuskegee*, Turner found this an effective way to market a new album to a bevy of home shoppers who might not have been familiar with his music.

"I knew Randy Travis had done it because I actually had made a call in to his live show," Turner said. "Outside of that, I didn't know a lot about HSN. But as I prepared for the show, I learned that HSN has started to get into introducing products for artists and they've been having a lot of success. So I was kind of excited about the whole venture. It's great for music, it's great for HSN. It's great for the fans to be able to get a sneak peek into a piece of new product and decide whether or not they want it and then go ahead and order it — and then get some extra stuff along with the new album. So it's a win-win situation for everybody."

HSN's earlier, ultra-successful experience with Lionel Richie primed them to get ready for Turner's appearance and concert. "Obviously, Lionel was the biggest one we've had so far," said Andy Sheldon, Executive VP, TV/Live Events/Creative, HSN. "His integration into Country Music was so spectacular, and it just felt that getting to Josh now would be the right thing to do. He's at the prime of his career. He's loved and adored and has had such huge success. This was a great way to introduce him to our audience and also bring his audience to HSN."

"We've been turning the network around in the last five years," Sheldon continued. "We've made some significant changes, and one of the areas of real growth for us has been to merge entertainment retail with lifestyle. A lot of people thought we were crazy, that it wouldn't work. But actually, it categorically does work. We've become a much

more accessible, more user-friendly, sharper platform that really understands the brand, whether it's Lionel or Josh or Badgley Mischka (fashion). It's my job to understand the DNA of that brand and bring it to life, so there's individuality but it fits within the brand that we work to create — and that's HSN."

For his May 25 appearance on "HSN Live," Turner performed a 60-minute concert, which also streamed live on [HSN.com](http://HSN.com) and HSN Mobile and included a live Twitter feed. The electronic retailer has become particularly adept in recent years at producing top-rate music specials, according to Sheldon.

"We know how to produce content that viewers respond to," he said. "Our objective with 'HSN Live' is to provide an environment where artists can showcase their music in a way that is compelling, entertaining and ultimately drives sales. Our crew understands the art and nuances of live stage production and executes flawlessly. Top artists like Lionel, Tony Bennett and a number of others have said their HSN appearances are some of the best produced shows they've ever been on. That's great to hear and clearly demonstrates that HSN knows how to produce live music events for television, as well as our digital platforms."

"IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE I'VE BEEN AROUND AS LONG AS I HAVE BEEN, BECAUSE I STILL CONSIDER MYSELF A NEW ARTIST." — Josh Turner

The success of "HSN Live" has triggered a flood of requests from artists and labels eager to participate in the special. "Absolutely, we want to explore more and work further on the Country scene," Sheldon said. "We've been working with Tom Lord (VP, Marketing, Universal Music Nashville) about various opportunities and ideas because Country Music is so important to the music scene in the U.S. and shouldn't be ignored. So many people love Country, so we're glad we're able to provide a platform and give the artists the exposure and the opportunity to perform. There are very few opportunities for artists and the fans to talk to each other during a live TV show. That's an engaging element we're able to provide. And as we continue to develop that, we're talking to so many labels and artists about opportunities right now."

For Turner, the HSN special is just one more step in a career that he feels is only just starting. "It's hard to believe I've been around as long as I have been, because I still consider myself a new artist," he said. "I still feel young, so looking back on 10 years of being in this business is kind of surreal. In some ways, it feels really short. In others, it feels like it's dragging on. But it's cool to be able to see or listen to the music I started making when I came to town and how much I've grown from that time. For instance, because I was so close to 'Long Black Train' — I wrote it, I was the singer on it — I always experienced it from a completely different angle than anyone else. Now, when I go back and listen to 'Long Black Train,' I can almost start to hear what people heard in the beginning. It's a good place for me to be."

**JoshTurner.com, @JoshTurnerMusic**

Lorie Hollabaugh grew up listening to stories about Waylon Jennings, Loretta Lynn, Hank Williams and other legends from her great uncle Hugh Cherry, a Country Radio-Hall of Fame disc jockey.



Craig Wiseman hosts the Second Harvest Food Bank Show, 2012

## CRAIG WISEMAN

One benefit of coming a few days early to the CMA Music Festival is the opportunity to attend the annual Stars for Second Harvest concert, which happens Tuesday night of Festival Week at the Ryman Auditorium.

Participants change from year to year. But the emcee is always Craig Wiseman. Unmistakable in his Big Loud Shirt, celebrated by the name of his publishing company, the Grammy-winning, three-time ASCAP Songwriter of the Year moves the show along with exuberant, spontaneous humor, joins his guests in performance and otherwise makes the Second Harvest fundraiser an event to remember. What's more important is what happens after the show. Proceeds from ticket sales, auctioned items and merchandise are donated to the charity to feed the hungry in Middle Tennessee. Wiseman feels their presence daily, even amid his office's upbeat decor.

"There are starving kids four blocks from here," he said, gesturing out his conference room window eastward across Music Row. "A child might go to bed tonight without a meal — in our country? Come on, man! I really do believe that old phrase, 'You bloom where you're planted.' I believe with all my heart that God puts you where you are in life, and the things you need to help change are right there in front of you."

Wiseman's involvement began shortly after his arrival in Nashville, when he was volunteering at the Hospital Hospitality House. His duties included driving a van to Second Harvest and loading food to take back to Hospital Hospitality House residents. Over time, he began to concentrate his energies on that charity, and was eventually asked to take over its fundraising concert series, formerly run by Emmylou Harris.

In addition to lining up talent for each show, Wiseman played a key role in rescheduling it for right before CMA Music Festival in 2010. "We'd already done the show in January when we decided to make the change," he recalled. "It was sort of like saying, 'We've played the Super Bowl in January — let's do it again in March!' But lo and behold, the Ryman had that Tuesday open. And getting it into CMA Week allowed me to go back to my mission of doing a songwriter show, where it's off the cuff and fun. It's a nice, organic, warm, low-key night, which lets you ramp up to the lasers and the explosions at LP Field. You can take that whole walk."

This year's Second Harvest concert, which featured Dallas Davidson, Florida Georgia Line, Vince Gill, Jake Owen and other notables, raised \$64,000, bringing the eight-year total to more than \$500,000 — enough to pay for more than two million meals.

Though it takes about half a year to book and prepare for each Second Harvest show, Wiseman has no regrets about his commitment. "I just love the charitable mindset there is in Country Music. When it's all said and done, I feel so fortunate to have been given this vehicle to show some support for Second Harvest and to be given this opportunity to ..."

Wiseman paused and then erupted in laughter as he said, "... bust my ass for a couple of months! And I'll keep coming back!"

**BigLoudShirt.com; SecondHarvestMidTn.org**



Tinti Moffat and Ree Buchanan Co-Chairs of "Hats Across the Row," 2011.

## TINTI MOFFAT

In early April, signs began to sprout along Music Row, each one depicting a hat, flamboyant, festively decorated and wide-brimmed, in the fashion of Minnie Pearl's signature headgear. That was no coincidence, for 2012 marks the 100th anniversary of the beloved comedienne's birth.

But "Hats Across the Row" also drew attention to the Minnie Pearl Cancer Foundation, which has been raising funds for cancer research since 1987. Known initially as the Cancer Education and Research Council, it was renamed with Pearl's blessing in 1992 after she had survived her own bout with breast cancer.

Created to widen its visibility, this campaign was conceived by Tinti Moffat, a former talent agent/manager and currently an entertainment and events consultant for the Jimmy Buffett organization as well as Co-Chair of "Hats Across the Row" with Ree Buchanan.

"I have no idea where it came from," she admitted, with a laugh. "I just pulled it out of somewhere in my head. If we can come up with something that sounds like it'll be fun, unite the community and create awareness at the same time, that's the goal."

Each sign was provided to businesses for a \$50 contribution. They stayed up until May, with a parade celebrating the Foundation on April 17. Among the antique cars, the Antioch High School Marching Band and other participants, a bevy of Minnie Pearl lookalikes strutted, flaunting hats donated by the Foundation. Despite the downpour that drenched the event, Moffat insisted that only confirmed their motto: "You cannot rain on our parade."

Born in Canada, Moffat moved to Nashville in 1992 when her employer, Balmur Entertainment, opened a branch there. As a member of the Hospital Community Foundation, her father was an innovative fundraiser. "A patient at one of the hospitals had given my dad 20 birdhouses, which he gave to some of the ladies of the auxiliary," she remembered. "They decorated them and sold them for the Foundation. So when we were trying to start a capital campaign for the new W. O. Smith (Music) School, to create awareness, we built 150 birdhouses and gave them to anybody in the community that wanted them — the Fire Department, the Mayor's office, St. Thomas Hospital, the library, and Edie Maney, Mandy Lawson and a lot of local artists."

Moffat and committee later retrieved them, each decorated and/or converted into furniture, artwork and even functional birdhouses. For a \$50 admission, the public could bid for them at an auction while enjoying food and wine donated by local restaurants. During her decade-long supervision of this initiative, ending with her retirement this year, more than \$600,000 was collected for the new school.

"There's always somebody less than two degrees away from you that has a passion for a charitable organization. All you have to do is have a cup of coffee with somebody, and whether it's this much commitment or this much," Moffat said, her hands far apart and then close together, "just dive in and do as much or as little as you can. But just do something."

**MinniePearl.org; wosmith.org**

Each CMA Member of the Month will be recognized in CMA Close Up and online at [CMAworld.com](http://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](http://CMAworld.com/News/CMA-Close-Up), email [CloseUp@CMAworld.com](mailto:CloseUp@CMAworld.com), or send information to CMA Member of the Month, One Music Circle South, Nashville, TN 37203.



Millions have come to know and appreciate Rodney Atkins as an entertainer. He connects with his audiences personally and directly; they are, to paraphrase one of his hit songs, his people, cut from the same cloth and guided by the values he celebrates in song.

**B**ut before embracing the role of performer, the East Tennessee native was drawn to a less public side of Country Music. "My dream was always to be a songwriter," he said. "When I was about 5 years old, I heard Charlie Daniels come over the radio, and I actually asked my parents, 'How do you get to be Charlie Daniels?'"

Atkins never achieved that goal — Charlie already had the gig sewed up — but he did take his first steps into the business as a writer. Some college friends of his essentially dragged him to a writer-in-the-round event in Nashville. There, Atkins found himself sitting onstage next to Casey Beathard, whose track record includes hits for a long line of artists; Atkins himself would top the Country charts in 2007 with the Beathard/Marla Cannon-Goodman co-write "Cleaning This Gun (Come On In Boy)."

These events helped usher Atkins into the Nashville musical whirl. It's understandable, then, why getting together and swapping songs with a group of fellow writers remains a fundamental pleasure for him. His performers side also finds it appealing to share that format with music lovers beyond Nashville. He did so in November by participating in the CMA Songwriters Series at Joe's Pub in New York City. And now he returns for a special installment as the Series debuts in Pittsburgh.

The Hard Rock Cafe Pittsburgh will host the event on Wednesday, Sept. 12, in a 200-seat space whose exposed brick walls and industrial ceiling create a comfortable urban vibe. Roy Smith, the venue's Sales & Marketing Manager, is pleased that Atkins will be onboard. More than that, he's excited to be among the many other enthusiasts who will be on hand for this milestone occasion.

"I personally have always been a fan of the singer/songwriter shows," he said. "Most people don't pay attention all the time to who writes the songs. But when somebody writes a song, they're coming from a certain place. When the singer hears the demo and picks that song to be on their record, they might have a different take on the lyrics. It could be translated in a different way. They might have gone a little faster or emphasized different words. It's a much more intimate and enlightening experience when you see this live at one of these 'unplugged' shows where people talk about their motivations behind writing songs. They're more personal and entertaining."

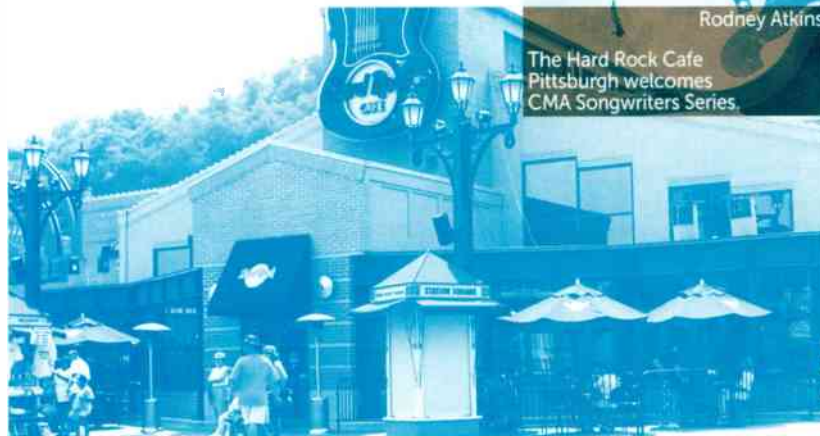
Atkins agrees with Smith on the Songwriters Series' fan appeal. But, he adds, taking part in songwriter circles continues to polish his craft, even now. "I get to sing 'If You're Going through Hell' typically two or three times a week in front of thousands of people," he said, referencing his No. 1 hit

# CMA Songwriters Series Premieres in Pittsburgh with Rodney Atkins

by BOB DOERSCHUK

"When I was about 5 years old, I heard Charlie Daniels come over the radio, and I actually asked my parents, 'How do you get to be Charlie Daniels?'"

— Rodney Atkins



from 2006, which Dave Berg wrote with Sam and Annie Tate. "It always blows me away to stand there and hear the crowd sing it back to you. Well, one time Dave and some friends and I did a benefit guitar pull for a school. Dave was singing that song, and when he came to the line 'You step off

the straight and narrow and you don't know where you are,' for some reason that line hit me completely differently. You're never really on the straight and narrow; none of us is. It's God's grace that it's impossible to completely walk the straight and narrow. That's what the song is about: faith, hope and 'keep on going.' What Dave did was make me completely relook at that song. Every line is amazing; it's so simple but deep at the same time."

The audience in Pittsburgh, like all who have experienced the CMA Songwriters Series, may gain similar insights into songs they've known and loved for years. "If folks do come in Pittsburgh because they've heard of me, I guarantee they'll walk away with whole new perspectives of where songs come from," Atkins predicted. "It's not just, 'Here's a new single by Rodney Atkins.' It's stories of, 'Somebody said this to me at this point in their lives. I started thinking about it and wrote this song.' God bless the folks that come because they're fans of mine, but they'll walk away being completely fans of these songwriters too."

"I came to Nashville to write songs," he concluded. "I never thought I could get in front of people and sing. I'm not good with that, 'Look at me up here!' But when you get out and play in front of people, the audiences lift you up with that feeling of 'we're in this together.' It's for them you want to give the best show you can, and then you fall in love with that aspect of it. It's such a blessing. But first, I'm proud to say I'm a songwriter."

For more information, visit [CMASongwritersSeries.com](http://CMASongwritersSeries.com).

Country Music Hall of Fame Member

# Frances Preston

1928-2012

by BOB DOERSCHUK

Frances Preston's legacy is unique. In terms of longevity, she had few rivals, having been a leader for more than half a century. Women in the music industry benefited from her achievements, not the least of which was to crack the corporate glass ceiling along with her close friend and colleague, former CMA Executive Director Jo Walker-Meador.

But above all, songwriters owe much to Preston's advocacy. Her career at BMI contributed to their empowerment and helped earn them recognition as an essential link in the chain of Country Music.

A Nashville native, Preston took her first step toward its nascent music industry while in college. A summer job at National Life Insurance earned her a berth at one of the company's properties, WSM-AM. Starting as a receptionist, she worked her way up the ladder, eventually becoming host of an on-air fashion show.

Impressed with her drive and talent, Bob Burton, Senior VP of BMI in New York City, appointed Preston to head the organization's new Southern regional office in 1958. Working initially out of her parents' home, she rose to the position of VP in 1964, becoming by many accounts the first female corporate executive in Tennessee.

Her impact grew steadily from those early years through her elevation in 1985 to Senior VP, Performing Rights and, from 1986 to 2004, President and CEO. Relocated to the national headquarters in New York City, Preston facilitated the expansion of BMI's catalogue in every genre. Writers and publishers enjoyed escalating royalty payments on her watch. While battling the threat to intellectual property posed by digital technology, she also embraced its potential in 1994 by launching **BMI.com**, one of the music industry's earliest websites.

Preston frequently took her crusade on behalf of songwriters to Washington, D.C., where she played a leading role in the Copyright Amendments Act of 1992, giving copyright protection to older compositions. Her efforts also helped extend the copyright term to the full life of the composer plus 70 years.

Washington, D.C., came to know Preston in areas beyond music too. She served on President Jimmy Carter's Panama Canal Study Committee and commission for the White House Record Library. In 1995 and '96, Preston sat on Vice President Al Gore's National Information Infrastructure Advisory Council, co-chaired by technology author Esther Dyson and NPR President/CEO Delano E. Lewis and formed to provide advice pertaining to the emerging "information highway."

Organizations in many different areas of service have honored Preston. She was presented with CMA's Irving Waugh Award of Excellence in 1991 and the Recording Academy's National Trustees Award in 1998, named "Person of the Year" by MIDEM in 1999, given the National Association of Broadcasters' Education Foundation Guardian Award in 2005, Leadership Music's Dale Franklin Award in 2007 and the



Nashville Songwriter Foundation's Mentor Award in 2010. In 2011, the Library of American Broadcasting Association named her to its elite Giants of Broadcasting, and BMI renamed its BMI Country Song of the Year in her honor, known now as the BMI Frances W. Preston Award.

Additional honors recognize Preston's charitable endeavors, including two Humanitarian Awards from the International Achievement in the Arts Awards, the first Distinguished Service Award from New York's Elaine Kaufman Cultural Center and the Lester Sill Humanitarian Award at the Retinitis Pigmentosa International Awards. The Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center acknowledged her with its Frances Williams Preston Research Laboratories.

Following her death at home in Nashville on June 13 from congestive heart failure, many have eulogized Preston. Jody Williams, BMI VP of Writer/Publisher Relations, Nashville, called her "without a doubt the single most important figure responsible for making Nashville 'Music City.'" BMI President/CEO Del Bryant described her as "a force of nature. She was smart, beautiful, tenacious and generous." Even her competitors noted her importance: "Whether we were competing or cooperating," said John LoFrumento, CEO of ASCAP, "Frances was always a class act, elegant and very gracious."

Speaking on behalf of CMA, where Preston served as its first female Chairman, CEO Steve Moore said, "Frances Preston was one of the most influential and significant leaders in the history of the music industry. Not only did she open doors for women, Country Music and Nashville around the world, but she was a tireless champion of songwriters and artists. She remained a strong supporter of CMA, contributing her knowledge and skills where they were needed and serving as one of three Lifetime Members of the CMA Board of Directors. She was most deservedly inducted into CMA's highest honor, the Country Music Hall of Fame, in 1992. Her presence will be missed, but the impact of her life charitable work, and the influence she had on thousands of industry colleagues will be felt for decades to come."

photo: courtesy of BMI



Country Music Hall of Fame Member

# Kitty Wells

1919-2012

by BOB DOERSCHUK

Country Music has weathered seismic changes since May 1949, when Kitty Wells stepped up from her gig as “girl singer” with Johnnie & Jack and their group and stood alone behind a microphone at Owen Bradley’s Castle Studios. She had agreed to record a song written by J.D. Miller and pitched by Troy Martin. It didn’t thrill Wells or her husband, Johnnie Wright of Johnnie & Jack, but she agreed to cut it mainly for the \$125 session fee.

That song, “It Wasn’t God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels,” exploded when released the summer of 1952, rocketing to No. 1, staying there for six weeks and selling well over a million copies. It pushed Wells from the background in her husband’s group and square into the center of the Country Music spotlight. It also caused controversy by daring to rebut Hank Thompson’s hit, “Wild Side of Life,” which dismissed a wife gone bad as a “honky tonk angel” for abandoning marriage and succumbing to the temptation of saloons “where the wine and liquor flow, where you want to be anybody’s baby.”

Country Music had seen gifted female performers before the advent of Kitty Wells, but none had challenged slatternly stereotypes as boldly as she did on this single. The moral onus, she sang, lay not on fallen women but also on those who exploited them because “too many times married men think they’re still single. That has caused many a good girl to go wrong.”

This shift in perspective stirred controversy. Wells was even briefly banned from singing it during broadcast segments of “The Grand Ole Opry.” But this initial resistance washed quickly away as Country Music reacted to the implications of its success — namely, that there was more than one point of view for songs that address the realities of life and that women could assume equal importance to men as singers

and, ultimately, in every other aspect of the business. That door would have opened inevitably, but it was Wells who made it happen.

In a career distinguished by 35 Top 10 singles, election to CMA’s Country Music Hall of Fame in 1976, a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and universal acknowledgment as “the Queen of Country Music” well before her last tour in 2007, she revisited the themes of betrayal, heartbreak, treachery in love and the saloon’s fatal lure. In the worlds she conjured, the “lights were dim and low” (“The Honky Tonk Waltz”), her sister steals away her suitor (“I Gave My Wedding Dress Away”), the true love of her life is forever out of reach (“Making Believe”) or a heartless hypocrite who stands too close (“There’s Poison in Your Heart”), and when she does marry the man of her dreams, he turns out to either do “too many parties and too much drinkin’, too many sweethearts and too little thinkin’” (“The Pace That Kills”) or suspect her of doing the same (“Jealousy”).

The irony is that the life Wells lived was the antithesis of those suffered by the broken, forlorn protagonists in her music. Her union with Wright was deep and enduring. It was he who named her; she had been born Ellen Muriel Deason but he thought the name Kitty Wells, borrowed from an old folk ballad, was more suited to the stage. They worked together for decades, adding their son and two daughters to the act as the Kitty Wells-Johnnie Wright Family Show. Wright passed away in 2011, just a few days short of their 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In purely musical terms, Wells’ sound has faded from contemporary Country. Backed by acoustic guitars, bass, one or more fiddles and steel guitar, she was a strict traditionalist, never indulging in dramatic crescendos, soaring leaps or melodic embellishment. Almost invariably, she stayed within an octave range, articulating the lyric squarely on each beat, singing either without any vibrato or with a tight, quick warble on long notes. Yet her singing communicated powerfully, conveying sadness and even searing pain through her unadorned delivery.

Listen to her recording of “Release Me.” Her version was released in 1954, more or less simultaneously with Ray Price’s rendition. He sings it with a wide-open throat, his voice catching now and then to underscore emotional turns in the words and melody. Wells holds back more. Aside from a quiet downward glissando at the end of a few long notes, she sings almost conversationally. Even now, she has few if any peers in her ability to get to the heart of a song with no pretense or apparent effort.

Kitty Wells, 92, passed away in Nashville, her lifelong hometown, from complications as a result of a stroke.



LEAH SEAWRIGHT

Leah Seawright stars in Montana Silversmith print ads.

## BUCKLES UP WITH MONTANA SILVERSMITHS

For nearly 40 years, rodeo devotees have sported beautiful classic Western buckles and jewelry created by Montana Silversmiths, based out of Columbus, Mont. But as Country Music continues to expand into wider and more diverse demographics, the company realized that its products could connect with new groups of potential customers.

Many Country artists had already discovered the brand; Jason Aldean and George Strait have worn their buckles, and Miranda Lambert owns their cross-pistol necklace. Still, Montana Silversmiths needed a spokesperson who could speak to the buyers they call "Western Positives." They found her in Leah Seawright, whose manager at the time came from Montana and thought this would be a great partnership.

"Country is a natural fit for us, because its fans have the same values as our core Western fans," said Brittney Fox, Marketing Lead, Montana Silversmiths. "They value authenticity and patriotism, and Leah really fits that too. And she has a great personality — she's a firecracker!"

"I had just released a song, 'Til Your Boots Are Dirty,'" said Seawright. "The Montana people loved the song. They were about to shoot a CMT commercial, so I went up there and met them. I felt like I'd known them my whole life, even though I'm an Alabama girl. It was just like coming home."

Seawright toured the facility, watched the staff create products from melting the metal down to wrapping them up, had a fun dinner ... and the very next day, they did a photo shoot and filmed the CMT video. It shows her in a dressing room, putting on Montana Silversmiths bracelet and necklace, pulling on her boots and then rocking "Til Your Boots Are Dirty" onstage. It's simple, quick and effective at spreading the word about both the accoutrements and the artist to CMT's vast viewership.

That's not all. Seawright has been able to use the results of her photo shoot for her own publicity. She drew a stream of visitors to her booth at Fan Fair Hall during CMA Music Festival with a contest that offered a hot pink guitar and a basket of Montana Silversmiths items as the prize; this enabled her to significantly expand her list of fan email addresses. And she grew her presence in the company's market too, with her CD now selling in the more than 7,000 retail stores that carry Montana Silversmiths. This has also helped her book PBR and rodeo shows, with a possible rodeo tour in the works for this fall, complete with a company bus wrap.

"The important thing is that you have to work with someone you believe in. I don't know if I'd go out there and hunt an endorsement deal with Rogaine for men," she added, with a laugh. "If it's something you're already doing, that just makes it second nature. And jewelry is something I already did. I put on jewelry every day — and now it's Montana Silversmiths."

LeahSeawright.com; @LeahSeawright; MontanaSilversmiths.com



CRAIG MORGAN

Craig Morgan introduces "What Matters Most" at the SHOT Show in January.

## SINGS FOR SURVIVORS

For all the ongoing efforts to care for troops coming home from abroad, the families of those who survived — and those who didn't — are somewhat overlooked. That's why Major Dan Rooney founded Folds of Honor, a charity dedicated to assisting these families by providing educational scholarships to dependents of troops who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bushnell Outdoor Products has partnered with Folds of Honor for several years. The company is also a sponsor of the Outdoor Channel's "Craig Morgan All Access Outdoors." The idea of getting Morgan, a 10-year U.S. Army veteran, involved with Folds of Honor was therefore, in the words of Mark Schaefer, Marketing Director, Bushnell Outdoor Products, a "no-brainer."

"We knew that Craig is one of those unique individuals who have given a lot back, not just to his community but to his country as well," he said. "So we approached him with the idea of writing a song that would be a tribute to the military and their families, and he just loved and embraced it."

Morgan finished that song, "What Matters Most," two days before the 2012 SHOT (Shooting, Hunting, Outdoor Trade) Show opened in Las Vegas. He premiered it there at a Bushnell press conference, where it was announced that a recording of the song would be made available for free download to the first 10,000 visitors at [WhatMattersMost.FoldsOfHonor.org](http://WhatMattersMost.FoldsOfHonor.org). Voluntary donations are encouraged from all who access this site, with Bushnell matching every one with its own \$1 pledge. The site will remain active at least through the end of 2012.

"We offer it free because we want as many people as possible to be exposed to the message of this song," Schaefer explained. "It's not just for those people we're supporting through Folds of Honor; it's really about the people that have to make sacrifices — not just those who are fighting for our country, but their families too. And people aren't just taking advantage of the free download; they're contributing. We've gotten over 3,000 downloads already, with people giving \$25, \$50, even \$100, stepping up and supporting our country."

"Most Americans support our military, regardless of their politics," said Morgan. "But when a soldier has fallen in service to our country or is no longer able to work, their dependents still need our support. Folds of Honor offers educational assistance their parent or spouse can no longer provide. Those families must not be forgotten."

"Country Music gets that message across better than any other format," he added. "It's the people's music. And education is critical for this country. We must ensure that these kids receive as much education as they can."

Bushnell.com; FoldsOfHonor.org; CraigMorgan.com; @CMorganMusic

**AUG. 7**

**Johnny Cash** / *The Greatest: Country Classics* / Columbia/Legacy

**Johnny Cash** / *The Greatest: Duets* / Columbia/Legacy

**Johnny Cash** / *The Greatest: Gospel Songs* / Columbia/Legacy

**Johnny Cash** / *The Greatest: Number Ones* / Columbia/Legacy

**Colt Ford** / *Declaration of Independence* / Average Joes Entertainment

**The Trishas** / *High, Wide & Handsome* / The Trishas Music

**AUG. 14**

**Jordan Anderson** / *Key to My Heart* / Go Time Records

**Blackberry Smoke** / *The Whippoorwill* / Southern Ground Artists

**Susan Cattaneo** / *Little Big Sky* / Jersey Girl Music

**Radney Foster** / *Del Rio, Texas: Unplugged and Lonesome* / Devil's River Records

**Teea Goans** / *That's Just Me* / The Crosswind Corp.

**Merle Haggard** / *ICON* / MCA Nashville/UME

**Corb Lund** / *Cabin Fever* / New West

**Bill Monroe** / *ICON* / MCA Nashville/UME

**Marty Stuart** / *ICON* / MCA Nashville/UME

**AUG. 21**

**JT Hodges** / *JT Hodges* / Show Dog/Universal Music

**Dustin Lynch** / *Dustin Lynch* / Broken Bow

**Lynyrd Skynyrd** / *Last of a Dyin' Breed* / Road Runner

**C. W. McCall** / *Wolf Creek Pass* / Omni Recording Corp. / reissue

**The World Famous Headliners** / *The World Famous Headliners* / Big Yellow Dog Music

**AUG. 27**

**Josh Turner** / *Live Across America* / Cracker Barrel Old Country Stores

**AUG. 28**

**The Flatlanders** / *The Odessa Tapes* / New West

**Nuala Kennedy** / *Noble Stranger* / Compass Records Group

**Michael Koppy** / *Ashmore's Store* / Good Track Records

**The Roys** / *New Day Dawning* / Rural Rhythm

**SEPT. 4**

**The Bellamy Brothers** / *Pray for Me* / Bellamy Brothers Records

**SEPT. 11**

**Kix Brooks** / *New to This Town* / Arista Nashville

**Bucky Covington** / *Good Guys* / e-One entertainment

**Waylon Jennings** / *Goin' Down Rockin': The Last Recordings* / Saguario Road Records

**Aaron Lewis** / *The Road* / Blaster

**Little Big Town** / *Tornado* / Capitol Records Nashville

**Kathy Mattea** / *Calling Me Home* / Sugar Hill

**The Time Jumpers** / *The Time Jumpers* / Rounder Records

**SEPT. 18**

**Easton Corbin** / *All Over the Road* / Mercury

**Bart Crow** / *Dandelion* / Smith Music

**Shane Gamble** / *Shane Gamble* / Baeble Music

**Janis Martin** / *The Blanco Sessions* / Cow Island Music

**Dwight Yoakam** / *3 Pears* / Warner Bros. Nashville

**SEPT. 25**

**Kasey Chambers and Shane Nicholson** / *Wreck & Ruin* / Sugar Hill

**Billy Dean** / *A Man of Good Fortune* / Rainman Records

**The Mavericks** / *TBA* / The Valory Music Company

**Ricky Skaggs** / *Music to My Ears* / Skaggs Family Records

**OCT. 2**

**Iris DeMent** / *Sing the Delta* / Flariella Records

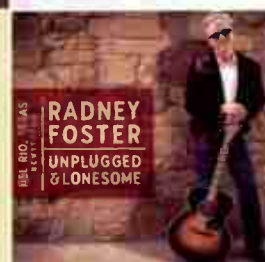
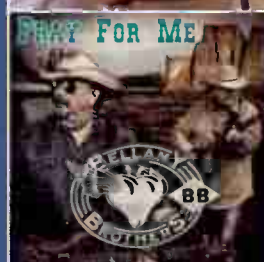
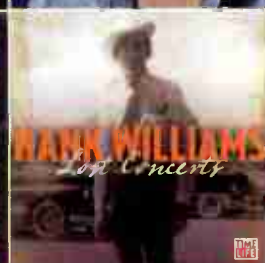
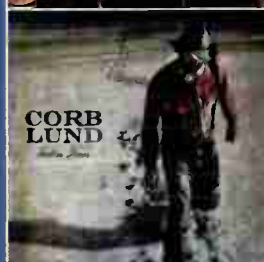
**Jerrold Niemann** / *Free the Music* / Sea Gayle/Arista Nashville

**Hank Williams** / *Hank Williams: The Lost Concerts Limited Collector's Edition* / Time Life

**OCT. 9**

**Wanda Jackson** / *Unfinished Business* / Sugar Hill

**Mindy Smith** / *The Essential Mindy Smith* / Vanguard



New CD Releases compiled by BOB DOERSCHUK

# NASHVILLE WELCOMES THE JOHNNY CASH MUSEUM

by KIP KIRBY

Downtown Nashville will soon be getting a new celebrity attraction that promises to become both a tourist mecca and a destination for music scholars from around the world. It's the Johnny Cash Museum, dedicated to celebrating the life and career of CMA's Country Music Hall of Fame member Johnny Cash.

Officially sanctioned by the Cash family, the museum claims to house the largest and most comprehensive collection of Johnny Cash memorabilia in the world. Its creation was the brainchild of California businessman Bill Miller, whose friendship with the singer began when Miller was just a boy.

"I became a Cash fan when a third-grade classmate of mine brought a copy of *Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison* to school for a show and tell session," Miller recalled. "The teacher put the record on the turntable. There was electricity in the air and I was hooked."

Three years later, he attended his first Johnny Cash concert, where he met Johnny and wife, June, in person. Miller, author of the biography *Cash: An American Man*, launched and for 16 years has overseen the official Johnny Cash website, [JohnnyCash.com](http://JohnnyCash.com), which hosts "The Johnny Cash Radio Show," presented by Miller and his wife, Shannon, and heard in more than 40 countries.

Establishing a permanent museum to honor his friend and hero is the realization of a dream for Miller, who made it his lifelong mission to amass as many Cash collectibles as possible, sleuthing out rare or missing items with a dedication worthy of Sherlock Holmes. Today, Miller owns the most comprehensive Johnny Cash collection in existence, which he looks forward to sharing with the public.

Asked why the time is right to open a Johnny Cash Museum, Miller responded enthusiastically, "The most obvious answer to that is, why not? You're looking at one of the most recognized artists in entertainment history, a man who has his fingerprints all over Nashville and Nashville had its fingerprints all over him. I get emails from people through the website from all around the world who are planning their trips to America and want

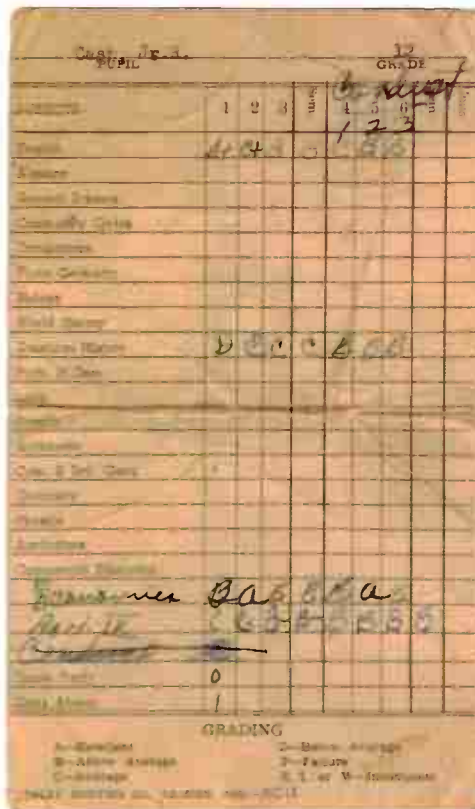
to know where they can come to learn everything about Johnny Cash. Until now, there hasn't been anywhere for them to go."

When all phases are completed, with Miller shouldering an estimated investment of up to \$7 million, the museum will occupy two full stories at 119 Third Avenue South, just south of Broadway and a stone's throw from the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, the Ernest Tubb Record Shop, the honky-tonks along Lower Broadway and other popular tourist destinations. Noting that "I don't think we could be in a better location," Miller projected first-year attendance could top 150,000

visitors, each of whom will pay approximately \$13 per ticket at the door.

Nearly a thousand items will be on permanent display. Additional customized exhibits will rotate on a regular basis, showcasing unique items and memorabilia on loan from the Cash family and friends. Exhibits will be arranged in timeline fashion, allowing visitors to enjoy a three-dimensional exploration of Cash's life in breathtaking detail. They can utilize state-of-the-art interactive graphics, video and iPad technology to view writings, artwork, photographs, instruments, stage-worn apparel, books, sheet music, LPs, awards and honors that held relevance in the singer's life. The museum will also have a 250-seat venue that will be used for events, live broadcasts and performances.

Every stage of the artist's life will be examined, from his beginnings as one of seven children picking cotton on the family farm in Dyess, Ark., through his Air Force career, his rise to superstardom through a successful recording/songwriting career and a wildly popular television show, his marriages and children, his Christian faith and spiritualism and finally to his last years. This chronology will culminate in the artifact that represents the final component of his life





— a song written by his own hand, titled “My Lord Has Gone,” which Cash penned just three weeks before his death in 2003.

Among the more unusual items on display will be Cash’s childhood membership card from the Future Farmers of America and a W-9 form documenting his employment in the Pontiac plant where the singer briefly worked prior to joining the United States Air Force. Hallmarks of his military service will include a German translation manual, a fishing license he obtained for recreational time off base and handwritten transcriptions he wrote in his duties as a radio intercept operator as he monitored for secret codes or enemy messages. There is a handwritten receipt from the landlord of an apartment Cash rented in Memphis after marrying his first wife, Vivian Liberto, and a marriage license made out in the names of John R. Cash and June Carter.

Some of these artifacts took years of painstaking personal effort on Miller’s part to locate. For instance, the famous “House of Cash” sign mysteriously disappeared not long after the landmark building in Hendersonville, Tenn., was shuttered. Miller tracked the sign down, eventually finding it back in Dyess, and restored it for display in the museum. And when a 2007 fire destroyed Johnny’s and June’s former home in its final days of renovation by new owner Barry Gibb, Miller was given permission to salvage individual stones from an interior wall of the house. Visitors will also see many original furnishings from that home, including a fully-set dining room table featuring June’s china.

“The stones were taken from the room where Johnny filmed the video for ‘Hurt,’” said Miller. “We’re using the dismantled stones to replicate a portion of that room.”

In addition to his decades-long search for “things Cash,” Miller received a number of gifts directly over the years from the singer himself or from family members. “Sometimes I felt like I was on a search-and-rescue mission,” he explained. “But I always knew that the things I was rescuing would one day be used in a positive way.”

Another arresting bit of memorabilia is a postcard from young J. R. Cash to his parents while he was on a high school senior class trip from Dyess to Nashville. “Ironically, the class went to the Grand Ole Opry, where who do you think Johnny saw for the first time performing but June Carter, who would later become his wife,” Miller noted. “We have the handwritten postcard Johnny sent to his parents on that trip, addressed simply, ‘Mr. And Mrs. Ray Cash, Dyess, Arkansas.’ On it, he wrote, ‘Dear Mom and Dad, having a great time. J.R.’ It’s a snapshot of the future because

“I want people to leave the museum understanding that this was a man who made a difference.”

— Bill Miller, author,  
Cash: An American Man

he’s on his way to Nashville, a place he would make famous around the world, and he sees his future wife for the first time.

“We aren’t looking to have an abbreviated version of Johnny’s life with things people already know or have seen,” he continued. “I want people to leave the museum understanding that this was a man who made a difference, a man who inspired people and changed their lives around the world.”

Miller is proud of the enthusiastic support his endeavor has received from the Cash family, including the singer’s siblings, relatives and children. Pointing out that the museum is fully authorized and licensed by the Johnny Cash estate, he said, “I think this recognizes the fact that they have full confidence in what we’re doing. There’s a decades-long friendship between myself and the Johnny Cash family. I know them and I think they feel comfortable with the fact that with the museum in our hands, it’s going to be a dignified, respectful tribute. It’s going to be done right.”

Joanne Cash, sister of the late singer, concurred. “If Johnny Cash were here today and could see what Bill Miller is doing, he would be elated. He would be extremely happy that his memory is being put into a building where people go and look at not only his life but at our whole family’s life.”

Cash’s younger brother Tommy agreed. “Johnny just deserves this more than anything else,” he insisted. “People from all over the world are going to come and see this museum and discover things that they never knew about Johnny. Bill Miller has the blessing of the family.”

As the museum readies for its opening downtown, Miller estimates how it would help enhance the legacy of the Man in Black. “There’s going to be a lot of really cool stuff here, but what I really want people to go away with is the feeling of, ‘This was a man who mattered. Here was a man who wrote great songs that helped people and inspired people everywhere.’ If visitors walk out of the museum thinking, ‘What a great man, I feel like I know him better now,’ then the museum will have accomplished its purpose.”

**JohnnyCash.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.*

*Kip Kirby served as Billboard’s Country Editor and Nashville Bureau Chief before joining TNN’s “Crook and Chase” and NPT’s “Tennessee Crossroads” as an on-air entertainment reporter.*



Cash’s “Flight,” his only published work of visual art.  
top: Briefcase used by Cash to carry notes and personal effects, mid-to-late 1970s.  
opposite: Cash’s 12th-grade report card from Dyess High School in Dyess, Ark.

# CMA Close Up

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JOSH TURNER SCORES A *KNOCKOUT* on page 22

## cma events

### AUGUST

#### WEDNESDAY, AUG. 1

CMA Songwriters Series | Joe's Pub |  
New York | 6:30 and 9 PM ET | Bob DiPiero,  
Natalie Hemby, Little Big Town |  
Tickets: CMASongwritersSeries.com

#### THURSDAY, AUG. 9

CMA Awards second ballot emailed |  
10 AM

#### TUESDAY, AUG. 21

Deadline for voting on CMA Awards second  
ballot | 5 PM

### SEPTEMBER

#### WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 12

CMA Songwriters Series | Hard Rock Cafe |  
Pittsburgh | Rodney Atkins, Bob DiPiero,  
other participants TBA |  
Tickets: CMASongwritersSeries.com

#### THURSDAY, SEPT. 13

CMA Songwriters Series | Joe's Pub |  
New York | Dierks Bentley, other participants  
TBA | Tickets: CMASongwritersSeries.com

"Trip Flip" | winners treated to CMA Music  
Festival VIP experience | 8-9 PM |  
Travel Channel

#### MONDAY, SEPT. 17

"CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock" |  
7-10 PM | ABC

"CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock"  
viewing party | Hard Rock Cafe | Nashville |  
7-10PM | all CMA members invited

### OCTOBER

#### WEDNESDAY - THURSDAY, OCT. 3-4

Third Quarterly CMA Board Meeting 2012 |  
Hilton Nashville Downtown | Nashville |  
Invitation only

#### THURSDAY, OCT. 4

CMA Awards final ballot emailed | 10 AM

#### TUESDAY, OCT. 9

CMA SRO Awards Presentations |  
"The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual IEBA Conference" | Sheraton  
Downtown Nashville Hotel | 6:30 PM

#### MONDAY, OCT. 22

Deadline for voting on CMA Awards final  
ballot | 5 PM

#### WEDNESDAY, OCT. 24

CMA Songwriters Series | Joe's Bar |  
Chicago | participants TBA | Tickets:  
CMASongwritersSeries.com

#### THURSDAY, OCT. 25

CMA Songwriters Series | Joe's Pub |  
New York | participants TBA | Tickets:  
CMASongwritersSeries.com



\*All times Central unless otherwise noted.