TWENTY YEARS OF US

POWER 31
Now & Then

SETH ENGLAND
THE INTERVIEW



TOP 100 X 20 YEARS

COUNTRY AIRCHECK
20 YEARS

FALL 2026

GAVIN ADCOCK

THE DAY I HANG IT UP

NEW ALBUM OCT. 2

WARNER RECORDS
WARNER RECORDS NASHVILLE

FEATURING FAN-FAVORITE TRACKS 'WANNABE' AND 'WORKIN' MAN'

FOR YOUR CMA CONSIDERATION

LAINEY WILSON



ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

SINGLE OF THE YEAR
"SOMEWHERE OVER LAREDO"

RETURNING TO HOST FOR HER THIRD STRAIGHT YEAR

BBR MUSIC GROUP

BBR

BMG



POWER 31 NOW & THEN

This year's reader-voted Power 31 leaders recall what they were doing the year Country Aircheck was launched.

Airplay & Exposure



1 TIM ROBERTS

Audacy VP/Country



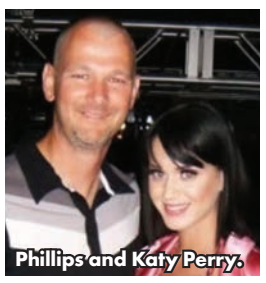
I was only a few months into my new job as WYCD/Detroit OM/PD, and I was banking on some new "up-and-comer" artists – Eric Church and Miranda Lambert – to play our epic free concert at Hart Plaza, the *WYCD Downtown Hoedown*. Clay Walker and local fav Josh Gracin were headlining, so it was gonna be a big night!

2 DAMON MOBERLY

MCA/Nashville SVP/Promotion & Touring



I was about to become a father to my son Boo and the VP/Promotion for Mercury/Nashville after spending eight years in the field as the Northeast rep. The Mercury team and our friends at Country radio had just delivered Billy Currington's first No. 1, "Must Be Doin' Something Right," and would then deliver Sugarland's first No. 1 at Country Aircheck, "Want To." Both artists would go on to deliver many country hits. My son is about to turn 20 (along with Country Aircheck, congrats!), and those songs still sound great!



Phillips and Katy Perry.

3 ROD PHILLIPS

iHeartCountry EVP/Programming Strategy

I started in a new and very unfamiliar market where I was asked to go in and bring back a legendary brand that had struggled in ratings for several years. While I was very hesitant to uproot my family and move so far away from our personal world, the professional opportunity was just too good. That started an amazing three-year run as OM of iHeartRadio/Miami, including day-to-day oversight and on-air of the one and only Y100 Miami!

4 KRISTEN WILLIAMS

Warner Records Nashville EVP/Radio & Commercial Partnerships



I wasn't scrolling through Instagram, analyzing Spotify algorithms, Ubering to my next show or Door Dashing my next meal. Instead, there were landline telephones, a flip phone on the road and promo CDs. *Actual* CDs. Stacks of them, everywhere: in the office, in my car, in hotel rooms. I was busy calling Country radio stations across the Midwest on behalf of Faith Hill, Big & Rich, The Wreckers, Blake Shelton and John Anderson, not realizing then that I was helping create a soundtrack for decades to come.

5 DENNIS REESE

Sony/Nashville SVP/Radio Marketing & Promotion

6 TRAVIS DAILY

Cumulus VP/Country



Daily (l) and Justin Moore.

I was roughly a year into launching WFUS/Tampa. The early days of WFUS are some of my most memorable, for sure. We had an amazing team, and I had an almost 18-year run before heading to Utah and now Nashville. All of this is a lesson in how quickly time goes by, and you should really try and live in the moment.

Artists & Music

1 SETH ENGLAND

Big Loud CEO/Partner



There's a music business college in Greenville, IL, 90 minutes from my hometown. After my sophomore year I went for internships in the business and met [current Big Loud SVP/A&R] Sarah Knabe. She was in her first job out of Belmont working for Melanie Howard, who ran her late husband's Harlan Howard Songs. That was a massive baptism in classic music publishing. They had just signed Lori McKenna to her first pub deal. In preparation for the next summer's internship, I was introduced to someone who worked for Craig Wiseman. *[Ed. Note: Read more of England's origin story in The Interview, page 33.]*

2 JON LOBA

BMG/Americas Pres./Frontline Recordings



I was discovering that, contrary to my previously held misconceptions, the life of Scotty O'Brien was not just on-air, theater-of-the-mind chaos with daily hijinks, usually involving authority figures in his life. It was real. A perfect example was his invitations to join him at local bars he was broadcasting from. Those invites were a foreshadowing of things to come for our relationship. As soon as I walked in the door, he would get on the mic and yell, "Big fancy record executive Jon Loba in the house! He's the nicest label guy in town, so if you want a deal, here's your chance! Come up and sing for him!" Needless to say, I stopped accepting his invites.

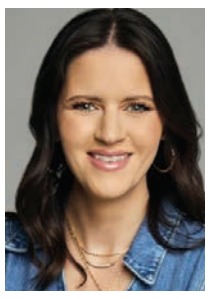
I also had the chance to see what his listeners didn't: the countless hours, daily, Scotty spent helping others in need. And he did it without telling anyone unless he was enlisting the help of others for the particular cause. I discovered that while Scotty was 100% the biggest class clown I had ever met, his heart was just as big as his relentless jokes.

3 CRIS LACY

Warner Records Nashville Chair/Pres.



Sometime around then I remember being on a bus with Blake Shelton outside of Billy Bob's during a snowstorm, sharing the music we grew up on, including "Morning Desire" by Kenny Rogers.



4 TAYLOR LINDSEY

Sony/Nashville Chair/CEO

I was a college student at the University of Georgia, on the pre-med track, running up and down the streets of Athens, soaking up its incredible creative community and calling the Dawgs every week! I had no idea what the next few years would have in store. I found my way into the music business program, a decision that would ultimately change the course of my career and, as it turns out, my personal life too. It's where my husband [Grammy-nominated songwriter Derrick Southerland] and I first met.

5 MIKE HARRIS

MCA/Nashville Pres./CEO



I was working at Virgin Records in New York City, in the madness of EMI. We were just a few months away from merging Virgin with Capitol to form Capitol Music Group. That merger ultimately led to me working with Mike Dungan and his team in Nashville. Little did I know, that relationship would eventually lead me to Universal/Nashville and, ultimately, MCA. I often tell people I went from Janet Jackson to Jordan Davis, and I wouldn't trade the ride for anything.



6 SCOTT BORCHETTA

Big Machine Label Group Founder/Chairman/CEO

We were celebrating Jack Ingram's first No. 1, which was actually our second single. The first was Danielle Peck's, which was a solid mid-charter. In June, we launched Taylor Swift's "Tim McGraw," so we were literally hitting every radio station in person with Taylor, Jack and Danielle. It was a full-on ground war. Which we won.

POWER 31 Now & Then

7 KURT JOHNSON

Townsquare SVP/Content & Programming



8 MARCI BRAUN

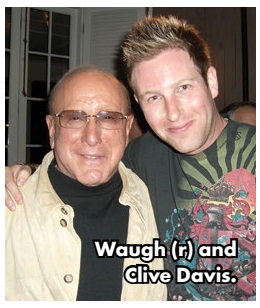
Audacy Regional Brand Mgr./Central

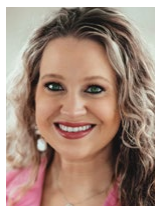
In 2006, I'm just two years into US99. I was still trying to find my way and learn everything I could from PD Mike Peterson. But I'm also having a hell of a good time with these three women at the station who befriended me, nicknamed the "BAT." Since we're all blonde, or were at one point, Peterson called us the "Blonde Ambition Tour." We even made stickers. Why? Because we could.

9 TYLER WAUGH

Big Loud EVP/Radio Promotion

I transitioned from working Rock radio in the Southeast for Roadrunner Records – promoting singles from Nickelback, Theory of a Deadman and Slipknot – to handling Southeast Radio Promotion for RCA, Arista and J Records across multiple formats. That move gave me the opportunity to work with an incredible roster of artists while learning from some of the very best in the business including Clive Davis, Richard Palmese, Peter Gray, Dave Dyer, Josh Reich and Bill Burrs.





10 ASHLEY SIDOTI

Blue Highway SVP/Promotion & Digital

I was studying Music Business at Belmont University. I interned for Tootsie's Famous Orchid Lounge, which involved sorting through audition tapes and screening acts hoping to audition for shifts on one of only two stages at that time! One of our exciting new regulars was an insanely talented new kid named Chris Janson. I was also bartending at another bar on Broadway to pay my bills, which coincidentally led to me meeting many industry people who remain friends and colleagues to this day, and even my husband! That fall, I secured an internship with Broken Bow Records, which was an important cornerstone experience in my career.

11 JOHNNY CHIANG

SXM/Pandora VP/Country Programming

I was less than two years into Country radio and running KKBQ/Houston, which means my entire management strategy was "act natural and hope the Texas listeners don't realize I'm still studying the country music syllabus." My daily routine while programming one of America's biggest Country stations consisted of pretending I totally knew the difference between George Strait and Alan Jackson's deep cuts. Making the Power 31 list today just proves that faking it until you make it actually works.





12 LAUREN THOMAS

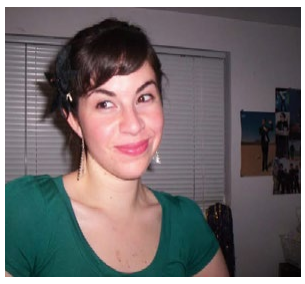
Big Loud EVP/Radio Promotion

I had just graduated from Arizona State University and was "Grabbin' a Hump and Hangin' On," running the promotions department at KMLE Phoenix ... already learning the fine art of getting people to have a good time, drink something cold and say yes to country music. Turns out, I was onto something.

13 EMILY COHEN BELOTE

Amazon Music Global LeadCountry Music Programming

Twenty years ago, during the summer after graduating college, I landed an internship at an independent record label in Seattle, where I launched my music career by helping bands reach college radio. As you can see from the wall of pictures behind me, I developed a deep fondness for Brandon Flowers back then, and that love holds just as strongly to this day.



14 MIRANDA MCDONALD

MCA/Nashville VP/Promotion

I was working for CMT as on-air host for the radio department. I was recording album release specials with various artists and hosting a morning "news from Nashville" show, as well as syndicated specials – all things country music. I also clearly had not had my colors done to know that black hair is *not* in my color wheel. Nor did I understand the art of coloring my eyebrows in. But I was really good at the gift of gab.





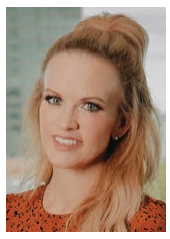
7 STACY BLYTHE

Big Loud Co-Pres.

I was working my very first label job at Category 5 Records. Bill Macky had just left Epic and hired me in the Promotion Coordinator role. Little did I know at the time, this was the springboard for a blessed career in the industry. I kept my job serving drinks at 3rd & Lindsley and would head straight there after my label job. I had the privilege of watching some incredible careers kick off there, including Lady A and Brandi Carlile.

8 JOJAMIE HAHR

BMG/Nashville EVP/Recorded Music



I was the Southeast regional for Broken Bow Records, feverishly fielding calls from Jason Aldean's very tenacious band members Tully Kennedy and Kurt Allison about "Amarillo Sky." Somehow, they had both acquired Mediabase logins and were tracking every spin and wanting to know if and when it would reach the top of the chart as his second No. 1 song (alas, we made it to No. 4). Twenty years and a quick stopover at The Valory Music Co. later, BBR Music Group and I are proudly celebrating his 32nd No. 1 and on our way to his thirty-third with "Anytime Soon." I still get regular calls from Kurt and Tully. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

9 KEN ROBOLD

Sony/Nashville President/COO

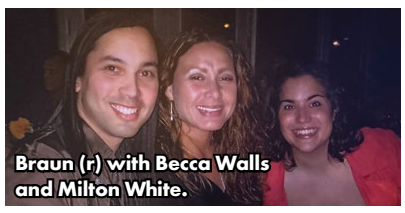
In 2006, I was the EVP & GM at UMG/Nashville, which then consisted of Mercury, MCA & Lost Highway. The prior fall, we had released George Strait's *50 Number Ones* and greatest hits albums from both Toby Keith and Shania Twain in the span of a couple of weeks in early October. It was the biggest revenue year in my career, so we had to follow it up with some big releases in 2006. Thankfully, we did that with eventual multi-platinum albums including Sugarland's *Enjoy The Ride* and Josh Turner's *Your Man*. We also had platinum releases in George Strait's *It Just Comes Natural* and Vince Gill's *These Days*, as well as other key country releases by Julie Roberts and Randy Rogers Band. Lost Highway had a busy year as well, with releases by Van Morrison, two Willie Nelson records, Johnny Cash's American *V: A Hundred Highways* and a few more. An amazing time, and I was fortunate to be part of a great team.



10 RAFFAELLA BRAUN

Triple Tigers Co-Pres.

I was voluntarily reading sports books and using my excellent PowerPoint skills [laughs] to try and make a case for sustainability in NFL stadiums. #nerdalert





11 JAKE BASDEN

Blue Highway CEO

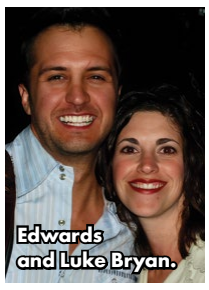
I was fresh out of the University of Oklahoma and living in New York City. I was working at the iconic advertising/PR firm Ogilvy on some of the biggest brands in the world. There, I learned the New York hustle, how to tell stories that resonated globally, how to handle clients and how to make ideas break through. That experience, combined with my rural Oklahoma roots, has proven to be a winning formula throughout my career.

12 MICHELLE TIGARD KAMMERER

Amazon Music Global Head/Country Music

I was a wide-eyed assistant at CAA/Nashville. With nothing but instinct and a love for music, one night I walked into 3rd & Lindsley and saw a band that had only been together a few weeks. They stopped me dead in my tracks. The lyrics, the melodies, the vocal harmonies. It was lightning in a bottle, and I knew it the moment I heard it. That band was Lady A. After the show, I walked up, introduced myself and asked if I could take them to coffee to talk about their music. I fell in love with their drive, their authenticity and their spirit, and I went back to the office and pitched them with everything I had to get them signed to CAA's roster. A few months later, they became the first act I ever helped sign. A year later, they had a record deal. And then came the ACMs, the CMAs and the Grammys. That one moment of trusting my gut jumpstarted my entire career and gave me the confidence to live by what a mentor once told me: "Always follow the music." I've been doing exactly that ever since.





13 KERRI EDWARDS

KP Entertainment President

I was stepping back from publishing and into a world I had never tackled before – artist management. I had been working with a new writer/artist for about four years and we had fought hard to get the attention of labels in town. In 2005, Luke Bryan was offered a record deal by Mike Dungan at Capitol. By 2006 I was officially jumping in head first to artist management – the scariest yet most rewarding leap I had ever taken. Built a strong team with Jeff Stevens (producer), Mike Vaden (business manager) and Jay Williams (agent), and we were head down in it ... all of us still are. What a blessing, what a ride. The beginning of so many memories with so many in this industry.

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BIG LOUD

CONGRATULATES





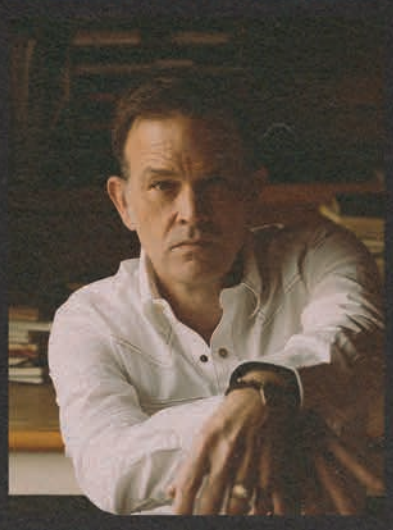






COUNTRY AIRCHECK





ON 20 YEARS






15 SCOTTY O'BRIEN

BBRMG VP/Promotion, Marketing, SXM Radio

I was on-air at WKHX/Atlanta, listening to Jon Loba pitch me on some guy named Jason Aldean. I met Jon and Jason at the *CMT Tour* with Billy Currington, Trace Adkins and Jason, who was the opener. At the time, I wasn't even sure if it was pronounced "All-dean" or "Al-dean," so I asked Jon. Instead of answering me, he turned to Jason and asked him ... and a little verbal scuffle ensued. Twenty years later, I'd say Jon's pitch worked.



16 MIKE MOORE

Cumulus WKHX/Atlanta PD

I was programming Portland's No. 1 Country station, KWJJ, and serving as the Country Format Head for Entercom, now Audacy. The photo was taken backstage with my staff and Toby Keith before he presented the keys to a brand-new Ford truck to a station contest winner. Later that night, I remember sitting on Toby's bus when he mentioned that, in his view, the invention of the internet would bring as much good as bad. He said something to the effect that it could help a parent whose child was suffering from a rare illness connect with someone halfway around the world who might have a cure, while at the same time making it easier for people to steal his music. It was an interesting perspective, and one that has stayed with me over the years. I can't help but wonder what Toby would say today about AI.



17 TOM MARTENS

Warner Records Nashville VP/Radio Accounts

Twenty years ago this month, I was working as a Midwest regional promotion manager for Interscope Geffen A&M Records, based in Kansas City. Country music was not even on my radar in those days, although it should have been! Instead, I was busy helping push Fergie's "London Bridge," The Pussycat Dolls' "Buttons" and Snow Patrol's "Chasing Cars" to the top of the *Radio & Records* charts.

18 BOBBY BONES

The Bobby Bones Show Host

I was working for the same company I'm working for now –iHeartRadio! I was about $50,000 in debt trying to build my own syndication from scratch and living in Austin, TX. Working all day with my exact crew I have now ... and watching *The Office* on my revolutionary new iPod Video.





19 BRUCE LOGAN *Audacy/Houston VP/Programming & PD/Country KILT*

I was in Charlotte as RVPP for iHeart, which included oversight of some of the biggest Country stations in the Carolinas. WKKT/Charlotte, WTQR/Greensboro, WKSF/Asheville, WCOS/Columbia and WSSL & WESC/Greenville, SC. Those stations were ground zero for the explosion of Eric Church as a superstar! That year [2006] marked the debut of *Sinners Like Me*! There was so much excitement for our Carolina superstar. Last month, I had the chance to see Eric celebrate the 20-year anniversary of *Sinners Like Me* at my very first visit ever to Red Rocks. Eric is on my Mount Rushmore of Country Music, and it all started in 2006 in his home state of North Carolina.

20 JIMMY RECTOR

MCA/Nashville SVP/Promotion & Regional Marketing

I spent the first quarter of the year at BNA Records working Kenny Chesney and Lonestar songs, among others, and got the opportunity to run the promotion efforts for Raybaw Records. I spent the rest of the year running around the country with Big Kenny, John Rich, James Otto and Cowboy Troy. When asked what title I wanted, I requested Ringmaster. But what a fun circus and amazing summer it was! Twenty years later, I am still running promotion efforts for amazing artists and trying to put them all in the center ring!





21 LEE ADAMS

Broken Bow VP/Promotion

Twenty years ago looked a lot like 2026! One amazing memory from 20 years ago was celebrating Jason Aldean winning the 2006 ACM Top New Male Vocalist. What's even better is this picture shows the same BBR women who were together at the 2026 ACMs, 20 years later! Layna Bunt, Shelley Hargis and JoJamie Hahr. And we are still celebrating Jason as he was just certified with two RIAA Diamond Awards. I've been blessed beyond measure in my 25 years at BBR.



14 ANNIE ORTMEIER

Triple Tigers Co-Pres.

I was the Coord./eCommerce & Merchandise at CMT, overseeing all merchandising of music, books, merch and more that lived on CMT.com. This included merchandise for the CMT franchise of *Trick My Truck*. In August of 2006, I added overseeing VH1, VH1 Classic, the Logo network and Comedy Central, which included launching the online store for Stephen Colbert's *Colbert Report*. We instantly sold out of everything posted online, and our Comedy Central store quickly became our most profitable in the Viacom ecommerce catalog.

15 KATIE DEAN

Leo33 Co-Head

I was early in my tenure at UMG during a year filled with so many special No. 1 singles, my favorite being Jon Bon Jovi and Jennifer Nettles' "Who Says You Can't Go Home." We did a satellite radio tour while Bon Jovi was in Japan, and I remember sitting in the studio, listening to him noodle on guitar during a break and thinking, "Is this my life?" He later sent me a handwritten note, and for a girl who graduated high school in New Jersey, it remains one of my most prized treasures.


Dean (c) with Braun (l) and sister Lauren.

16 JORDAN PETTIT

Big Loud Co-Pres.

While learning the ropes of radio promotion at UMG/Mercury, we were introducing a new trio (at the time) named Sugarland to Country radio. WGTR "Gator 107.9" PD Steve Stewart and I dreamed up a promotion around their Myrtle Beach House of Blues show: "Feed the gators with Sugarland, then let The Gator feed you!" We took winners next door to Alligator Alley to feed the real gators before dinner and the show. At one point, Jennifer Nettles was holding a piece of raw chicken when a seven-foot gator launched out of the water and came within inches of her hand. Thankfully, Jennifer's reflexes were considerably better than our promotional judgment. No one will ever know how close she came to losing a hand – or how close Steve and I came to significantly shorter careers in the music business.



17 CLINT HIGHAM

Morris Higham Management Pres.

18 RUSTY GASTON

Sony Music Publishing/Nashville CEO

Songwriters Tim Nichols, Connie Harrington and I were starting the publishing company THiS Music. Man! Those were some fun years! We were full of dreams, and all of those dreams came true. What a blessing.





19 GEORGE COURI

Triple 8 Management Founder/Partner, Triple Tigers Founder/Managing Partner

I was new to the country music business, managing my first country artist. That summer, I had my first No. 1 party, which was also Big Machine's first No. 1 party (Jack Ingram). Scotty B still returns my calls, and I still do silly things like this sumo-wrestling-to-live-polka-music party I threw that year.

A DECADE OF ROARS

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF TRIPLE TIGERS RECORDS

TRIPLE TIGERS RECORDS

17 #1 RADIO SINGLES.

36 RIAA GOLD AND PLATINUM CERTIFICATIONS.

9 BILLION STREAMS.

Thank you!

22 ANNA CAGE
Warner Records Nashville VP/Radio

In 2006, I was unknowingly experiencing a kismet moment working as a Grid Girl for Formula One, which was being hosted in Indianapolis for a series of years. Little did I know that 20 years later, I'd be working with the sister station of the truck I'm standing next to in this photo.



23 JOJO TURNBEAUGH
iHeart/Rockies SVP/Programming

I was just wrapping up a 10-year stint at then-Clear Channel, where at the time I was PD and mornings on KCCY/Colorado Springs. I left to join KYGO in mornings with Kelly Ford and Steve "Mudflap McGrew." That was a serious rollercoaster year, but I'm still glad I did it.



24 SHELLEY HARGIS
BBRMG VP/Syndication & Group Strategy

Oddly enough, 20 years ago looked *a lot* like it does right now! It's crazy to believe, but in 2006, BBR was celebrating our first No. 1 single with Jason Aldean!



We were the little label that could, and while it was hard to break down the "indie label barrier wall," we were passionate, music-loving, industry-loving, and damn-sure Jason Aldean- and Craig Morgan-loving, scrappy believers! You couldn't tell us no, and I suppose that's why 20 years later, we are all still here together! All of us ... in this picture from that first No. 1 Party for "Why." We laugh a lot at this photo because it looks like Jon Loba is the artist, with him in the middle and Jason on the end!

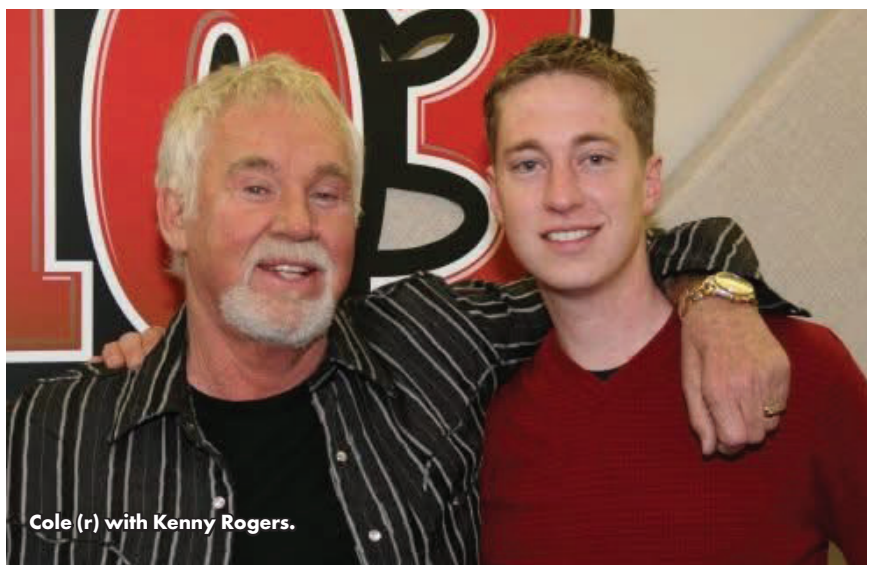
25 RYAN DOKKE
Nashville Harbor SVP/Promotion

I was cutting my programming teeth at KDRK/Spokane, WA, with no real idea of where my path would lead. In the summer of 2006, I met Carrie Underwood, fresh off of her *American Idol* win and for the first time at the Spokane arena opening for Keith Urban. I couldn't have imagined that five years later I'd have jumped from the radio side to the record side and would be a part of helping Carrie score multiple No. 1 singles during my time at Arista Nashville. Moral of the story: Buckle up and enjoy the ride!



26 JUSTIN COLE
Audacy SVPP/Brand Mgr.

I was co-hosting the morning show with Eddie Foxx and Lisa Manning at WKDF/Nashville. I had just been promoted and was a brand-new, first-time Program Director. I was also on-air, my own APD/MD and the in-arena host for the Nashville Predators. I had no life outside of work.

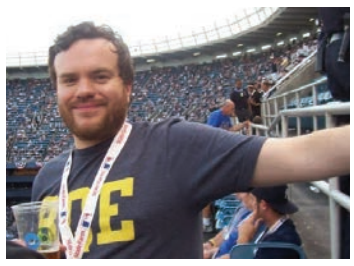

Cole (r) with Kenny Rogers.

20 BRIAN O'CONNELL
Live Nation Pres./Country Touring



21 MIKE CURB
Curb Word Entertainment Owner/Chairman

Tim McGraw celebrated a 50th chart record. Curb had the Hot Country Song of the Year with Rodney Atkins' "If You're Going Through Hell." Steve Holy had his second No. 1, Jo Dee Messina had her 20th chart record, Wynonna (including The Judds) her 53rd, LeAnn Rimes her 35th, Sawyer Brown their 50th and Hank Williams Jr. had his 80th chart record. Lee Brice signed with Curb and had his first charted song. Word/Curb was the Top Christian Imprint of the Year, and Curb achieved 20 No. 1 hits on 20 different charts.



22 TIM FOISSET
Spotify Head/Label Partnerships /Nashville & Canada

Twenty years ago this month, I was working at Razor & Tie in New York City as the label's primary liaison with iTunes. We were busy releasing *Kidz Bop* volumes nine and 10, a new album from the metalcore band All That Remains and a Christmas album by Twisted Sister. I was also working to get our artists' music videos live on a new online video service called YouTube, which Google would purchase later that year. The early days of the internet!

23 CHRIS KAPPY
Make Wake Artists Founder /Chief Navigation Officer

24 JIMMY HARNEN
Nashville Harbor Pres./CEO

I was serving as SVP/Promotion & Marketing for Capitol/Nashville, working alongside an incredible roster of artists including Keith Urban, Eric Church, Dierks Bentley, Trace Adkins, Lady A, Darius Rucker, Luke Bryan, Little Big Town and Chris Cagle. An exciting time in country music, and we definitely knew how to have a little fun along the way. For one memorable holiday card, I transformed into Gene Simmons of Kiss and joined Little Big Town for a photo we sent out with the perfect holiday message: "A Christmas Kiss from Little Big Town." Looking back, it's a great reminder of the music, the people, the creativity and the fun that made those years so special.




2006 Lyric Street crew.

25 KRIS LAMB
Hey Now Records Pres./Co-Founder

I had just started as Coord./Promotion at Lyric Street – 23 years old, fresh off being "Kid Camel" at KMLE/Phoenix and willing to do *anything* anyone at the label needed me to do. I also had absolutely no idea I'd just walked into one of the greatest classrooms imaginable. Rascal Flatts' "Me And My Gang" came out a couple of months after I started, they became the top-selling artist in America that year. Meanwhile, I was somewhere making copies, getting coffee and updating spin reports, thinking I had the greatest job on Earth. Twenty years later, we're building Hey Now with some of my best friends, still obsessing over spin reports and doing whatever it takes to get the job done. The title changes and the stakes get bigger, but the job remains: Believe big. Care deeply. Fight like hell for the art.

26 CLARENCE SPALDING
Maverick Partner & Spalding Entertainment Founder/Pres.

27 ASHLEY GORLEY
Tape Room Music CEO/Founder

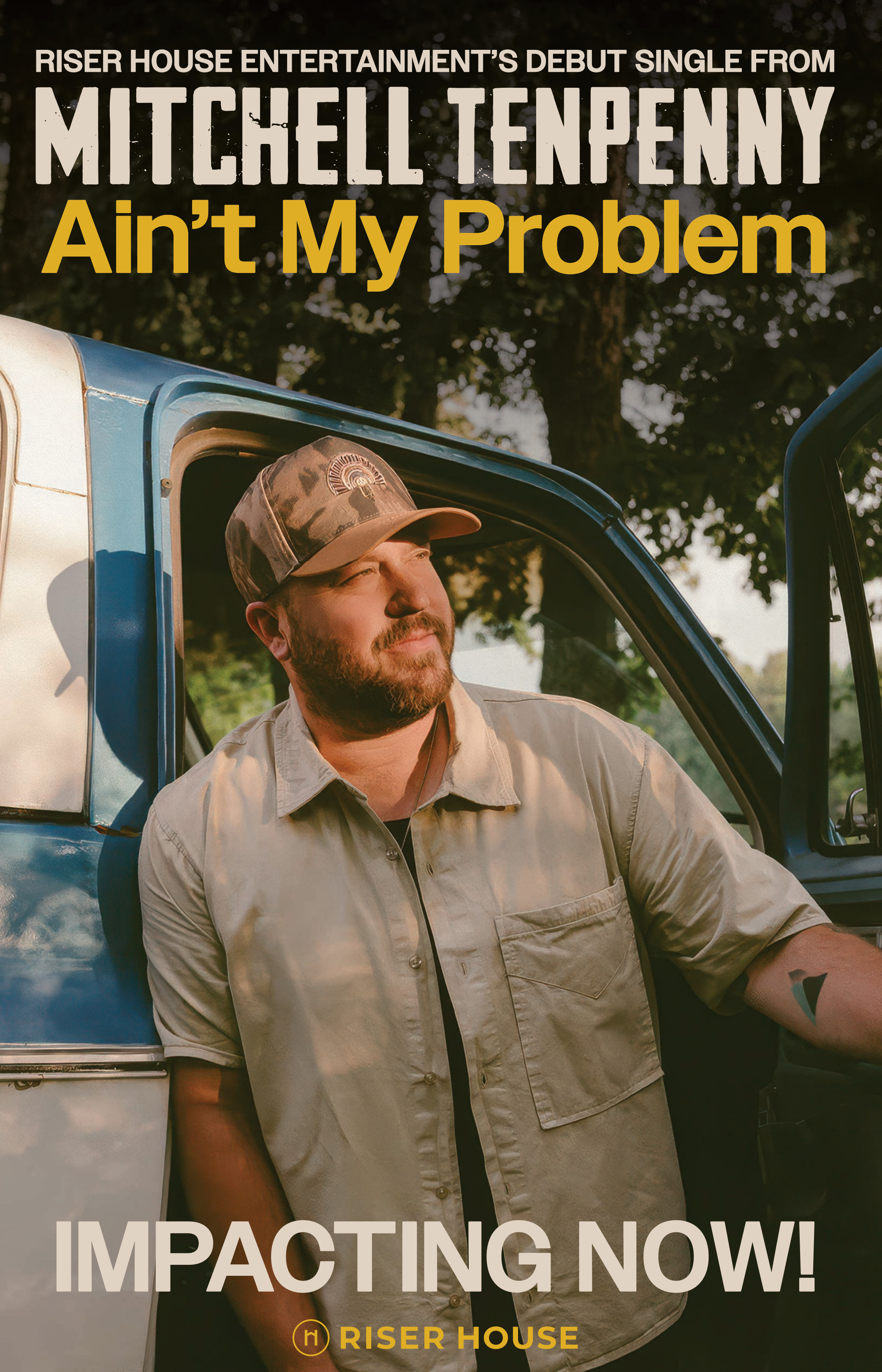
I got my first No. 1 hit on my daughter's second birthday. The song was "Don't Forget To Remember Me" by Carrie Underwood, a song about a daughter growing up and leaving home. Ironically, 20 years later, my most recent No. 1, "Don't We" by Morgan Wallen, topped the charts on my daughter's 22nd birthday, just as she was graduating college and starting her own career in the music industry. A pretty wild, full-circle moment as a songwriter and as a dad.



RISER HOUSE ENTERTAINMENT'S DEBUT SINGLE FROM

MITCHELL TENPENNY

Ain't My Problem



IMPACTING NOW!

RISER HOUSE



27 MIKE PRESTON

Cumulus KPLX & KSCS/Dallas PD

I was VP/Programming at CBS/San Francisco. I was overseeing several stations and preparing to launch the Movin format on KFRC-FM. (That's a story for another time.) It was just shy of three years before I'd head back up to Seattle and make the move to Country radio! Thankfully, my friend Mike Moore and the great Dave Richards took the chance on turning a Pop guy into a Country guy.

28 TRAVIS MOON

Radio-One Houston Dir./Operations

Joe Nichols was opening for Toby Keith's *Throwdown Tour* at The Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul. That night, Scott Borchetta was showing an artist named Taylor Swift what the concert scene looked like, and months later she released her first song "Tim McGraw." Still remember Scott introducing me to her and saying she was a new artist who they signed and would be having music later that year.





29 MALLORY MICHAELS

Sony/Nashville VP/Radio Marketing & Promotion

I was saying goodbye to my family, friends and hometown to move to Nashville. Naive and ecstatic to try my hand at getting into the entertainment industry, I was moving into my dorm at Belmont University with a music business major. That young woman in that moment couldn't begin to imagine the career ahead of her, let alone the honor of being included in the Power 31.

30 SCOTT RODDY

Audacy RVPP/Brand Mgr.



I was flying my station's logo over my competitor's free concert and passing out cash to anyone in the crowd wearing my brand's logo.


Jay with Taylor Swift.

31 KENNY JAY

Albright & O'Malley & Brenner Consulting Partner

The phone cameras weren't great, but this giveaway was. KQYB listener Donna winning a brand-new Saturn Sky Roadster – the actual car, not a lease. We may have been one of the first stations to post the winner video on this new, fancy digital platform called YouTube.



28 TROY TOMLINSON

Universal Music Group Publishing/Nashville Chairman/CEO

The year started like most in the music publishing world: lots of change. I had recently been appointed President/CEO of Sony/ATV – a wonderful opportunity. The challenge, however, was trying to build upon what legends Buddy Killen and Donna Hilley had created over a span of decades. I was blessed with a team of people who pulled together because they too knew we were standing on the shoulders of every leader and songwriter who had passed through the hallowed doors of what had previously been Tree Publishing. We were fortunate to have an unbelievable roster of songwriters and artists who joined us in the endeavor of taking the company to new heights. Looking back, that team and those songwriters led us to historic, record-setting accomplishments. We became the first music publisher in Nashville to be named BMI, ASCAP, SESAC and *Billboard*'s Publisher of the Year. Twenty years go by faster than you think. Don't blink.

29 STEPHANIE WRIGHT

MCA/Nashville EVP/Head A&R



I was hungry to move beyond the administrative side of A&R and really learn the art of the creative process. I wanted to be in the room listening to songs, talking about artists and discovering what could help take a career to the next level. I jumped at the opportunity to help find songs for Lee Ann Womack, Ashton Shepherd and David Nail among others on the roster. I was also working with two of the best A&R's – Brian Wright and Joel Fisher – who taught, encouraged and challenged me to be a better creative. Experiences and lessons that have stayed with me throughout my career and continue to shape the way I approach A&R today.

30 ADAM WEISER

AEG Presents SVP/Global Touring & Talent



I was at ILG (Independent Label Group/East West), which operated under Warner's ADA, handling Tour Marketing. A big part of the job was keeping everyone updated on who was where on the road, but I also found myself playing "agent" for a lot of our younger artists heading out on their first tours. I learned routing pretty quickly, mostly by doing it wrong. The first tour I routed included a few twelve-hour drives between shows. After the artist had to cancel a handful of dates because they literally couldn't get there in time, I realized there might be more to this touring thing than connecting dots on a map. Twenty years later, I'm still doing it, although I'm happy to report my routing has improved considerably. It's been a hell of a 20-year ride, and one I'm incredibly proud of!

31 KATIE MCCARTNEY

MCA/Nashville EVP/GM

I was hustling to be a part of the music industry in any way I could. I was your friendly artist escort at *CRS* and *CMA Fest*, helped the promotions team at 95.5 The Wolf (WSM-FM/Nashville) with their Coyote Ugly remote every Friday night, interned at NSAI and drove all over Middle Tennessee doing store checks at every Walmart, Target and Best Buy for Lyric Street Records. I went to every show I could, hung out at the *Opry* any chance I got and somehow made my way through MTSU on my waitressing money. I was thriving. I was obsessed with country music. I was living the dream and didn't even know it yet. **CAC**


McCartney with Vince Gill.

Need Help?

MENTAL HEALTH

https://cmamember.com/mentalhealth/

Amber Health

backline

eccholive

MUSIC HEALTH ALLIANCE

MUSICARES

PORTER'S CALL

FINANCIAL RELIEF

ACM LIFTINGLIVES

ACMLL Diane Holcombe Emergency Relief Fund: Email liftinglives@acmcountry.com for the application to apply.

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BFOA: https://broadcastersfoundation.org/donate/

THE FOLLOW-UP TO HER
CHART-TOPPING HIT "BOSTON"

SOMETHING TO LOSE

STELLA LEFTY WITH VINCENT MASON

★ TAKING AIRPLAY NOW ★



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR

COUNTRY AIRCHECK 2026

POWER 31 HONOREES



SCOTT BORCHETTA

FOUNDER/CHAIRMAN
BIG MACHINE RECORDS
NASHVILLE HARBOR RECORDS & ENTERTAINMENT
BORCHETTA ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

JIMMY HARNEN

PRESIDENT/CEO
BIG MACHINE RECORDS
NASHVILLE HARBOR RECORDS & ENTERTAINMENT





RYAN DOKKE

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
BIG MACHINE RECORDS
NASHVILLE HARBOR RECORDS & ENTERTAINMENT

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HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY COUNTRY AIRCHECK

FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT

BIG MACHINE RECORDS

BORCHETTA ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

NASHVILLE HARBOR RECORDS & ENTERTAINMENT















25 YEARS

113 #1 SINGLES

AND... THIS YEAR'S SMASH SINGLES

"HATE HOW YOU LOOK" - JOSH ROSS
(JESSICA FARREN / NICHOLAS SAINATO / CHRIS MCKENNA)

"I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE"
ELLA LANGLEY & MORGAN WALLEN
(AUSTIN GOODLOE)

"WHERE WOULD I BE" - PETER BURTON
(AJ PRUIS)

"GOOD" - MATTHEW WEST
(AJ PRUIS)

"ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW"
COREY KENT FT. KOE WETZEL
(COREY KENT / AUSTIN GOODLOE / THOMAS ARCHER)

"CARRY ON" - KENNY CHESNEY
(MATT JENKINS)

"GET TO DRINKIN'" - ZACH JOHN KING
(THOMAS ARCHER)

COMBUSTION MUSIC
NASHVILLE · TN

THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE WRITERS AND ARTISTS THAT HAVE LET US BE A PART OF THEIR CAREERS THE PAST 25 YEARS. CHEERS TO 25 MORE!



JAYE ALBRIGHT

Then: Country Consultant
Now: Retired
2008 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee



I was 63 those two decades ago and still had seven or eight years to go before I formally retired. At that time, I felt like I was going to work until I dropped because I got so much positive from the career I felt so fortunate to have chosen. A secret that only consultants know is that you advise people to do things, and it feels so wonderful to watch them succeed, accomplishing more than you could envision. [What I've learned in retirement] is that longtime friends are the most precious gift. Cherish them!



SKIP BISHOP

Then: Arista/Nashville VPP
Now: Partner in Galaxy Label Group, Music City Power Company, MMI Publications, Studio2Bee Entertainment & BeeManaged

I miss the incredible energy, tenacity and creativity of that Sony executive team. From Joe Galante and Butch Waugh on down, it was fast-paced huddling, decision making and snap execution. It was luminously focused. I don't miss the knot in my stomach ... because I still have it. I wish I'd known then that time moves this quickly, and the seeds you plant in your younger days become the garden (or jungle) in which you live!

SCOTT BORCHETTA

Then: Big Machine President
Now: Founder/Chairman/CEO of Big Machine Records/Nashville Harbor Records & Entertainment and Borchetta Entertainment Group



Nobody predicted what a global pandemic could bring to our business or how we would even begin to prepare. What it did to frontline releases, catalog, radio and social media completely changed the game and there's no going back. Most of those changes were coming, COVID just turbo-charged the speed at which they changed. What do I miss? Selling CDs for $12.02 wholesale! Big Machine got in under the wire when radio, TV, print media and physical distribution still delivered fans to our doorstep, and we shipped millions of CDs. I miss the superhighway we built to break artists. I miss having everyone's attention as opposed to constantly fighting for oxygen in our attention-based economy.


Brenner gets a smooch from Blake Shelton.

BECKY BRENNER

Then: KMPS/Seattle PD
Now: Retired, but still reviewing music for Albright & O'Malley & Brenner
2022 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee

I miss the camaraderie both with the radio station staffs and the industry colleagues. When I look back at the early/mid 2000s and think about the wonderful relationships I nurtured and how many of those I still have today, I always smile. I don't miss push weeks at all! It was so hard to balance the mission to serve the listeners with the desire to maintain win/win relationships with the labels and artists. Our agendas didn't always align, but I'm proud of the success we had with both the listeners and the industry.

COYOTE CALHOUN

Then: WAMZ/Louisville PD
Now: Retired
2005 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee



I miss the interaction with the folks in the industry. I was fortunate enough to be on the CMA Board for 10 years and the ACM Board for six. I learned so much ... and I got to make friends with a lot of industry professionals. I also miss being PD of a live and local airstaff, having a hefty marketing and promotional budget, and the interaction with the local community. I'm glad I didn't know there would come a day when the priority on air talent would be little to none, and that's a major reason that young people don't see broadcasting as a lucrative career.


Catino with wife Linda and their granddaughters.

BILL CATINO

Then UMG/Nashville EVPP
Now: Retired

I wish I would have taken it all in a little more. Looking back, I realize how lucky I was to have a career I was truly passionate about, surrounded by amazing staff, talent and friends at radio. I'm so proud to have been part of helping the artists and their careers. It was always fast-paced and filled with excitement. I think about that time in my life a lot and realize how special it was. I miss the lifestyle. I loved traveling with the artists and my staff. I miss the conversations over great meals, working hard to break artists and building great friendships with everyone at radio. I don't miss the stress!

CHARLIE COOK

Then: Cumulus VP/Country
Now: Retired, but also works as SonicTrek.ai's MyCountry.fm format Brand Mgr.
2011 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee



I'm not sure knowing what I know now would have changed the way I approached my job 20 years ago, because I was living in that world with that music and those rules. I think I did the best I could under those circumstances. I would have liked to have known a couple of lottery numbers, but that's a whole different deal. I don't miss the rodeo, but I do miss the cowboys and the cowgirls.



MIKE CURB

Then & Now: Curb Records Chairman

I wish I'd have known in 2006 the impact that streaming and artificial intelligence would have on our music industry. I miss the compact discs, but most of all miss the many great friends we've lost over the past 20 years. I don't miss the national economic crisis that was building between 2006 and 2008 that impacted everyone.

MIKE DUNGAN

Then: Capitol President/CEO
Now: Retired



What do I wish I knew then that I know now? Taylor Swift. Man, did I wiff there! Good for you, Scott B! I miss my many talented friends who used to make a decent living as songwriters composing solid B-sides. I miss my many talented friends in radio who used their well-trodden skills to build and manage their stations with entrepreneurial spirit and dedication to the towns they lived in. I miss melody in the music. I miss being the boss.



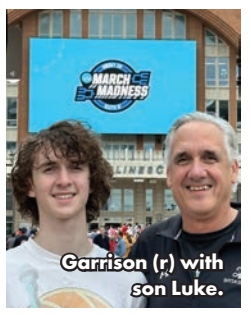
JOE GALANTE

Then: Sony BMG Chairman
Now: Retired, but serving non-profits including Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, Pet Community Center and Leadership Music, as well as public company boards

I wish I knew that digital and social media would change the way people discover and consume music, and that great live performers can sustain a career for decades, long after you don't have current hits. I miss the process of listening to demos from all over the town and picking the songs to help the artist build their musical journey for the fans formerly known as an album. I don't miss the obsession we have with the singles race to the top of charts with songs that never make an impact. We slow down the entire town's artist development by hanging on for over 30 weeks to say the artist got a hit.

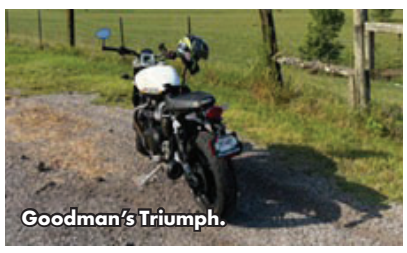
JEFF GARRISON

Then: CBS Radio VP/Country; KILT/Houston PD
Now: "Enjoying the life radio gave us, and no long meetings."
2019 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee



Garrison (r) with son Luke.

I wish I'd known to slow down just a bit. I burned pretty hot when it came to the product, always wanting it to be perfect. Good goal, but unattainable. All you can do is get better every day. I miss the crazy ideas and competition of day-to-day radio. We were a fighting bunch. Ideas came from hanging out with other crazy people when everyone cared and wanted to do fun, creative programming for both the listener and clients. Winning was the goal. So grateful that I was blessed to be in radio in such a creative, competitive and community focused era. What a blast! I miss all the other crazies that made the trip so fun!


Goodman's Triumph.

RANDY GOODMAN

Then: Lyric Street President
Now: Retired, enjoying being a new grandfather and taking road trips on his Triumph, doing service work and being "fully available to mentor"

Three things I wish I'd know 20 years ago: 1. The understanding that this too shall pass. Whatever that may be, good or bad, nothing is constant and everything is always evolving. So, be aware and be prepared. 2. Discern the right thing to do vs. doing the thing right. So subtle, but so important. 3. Hold things more lightly. It's not all a zero sum game. Be more in the moment. I miss the people, the collaborative creative process, and daily mentoring. I don't miss the business plan meetings, but it's all part of it.



JIMMY HARNEN

Then: Capitol/Nashville SVPP
Now: Big Machine Records & Nashville Harbor Records & Entertainment Pres./CEO

What I wish I'd known 20 years ago is not to worry quite so much about every bump along the way. Work hard, trust your instincts, surround yourself with great people and keep moving forward. Most importantly, never lose the excitement of hearing a great song and believing in an artist ... I tend not to look in the rear-view mirror too often, especially since the windshield has such a bigger and exciting view! I'm much more interested in what's happening now and what's coming next. This business keeps reinventing itself, and that's what makes it exciting. I still believe the best record, the best artist and the best moment could be the next one.

KEVIN HERRING



Then: Lyric Street VPP
Now: Triple Tigers Advisor

I wish I knew 20 years ago I'd still be waiting on my beloved Detroit Lions to make it to the Super Bowl. I could have enjoyed many more beautiful Sundays in the fall. What I miss most is a toss-up between the days when almost every radio station PD made 100% of their airplay decisions, and the little ball at the bottom of the computer mouse. I don't miss haircuts.



CLAY HUNNICUTT

Then: Clear Channel VP/Country; WUBL/Atlanta PD
Now: Honey Music Founder and Merch Traffic/Nashville SVP
2025 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee

A lot of us wish we could have predicted earlier how listeners would change their habits and the impacts of those changes. With radio, DSPs, streaming services, social media and so much more, we're all competing for the ears of the fans at every turn. That has changed drastically in 20 years from cars and at-work to phones and other devices. From a personal perspective, I wish I'd known that our jobs are not our identities. There are more important things in life. I gave up a lot in my early career to do what I love, and have learned 20 years later how to properly balance personal and professional.

MIKE KENNEDY



Then: Wilkes/Kansas City Dir./Programming; KBEQ/KC PD
Now: Emporia, KS Chamber of Commerce Pres./CEO, and volunteer for the Olathe School District
2015 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee

Even though I don't think there was any way to change the wiring in my brain, I do wish there was a way that I could have shut off the work button sometimes. I wish I'd have known better. What I really know that I didn't know 20 years ago is that there are other things out there than radio! You could not tell me that in 2006. But I miss the constant energy, the music and my Nashville friends coming in with new artists, new music, new fun, etc. I also miss the artist relationships. Real or not so real, what a great bonus of being in Country radio to get that close to the artists and be a small part of their career.



LUKE LEWIS

Then: UMG/Nashville Chairman
Now: Retired

I wish I'd known how great micro-dosing mushrooms is. I miss almost all of my co-workers and competitors. I don't miss bro-country. Retirement with young kids in the house is a blessing. It's a little easier to shoot your age at golf when you are 79.

SCOTT LINDY



Then: Sirius Satellite Radio Country PD
Now: Lindy Media AI Consulting Founder

I wish I had paid more attention to the wide set of skills a PD amasses over time and how valuable they are. Writing copy, organizing strategic promotions, casting talent, marketing on a $0 budget, reimagining sales promotions to fit programming strategy, and a dozen more skills like those are in high demand across all job categories. Knowing that back then would have made me more comfortable in taking more chances and stretching the boundaries of creativity. What I miss most is being surrounded by radio people every day. They're a special breed and tend to see the world differently.



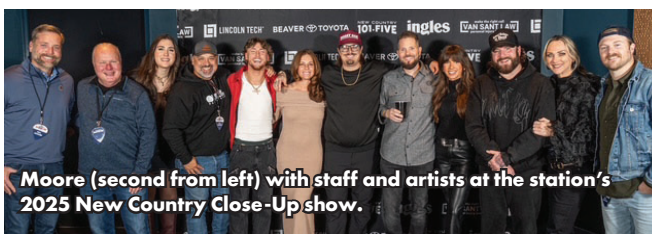
BOB MOODY

Then: Regent VP/Programming
Now: Retired, and authoring historical books
2007 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee

I wish I had known that shortly after I left the business two grandchildren would arrive to make my retirement years the happiest time of my life. I miss Jack's Place, where every Monday night Jack Lameier's office at Sony would be filled with artists, songwriters, promotion staff, independent promotion people, and visiting out-of-town radio folks to watch the new charts arrive via fax. The music industry people in Nashville today are making more money than we did, but not having nearly as much fun.

MIKE MOORE

Then: Entercom VP/Country; KWJJ/Portland PD
Now: Cumulus/Atlanta OM & WKHX PD
2024 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee



Something I wish I had known 20 years ago is that things usually end up working out in the end. I tend to worry, and most of the things I worry about never happen or are never as bad as I imagine. Things I miss about those days are some of the people/staffs I have worked with over the years. Thankfully, I have been blessed to work with some wonderful, talented people, and I love my team at Cumulus/Atlanta!



MIKE O'MALLEY

Then: Country Consultant
Now: Retired, but still "on call" for Albright & O'Malley & Brenner; has authored four novels in his *Stan & Mo Chronicles* series
2018 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee

I wish I would have known about the increasing level of turbulence talent would face because of the ongoing roster trimming. Not that anyone was unaware of what the industry was moving toward 20 years ago, but [not] the degree of *urgency* for all talent to leverage their visibility while they had such a huge platform in the station. While that strategy is well-known and widely used now, 20 years ago was less obvious and, as a result, a number of excellent opportunities were likely missed.



MIKE PETERSON



Then: WUSN/Chicago PD
Now: Audacy VP/Talent Development, OM for Denver cluster & PD of Hot AC KALC

I thought I was pretty smart 20 years ago. Yet today, I have a much broader scope of knowledge from a bigger network of really smart and talented people. That includes the various nuances of multiple formats, on-air talent in all formats, demographics, and of course, the ever-changing landscape of technology and consumer behavior. Some days I miss the simplicity of focusing on the fundamentals of great radio and great ideas with a full air staff for just one or two stations. The ability to make quick decisions, react instantly, and execute ideas without the layers of bureaucracy was simpler then. I don't miss printing pages and pages of music and commercial logs!



JOEL RAAB

Then & Now: Country Consultant
2015 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee

I wish I appreciated how much fun it was to be on the air when I was a PD. Sometimes it seemed like a chore when so many other duties hung over my head. As a consultant, I wish I had known early on that it wasn't enough to have a good idea; that you had to sell that idea to a lot of people to get it implemented, and then follow up to make sure it was done properly. I miss stations having more people. I miss big contest and promotion budgets of 20 years ago. I miss the world being a little more normal. I don't miss the travel that has been reduced by Zooms and other means of communications. That would have been nice when the kids were younger. The pandemic did teach us how to be more efficient with our time.

GREGG SWEDBERG



Then: KEEY/Minneapolis PD
Now: iHeartMedia Strategic Advisor
2025 Country Radio Hall of Fame Inductee

I miss all the people. As the industry has shrunk, the work has gotten easier through technology, but you do miss being able to bounce off people every day. Not only are there fewer people, everyone who's still here is so busy. I just wish we had more time to just bounce ideas around. What do I wish I knew? I think part of the charm of this job has been dealing with the constant change. The journey has been the destination, I guess. I do wish I knew that the Vikings were *still* not going to win the Super Bowl. Would have saved me a lot to angst on Sundays.



BUTCH WAUGH

Then: Sony BMG/Nashville EVP
Now: Retired

These are all good questions, but these would be for Butch. I now answer to Paw Paw. Twenty years ago I was chasing airplay and sales. Now I try to keep up with my three beautiful granddaughters, the brightest lights in my life. At 78, I am enjoying watching my son Tyler and daughter-in-law Stacy [Blythe] at Big Loud; they are such a source of pride. I am still in touch with many of my contemporaries, mostly through the J2 Poker Club, which is about 90% music industry folks. My advice is: enjoy your successes.

KERRY WOLFE



Then: WMIL/Milwaukee PD
Now: Galaxy Label Group VP/Promotion

I wish I knew that radio stations would become a skeleton crew with only one, two or even zero employees locally, and that PPM would slowly strip a lot of the personality out of on-air talent. I miss the energy and camaraderie of a full staff of talented people working toward a common goal of winning. I also miss the collaboration of a staff to create exciting, creative and interactive promotions that had the whole market talking and the competitors envious. **CAC**

Power 31 In Memoriam

Rusty Walker, Country Consultant



Walker's influential consultancy, launched in 1984, over time advised more than 500 stations. Former colleague and fellow Hall of Famer Phil Hunt tells **Country Aircheck** that Walker's "impact on the Country radio format was profound. Rusty had an unmatched ability to influence, mentor and shepherd programmers to produce radio stations that play the hits, celebrate the station with exuberance, and keep the focus on the listener. Those station qualities produced ratings, which became a lasting legacy." Walker died at the age of 59 in 2012, the same year he was inducted into the Country Radio Hall of Fame, and he is now the namesake and inspiration for an annual CRS scholarship.

BEST COUNTRY

ALL DAY





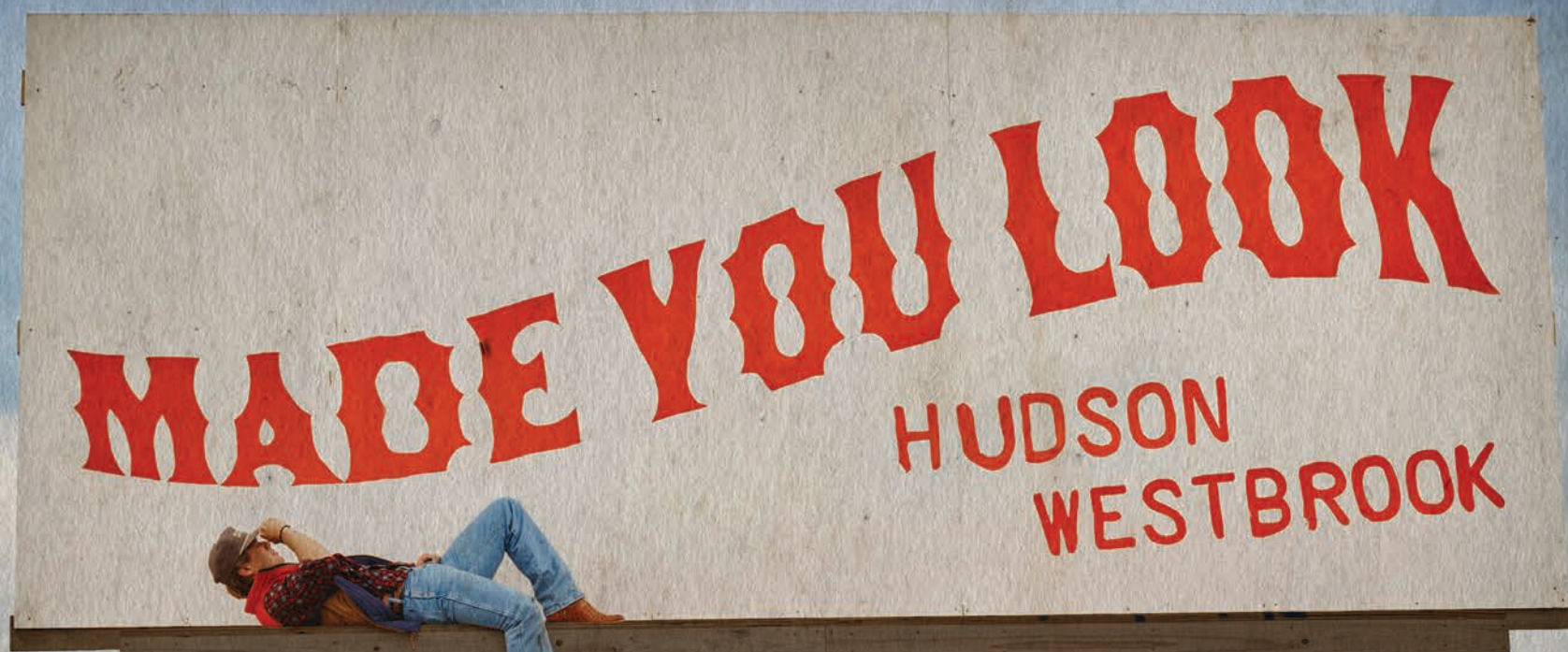
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AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 6TH



WARNER RECORDS NASHVILLE

RIVER HOUSE ARTISTS

The Creekers

Debut Album

Follow The Sound

Out October 30th



WARNER RECORDS NASHVILLE

RANDY TRAVIS

SAME OLD WAY

NEW ALBUM

FROM THE VAULT

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 13TH

IN CELEBRATION OF 40 YEARS OF IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC

WARNER RECORDS NASHVILLE

TWENTY 20 VISION

While the first-ever issue – pictured below – belies the idea, one of Country Aircheck's first principles was to be more aggressive with art than a typical trade publication. From the large-format print issues to photo shoots for The Interview and fanciful illustrations, a signature style was intended … if not always achieved. Here are 20 images that help tell the story.

COUNTRY AIRCHECK IN PICTURES


DANIELLE PECK "Findin' A Good Man"
CA/MB/USA Today 18* +223 points / RR/BB 19* AIRPOWER +370K impressions
Triple Digit Spin Increase This Week - CONVERT NOW!!!
NEW TODAY: WGAR, WOGK, WDSY, WDAF, WJCL
BIG MACHINE RECORDS

Los Angeles Earthquake Shakes Country

It seems especially ironic that Emmis would pull the plug on KZLA/Los Angeles on the eve of the first of three sold out shows by **Faith Hill** and **Tim McGraw** at LA's Staples Center. The flip to Movin' 93.9 after almost 26 years of Country registered 10.0 on this format's Richter scale last Thursday.

Emmis' exit from the nation's second largest market was a blow to Country radio and the country music business already suffering from the lack of Country outlets in New York and San Francisco. The next few stories chronicle the events as they unfolded, the reason why Emmis made the change and the impact KZLA's absence will have on Nashville.

Exiting were APD/MD **Tonya Compos** (who has since taken a job with Lofton Creek), morning personality **Peter Tilden** (*peter@kzla.com*), middayer **Shawn Parr** (*shawn@kzla.com*) and PM driver **Whitney Allen** (*whitneyone@aol.com*). There hasn't been an evening talent for the last year and **After Midnite with Blair Garner** filled the overnight hours. In fact, Garner's was the last voice to be heard on KZLA. He was filling in for the vacationing Tilden and had started a music sweep before handing over the reins to Parr -- who never had a chance to say a word. The plug was pulled shortly after 10am, with **Keith Urban**'s "Tonight I Wanna Cry" the last Country song heard on KZLA.

PD **R.J. Curtis** (*locurto6@mindspring.com*) said he had no inkling a change was imminent. Market Manager **Val Maki** and Emmis VP/Programming **Jimmy Steele** walked in his office about 9am to tell him of the impending flip. Yesterday was Curtis' last day at KZLA. Almost 17 of his 28 years in radio were at KZLA.

Inside The Decision To Flip KZLA

Why did Emmis drop Country? "Because we found a better business opportunity -- considerably better," says Emmis President/Radio **Rick Cummings.** "We don't take exclusive positions lightly and I'm proud of how well our team made Country work in Los Angeles *long* after it was given up in New York and San Francisco. But it is challenging to do this format in markets with high ethnicity.

"We grew Country radio in Los Angeles every year [since we've owned it] -- nice, steady, incremental revenue

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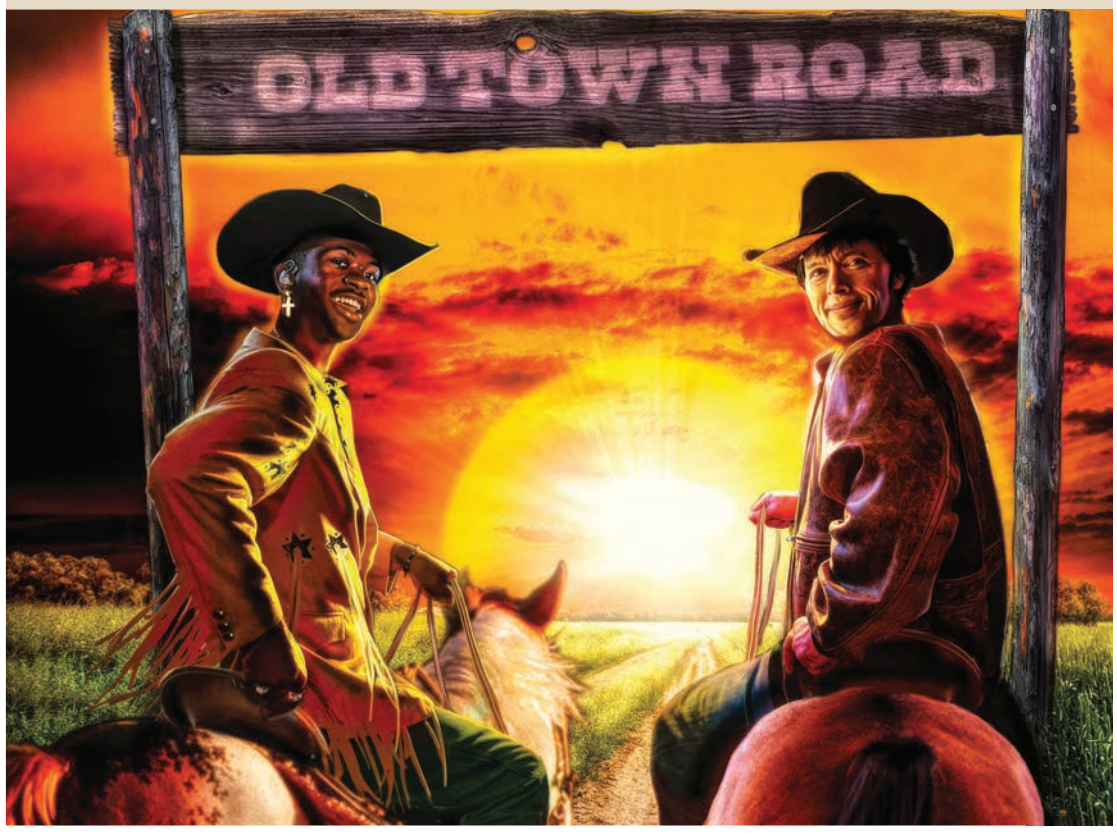
BRAVE NEW WORD: The first ever issue of **Country Aircheck** was a full weekly anchored by **Lon Helton**'s story about KZLA/Los Angeles leaving the format. The pedestrian layout was primarily the work of the eminently underqualified **Chuck Aly** after the just-hired graphic designer quit shortly before midnight on production day. A long-distance, late-night (and early morning) assist from **Pete Stringfellow** salvaged the operation.



EAT 'EM & SMILE: Early in **Country Aircheck**'s existence, Publisher **Lon Helton** found an 11x17-inch Grammy week special issue that he'd brought back from Los Angeles earlier that year, which inspired the first-ever print issue (above) in December of 2006. Beyond being impossible to hide under more conventionally sized competitors on a desk or lobby coffee table, it offered a generous canvas for art and ads. Bonus: Turned sideways, it makes a nice placemat.

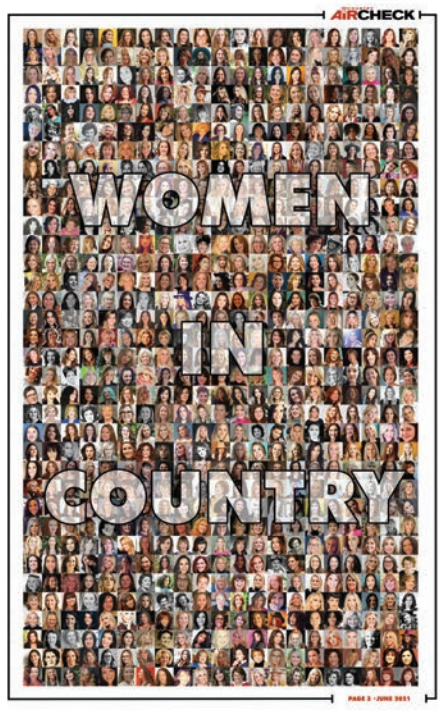


ALT-COUNTRY: Illustrations often helped tell a story there was no other way to tell. Like the 2019 Top Stories of the Year image putting **Lil Nas X** and **Ken Burns** in the saddle, and the following year's Power 31 sketch showing the "truth" behind pandemic-zooming disembodied heads.



BE HER: A 2015 deep-dive into the numbers and concerns around female representation in country music included a conversation (and photo shoot) with **Karen Fairchild**, **Michael Bryan**, **Natalie Hemby** and **Jon Loba** at the Country Music Hall of Fame. **Country Aircheck** updated the story five years later, including a full-page montage of every headshot we could find of female artists and execs ... literally.







MODEL THIS: Generative-AI illustrations anchored stories two years apart. The illustrations generated in 2024 (top) to prompts asking for "retro," "futuristic" and "robot" radio personalities were pretty bizarre. The antenna in the nostril was a particularly odd touch. Two years later, the technology had come a long way.



PHOTO FINISHED: The standing "power shot" quickly became a staple look in The Interview that closes every print issue.



TWENTY 20 VISION

WHO NOSE? A montage of illustrations intended to humorously prime readers for the first post-pandemic, in-person CRS included this questionable image. Some might ask, "What were they thinking?"



BELL WHICH? Under the headline of "Country's Big Bang," a 30-year look back at the venerated **Class of '89** put its members in a *Saved By The Bell* motif.







SHUTTER TO THINK: Trade shots run every day in **Country Aircheck**, and the staff has no qualms about running ridiculous images. In fact, it's encouraged. Whether it's being caught snuggling an ACM trophy – like **Gator Harrison**, **Greg "StyckMan" Owens** and **Cowboy Kyle** in 2013 – or not selecting the photo where eyes are open – like **Wingnut** and **Mike Preston** with **Tim McGraw** in 2010 – sender beware. Hey, it's the entertainment business!





SPACE RACE: The annual Power 31 has been a focus of many creative images, most of them by Washington-based illustrator Brad Walker prior to his move into another creative field. **CAC**



SMACK CONGRATULATES

OUR SONGWRITERS



BODY LIKE A BACKROAD



GET ALONG



MAMA'S BROKEN HEART



WHAT IFS



HOTEL KEY



UNFORGETTABLE



AMERICAN KIDS



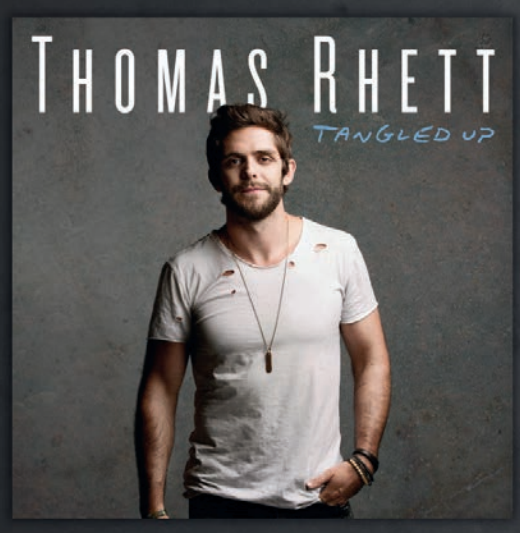
HEAVEN



LOVE AIN'T



ONE MAN BAND



T-SHIRT

11 SONGS IN THE 20 YEAR TOP 100

SMACK

JASON ALDEAN

THE

#1 MOST PLAYED ARTIST

IN COUNTRY AIRCHECK'S

20 YEAR HISTORY...

...AND NOT RUNNING OUT OF HITS

"ANYTIME SOON"



PAPER OF RECORD

The day-in day-out work of Country Aircheck is chronicling an ever-changing business, but at its heart, it's about people. Who got a new job and has earned a congratulatory email? Who lost one and needs a lead or three? Airplay, chart share and the mechanics of the business certainly have their place, but the stories are often most easily remembered. Here are just a few that stand out:


Dungan with Charles Kelley and Luke Bryan

The Storyteller

*Retiring UMG/Nashville CEO **Mike Dungan** did not want to do an exit interview with **Country Aircheck**. Or anyone else. But that wasn't the pitch. "We want you to tell your best stories … Sinatra calling you 'Jesus' from the stage when you had long hair … the time you fell off the stage at CRS … how you were thrown into a pool at an afterparty." He got it. The March 2023 "Storytime with Mike Dungan" feature also contained a gem about Dungan's early days working with 'Jesse's Girl' singer Rick Springfield.*

"We set up '98-cent WNCI day with Rick Springfield' at the [Cincinnati] Zoo with a temporary stage, barriers and security. Rick was not going to perform, just take the mic and say a few words. We got there, and I've never seen anything like it. It was a Woodstock of 12-year-old girls as far as the eye could see, screaming at the top of their lungs.

"Rick hits the stage, starts to talk, and it gets louder and louder with each passing moment. They surge forward, crush the barriers, get by security, push up against the stage and are rocking it. The cops say, "We're shutting this down." We run off the stage trying to get to the administration building, and there are 4,000 little kids running after us.

"Rick is a few steps ahead of me. At one point, I got stepped on by a cop's horse. And there's this little, tiny speedster girl catching up to us from the side. I've never seen anybody so fast in my life! If she catches Rick, she's going to slow him down, and we're all dead. Without even thinking, I elbowed her in the side of the face and knocked her to the muddy ground, saving our lives."

Our Song

*The annual "ACM Week With …" feature has captured one artist's first major awards show experience. Among them, Luke Bryan, Lady A, FGL, Scotty McCreery, Kelsea Ballerini, Lainey Wilson and Tucker Wetmore. But the first was **Taylor Swift**, who was promoting her first single, and planned to meet the song's namesake during the show.*

At rehearsals for her performance of "Tim McGraw," the planned and super-secret introduction was center stage. "We did five passes through the song," Swift says. "The important thing was to get the stepping right because I walk a good bit while I'm playing.

"After the first chorus, I'm going to walk down and sing the song in front of him. We still have never met. So when the song's over I'm going to extend my hand and introduce myself.

"They were so nice. I'm doing 10 dates with them on *Soul2Soul* and I can't even wait. They told me during the commercial they're looking forward to seeing me out there."

Swift says her first major awards show appearance was exactly what it should have been. "It's just me, a guitar and no band. That's symbolic because when this all started I took my guitar out on the road and introduced myself to radio. Because they took a chance on me, a year later I'm here. And it's still just me and my guitar."


Swift meets McGraw

How Do You Like Me Now?!

*Longform career retrospectives have found iconic artists exploring their early days. Whether it was **Tim McGraw** or the late **Toby Keith** recognizing 30 years of airplay, or **Eric Church** examining his debut album* Sinners Like Me *20 years later.*

Church: "We were playing seven nights a week and hoping to make enough merch money to pay for diesel to get us to the next show. 'Guys, if we don't sell enough shirts tonight, I don't think we can get to Amarillo from El Paso.' The young artists today want to know my secrets, but it's not a secret. There's a lot of earning it when you come up that way. You find out a lot about yourself when you're playing for eight people. How much do you really care about what you do? How committed are you?


Eric Church

"I say to a lot of them, if you're good, you're going to get your time. The spotlight will turn your way. And if you've earned it, you won't melt when that happens. If you haven't earned it, you might. That happens a lot these days. If you're not sure you belong, you're dead. When you've gone through surviving just to get to the next show, it changes how you treat all of it. I never considered whether I was ready to play a show because I didn't have the luxury of letting that cross my mind. You get an opportunity and every ounce of your energy goes into that moment because you remember the time you were almost stuck in El Paso."

McGraw: "I remember thinking, 'If this doesn't work out, maybe I'll play acoustic guitar in someone's band. Maybe I'll work for a publishing company. I'm pretty good at picking songs, maybe that's something I could do down the road.' But in the back of my mind, I had a feeling something was going to work out. Even when I was trying to get a record deal, I knew I wasn't going to walk into a room, sit down with a guitar and blow anybody away. But if given the opportunity to make a record, I could do it. Same with acting. I'm probably not going to read for a part and have them think I'm Brando. But put me on the set, and I'll hit a home run for you. I was that way in sports as a kid. I was small but fast. I didn't impress off the bat, but in a game situation, you wanted the ball to come to me."


Tim McGraw

Keith: "I'd been working five or six nights bringing home $300 for the week. Any extra money went to fixing the van, trailer, whatever. Now they're telling me, with a hit, I can get $5,000 to $7,500 a night and every once in a while on weekends they can throw me a $10,000 or $12,000 bone. That's for 75 minutes, which is my album, anything new I've written and a few covers. They asked, '"How many of these dates do you want?' And I'm like, 'All of 'em.' 'You want to work every single day?' 'I'll work every single day.' So the next three months, I tried to make enough money to take care of my family, pay some bills and get ourselves in a better situation."


Toby Keith



Martina & John McBride

Salad Days

***Country Aircheck**'s only viral moment – and the impetus for the only Wiki about the publication – was TomatoGate, the infamous position taken by consultant Keith Hill about female artists in the May 26, 2015 weekly. Interestingly, Hill had made the same statement in public before, and **Country Aircheck** had reported it before. But this one struck a nerve, and led to widespread debate and deeper dives into the issue in multiple print and weekly editions.*

Finally, Hill cautions against playing too many females. And playing them back to back, he says, is a no-no. "If you want to make ratings in Country radio, take females out," he asserts. "The reason is mainstream Country radio generates more quarter hours from

PAPER OF RECORD

female listeners at the rate of 70 to 75%, and women like male artists. I'm basing that not only on music tests from over the years, but more than 300 client radio stations. The expectation is we're principally a male format with a smaller female component. I've got about 40 music databases in front of me and the percentage of females in the one with the most is 19%. Trust me, I play great female records and we've got some right now; they're just not the lettuce in our salad. The lettuce is Luke Bryan and Blake Shelton, Keith Urban and artists like that. The tomatoes of our salad are the females."

Buy And By

Now 30 years old, the Telecom Act of 1996 continues to be felt as many of radio's biggest companies are still carrying debt that can be traced back to consolidation. Ten years ago, ***Country Aircheck*** *asked the originator of the act for his assessment.*

Retired U.S. Senator **Larry Pressler** (R-SD) authored the 1996 law and the original signed copies hang on the wall of his Washington office. Despite appearances, the prospect of excessive consolidation loomed large as the legislation was being crafted. "I was afraid of too much consolidation," Pressler recalls. "People suggested that would be addressed with antitrust enforcement, but no recent president of either party has enforced antitrust laws. That's part of the problem. It's not the Telecom Bill."

Inadequate antitrust enforcement, Pressler says, can be laid at the feet of special interests. "It's the power of big business and big labor," he argues. "[Communications


Bill Clinton & Al Gore

Workers of America] were as equally greedy as any of the companies were. So I've got a bad flavor in my mouth that we've allowed so much consolidation."

Pressler believes the positive aspects of Telecom far outweigh the negatives. "I'm pretty satisfied," he contends. "I did the best I could and I think it's a great piece of legislation. It divided up the pie in ways it hadn't been before and let more people get more pieces of it." Pressler is not bothered by criticism that the law gave too many breaks to big companies. "It takes a big company to put up a satellite or lay fiber optic cable to India," he explains, both of which have been aided by the relaxed regulations in the law. "We tried to create a whole host of opportunities for other businesses."

Here In The Real World

The worst part of telling the industry's stories is when the worst happens. Death, illness and tragedy. Grieving and healing have been woven into the daily, weekly and quarterly publications in exact proportion to how they are intertwined with what it means to be human. But twice in 20 years, ***Country Aircheck*** *has broken format.*

After the passing of Country Radio Hall of Famer and iconic countdown host ***Bob Kingsley****, a special edition of* ***Country Aircheck Weekly*** *was released the day after the typical Monday issue. The outpouring of love from the business included several songwriters, among them* ***Jeffrey Steele****:*

"Back in the early '80s when Bob was at KLAC/Los Angeles, he would meet his attorney for a drink at the Palomino Club on talent night. I was probably 21 or 22. He would come up to me every time and say, 'Hey kid, keep writing those songs. Don't quit writing.' That's a small thing, but I didn't have a lot of people telling me that, and it was a huge part of carrying me through. Over the years I played his wedding and so many of his events. He celebrated songwriters and let everybody shine around him. Coming up in the business, you try to emulate that. But the main memory is after my boy died, we had just gotten back from a horrific nightmare at the hospital, and Bob was at my door. He'd gotten on a plane and was the first guy there. That's who he was. I don't know a lot of people like that."


Lon Helton & Bob Kingsley

Monday morning, Oct. 2, 2017, ***Country Aircheck*** *staff joined the entire nation reeling in horror at the attack on the* Route 91 *festival in Las Vegas. Like everyone in the industry, the staff's immediate concern was the well-being of friends and colleagues. As the day progressed, a "safe list" was compiled, published, updated and republished. Before long, it became apparent there was no reasonable way to carry on with a normal chart day. The special issue that went out that night opened with the following statement:*

For the broader country music family, "business as usual" died Sunday night along with at least 58 of our fans. Like our friends and colleagues across the music business and Country radio, Country Aircheck will pick up and carry on in support of the industry, its people and the music ... tomorrow. Tonight's special edition of the weekly is focused on Las Vegas. There are no photos. There is no chart. Our thoughts and prayers will continue to be with everyone affected. We'll be back Tuesday to resume covering the greatest music community in the world.

Country Club

Perhaps the best part of talking to professionals in all corners of the country music world is experiencing how much passion every one of them has for the music, the community and its people. An exceedingly small sample follows.


Ashley Gorley

Songwriter **Ashley Gorley**: "I would have been happy to be in the business in any capacity, but I didn't know what God had in store for me. To be able to work with the caliber of artists I do is still mind blowing. Being able to stand in the pit at a show where nobody knows me – which is great, because that would freak me out – and hear them sing along to my song is the best night of my life. They love the music, and I do too. I get to put a few fingerprints on it, and that's enough."


Miranda Lambert

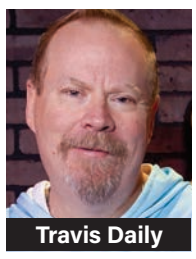
Miranda Lambert: "Country has always been very good about supporting each other. Country music is a family. We're not all best friends. Everybody doesn't always get along or like each other's music all the time. But when you have a CMA after party at Casa Rosa and every single artist you've ever met in the business for 20 years shows up, it's because we stick together. I hope that continues. I don't ever want it to divide. Everybody shares in this passion for country music, and that's what bonds us, even though we're all different."


Michelle Tigard Kammerer

Amazon Music's **Michelle Tigard Kammerer**: "Growing up in teeny, tiny, small town Kansas, I fell in love with country music when I was really small. I remember listening to the *Grand Old Opry* and loving the songwriting, storytelling and music. If we have even the smallest part in someone finding a song that timestamps their life, speaks to them, gets them through a breakup, birth or death, or becomes the first dance at their wedding – that is ultimate joy to me.


Brian O'Connell

Live Nation's **Brian O'Connell**: On the best part of the gig being "when you look out over the crowd, whether it's at a tour or a festival you've created, and you see all the smiles. What you set out to do worked. If it's a sellout, great. If it didn't sell out, it's not a failure. Those people are still having fun; that's just a math problem. Without all those smiling faces, we are just a bunch of goofy people standing in parking lots behind arenas. It'd be a really dumb job."


Travis Daily

Cumulus' **Travis Daily**: "I have done this my whole life and I believe in radio wholeheartedly. I have seen the power it has to raise money for kids in need. I've seen how one song or the right stupid joke between songs can change somebody's day. We've done a bad job of telling our story, and I am hell bent on fixing that narrative." **CAC**

ALL I DO IS WIN

The top airplay chart share label and artist in each of Country Aircheck's 20 years.

	LABEL	ARTIST
2006	Arista	Kenny Chesney
2007	Arista	Kenny Chesney
2008	Arista	Kenny Chesney
2009	Capitol	Keith Urban
2010	Capitol	Lady Antebellum
2011	Capitol	Jason Aldean
2012	Capitol	Luke Bryan
2013	Capitol	Florida Georgia Line
2014	Capitol	Luke Bryan
2015	Capitol	Luke Bryan
2016	Capitol	Thomas Rhett
2017	Capitol	Blake Shelton
2018	Capitol	Thomas Rhett
2019	Capitol	Luke Combs
2020	Capitol	Luke Combs
2021	Capitol	Luke Combs
2022	Broken Bow	Morgan Wallen
2023	Big Loud	Morgan Wallen
2024	Big Loud	Morgan Wallen
2025	Big Loud	Morgan Wallen

COUNTRY AIRCHECK

CONGRATULATIONS ON NOT SCREWING IT UP FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS!

UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING GROUP

Wherever Songs Go, We Are A World Ahead

UMUSICPUB.COM

St. Jude patient **Juan**



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Finding cures. Saving children.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

COUNTRY AIRCHECK!

BIG MACHINE MUSIC

We are proud to publish

12 OF THE TOP 100 SONGS

in your 20 year history!

SESAC

CONGRATULATES

COUNTRY AIRCHECK ON 20 YEARS & ALL OUR ARTISTS AND WRITERS IN THE

TOP 100 SONGS OF THE LAST 20 YEARS

#1





"CHICKEN FRIED"

written by
Zac Brown and Wyatt Durrette III

recorded by
Zac Brown Band

#3



"WAGON WHEEL"

written by Bob Dylan

recorded by Darius Rucker

#8



"ONE OF THEM GIRLS"

written by Lee Brice

recorded by Lee Brice

WATCHING YOU
written by Brian White

WHATEVER IT IS
written by Zac Brown and Wyatt Durrette III

GIMMIE THAT GIRL
recorded by Joe Nichols

FAMOUS FRIENDS
written by Cary Barlowe

SINGLES YOU UP
written by Justin Ebach

HEAVEN
written by Matt McGinn

TOES
written by Zac Brown, John Driskell Hopkins, and Wyatt Durrette III

NEED YOU NOW
written by Hillary Scott

ONE NUMBER AWAY
written by Sammy Mitchell

KNEE DEEP
written by Zac Brown, Coy Bowles, and Wyatt Durrette III

HOMEGROWN
written by Zac Brown, Niko Moon, and Wyatt Durrette III

GIRL LIKE YOU
written by Michael Tyler and Jaron Boyer

ARE YOU GONNA KISS ME OR NOT
recorded by Thompson Square

DANCIN' IN THE COUNTRY
written by Jon Nite

JUST GOT STARTED LOVIN' YOU
written and recorded by James Otto

THINKING 'BOUT YOU
written by Will Weatherly

SOMEWHERE ON A BEACH
written by Michael Tyler and Jaron Boyer

I'M COMIN' OVER
written by Josh Hoge

WHAT IFS
written by Matt McGinn

I HOPE
written by Jon Nite

BEAUTIFUL CRAZY
written by Wyatt Durrettte III

TOP 100 2006-2026

MEDIABASE



1	ZAC BROWN BAND *(Songwriters: Zac Brown and Wyatt Durrette)*	Chicken Fried	Atlantic/HomeGrown/BPP
2	SAM HUNT	Body Like A Back Road	MCA
3	DARIUS RUCKER	Wagon Wheel	Capitol
4	BLAKE SHELTON	Honey Bee	Warner Bros./WMN
5	JAKE OWEN	Barefoot Blue Jean Night	RCA
6	CARRIE UNDERWOOD	Before He Cheats	19/Arista
7	FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE	Cruise	Republic Nashville
8	LEE BRICE	One Of Them Girls	Curb
9	COLE SWINDELL	She Had Me At Heads Carolina	Warner/WMN
10	BILLY CURRINGTON	Good Directions	Mercury
11	RODNEY ATKINS	Watching You	Curb
12	ERIC CHURCH	Springsteen	EMI Nashville
13	JON PARDI	Dirt On My Boots	Capitol
14	ERIC CHURCH	Drink In My Hand	EMI Nashville
15	DARIUS RUCKER	Alright	Capitol
16	CHRIS YOUNG & KANE BROWN	Famous Friends	RCA
17	RASCAL FLATTS	Life Is A Highway	Walt Disney
18	DUSTIN LYNCH	Small Town Boy	Broken Bow
19	JASON ALDEAN	She's Country	Broken Bow
20	KENNY CHESNEY	Get Along	BlueChair/WarnerBros/WEA
21	LUKE COMBS	She Got The Best Of Me	River House/Columbia
22	ZAC BROWN BAND	Toes	Atlantic/HomeGrown/BPP
23	CODY JOHNSON	'Til You Can't	CoJo Music/Warner/WMN
24	ZAC BROWN BAND F/J. BUFFETT	Knee Deep	SouthernGrnd/Atlantic/BPP
25	THOMPSON SQUARE	Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not	Stoney Creek
26	RODNEY ATKINS	If You're Going Through Hell	Curb
27	DUSTIN LYNCH F/M. PORTER	Thinking 'Bout You	Broken Bow
28	JASON ALDEAN	When She Says Baby	Broken Bow
29	CARRIE UNDERWOOD	Blown Away	19/Arista
30	LUKE BRYAN	I Don't Want This Night To End	Capitol
31	MIRANDA LAMBERT	Mama's Broken Heart	RCA
32	JASON ALDEAN	Dirt Road Anthem	Broken Bow
33	LUKE BRYAN	Drink A Beer	Capitol
34	LUKE COMBS	When It Rains It Pours	River House/Columbia
35	KANE BROWN F/L. ALAINA	What Ifs	RCA
36	MORGAN WALLEN	Whiskey Glasses	Big Loud
37	BLAKE SHELTON	Boys 'Round Here	Warner Bros./WMN
38	KIP MOORE	Somethin' 'Bout A Truck	MCA
39	ZAC BROWN BAND	Whatever It Is	Atlantic/HomeGrown/BPP
40	RODNEY ATKINS	Take A Back Road	Curb
41	DYLAN SCOTT	My Girl	Curb
42	JASON ALDEAN	My Kinda Party	Broken Bow
43	JORDAN DAVIS	Singles You Up	MCA
44	LUKE BRYAN	Country Girl (Shake It For Me)	Capitol
45	LADY ANTEBELLUM	Need You Now	Capitol
46	ZAC BROWN BAND	Homegrown	SouthrnGrnd/Varvatos/BMLG
47	OLD DOMINION	Hotel Key	RCA
48	BILLY CURRINGTON	Do I Make You Wanna	Mercury
49	BRETT ELDREDGE	Don't Ya	Atlantic/WMN
50	BILLY CURRINGTON	People Are Crazy	Mercury
51	KENNY CHESNEY	Beer In Mexico	BNA
52	TYLER HUBBARD	Dancin' In The Country	EMI Nashville
53	NATE SMITH	World On Fire	RCA
54	JASON ALDEAN	Big Green Tractor	Broken Bow
55	LUKE BRYAN	That's My Kind Of Night	Capitol
56	THOMAS RHETT	Unforgettable	Valory
57	BLAKE SHELTON	A Guy With A Girl	Warner Bros./WMN
58	KENNY CHESNEY	American Kids	Blue Chair/Columbia
59	LUKE COMBS	Fast Car	River House/Columbia
60	J. ALDEAN & C. UNDERWOOD	If I Didn't Love You	BBR/Capitol
61	DIERKS BENTLEY	Somewhere On A Beach	Capitol
62	GABBY BARRETT F/C. PUTH	I Hope	Warner/WAR
63	JOE NICHOLS	Gimmie That Girl	Show Dog-Universal
64	THOMAS RHETT	Die A Happy Man	Valory
65	KANE BROWN	Heaven	RCA
66	LUKE COMBS	One Number Away	River House/Columbia
67	ELI YOUNG BAND	Love Ain't	Valory
68	DIERKS BENTLEY	Drunk On A Plane	Capitol
69	DAN + SHAY	Tequila	Warner/WAR
70	MORGAN WALLEN	Last Night	Big Loud
71	OLD DOMINION	One Man Band	RCA
72	LUKE COMBS	Hurricane	River House/Columbia
73	LUKE COMBS	Forever After All	River House/Columbia
74	LUKE COMBS	The Kind Of Love We Make	River House/Columbia
75	JASON ALDEAN	Girl Like You	Macon Music/Broken Bow
76	BAILEY ZIMMERMAN	Rock And A Hard Place	Warner/WEA
77	JELLY ROLL	Need A Favor	Stoney Creek
78	ELI YOUNG BAND	Even If It Breaks Your Heart	Republic Nashville
79	LUKE COMBS	Beer Never Broke My Heart	River House/Columbia
80	THOMAS RHETT	What's Your Country Song	Valory
81	JAMES OTTO	Just Got Started Lovin' You	Warner Bros. Nashville
82	SHABOOZEY	A Bar Song (Tipsy)	American Dogwood/EMPIRE
83	LOCASH	I Love This Life	Reviver/Star Farm
84	LUKE BRYAN	Play It Again	Capitol
85	JASON ALDEAN	Lights Come On	Broken Bow
86	CHRIS YOUNG	I'm Comin' Over	RCA
87	DIERKS BENTLEY	Free And Easy (Down The...)	Capitol
88	BLAKE SHELTON	God's Country	Warner/WMN
89	JORDAN DAVIS	What My World Spins Around	MCA
90	LUKE BRYAN	Huntin', Fishin' And Lovin'...	Capitol
91	MORGAN WALLEN	You Proof	Big Loud
92	LUKE COMBS	Beautiful Crazy	River House/Columbia
93	THOMAS RHETT	T-Shirt	Valory
94	LUKE COMBS	Lovin' On You	River House/Columbia
95	BRETT YOUNG	In Case You Didn't Know	BMLG
96	KENNY CHESNEY	Save It For A Rainy Day	Blue Chair/Columbia
97	LUKE BRYAN	One Margarita	Capitol
98	POST MALONE F/M. WALLEN	I Had Some Help	Big Loud
99	FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE/T. MCGRAW	May We All	BMLG
100	COLE SWINDELL	Single Saturday Night	Warner/WMN

Source: Mediabase

From The Publisher

TWO DECADES. A MILLION THANKS.

Thank you. Thank you for 20 years of readership, trust and support. It's hard to believe that two decades have passed since our first issue of **Country Aircheck**. From the beginning, our goal was to serve the people who make Country radio and country music special. We wanted to create a publication that informed, connected and celebrated those of you who engage the Country listener and those who create and promote the artists and music we all love. Our celebration is a milestone that belongs to all of you.

Of course, you don't make it this far without great people. As I've written numerous times, I could not and would not have even attempted this without my then-*Radio & Records* cohorts **Chuck Aly** and **Mary Forest Campbell** taking a huge leap of faith and leaving great jobs to take a flyer with me. I am forever grateful.

I'm also so appreciative of all those who worked so hard making CA the newspaper of record for our industry. Through these 20 years, a total of 26 CA employees and almost 80 outside contributors have written, marketed, designed and provided photographs for more than 5,000 daily missives, 1,000-plus weekly tomes and 80 print publications. (Man, that's a lotta words and pictures.)

I can't thank the current CA team enough. Chuck and **Kelley Hampton** have been here since the beginning (Kelley was only 19, as I discovered when offering to buy her a drink at our first staff dinner). **April Johnson** followed Mary Forest as our only other VP/Sales & Marketing almost 14 years ago; **Caitlin DeForest** will soon hit nine years; **Addie Morton** is at six years over two stints; and **Phyllis Stark** came aboard three years ago. Your dedication to the people of Country radio and music is what sets you apart.



We also don't make it this far without the trust and support from our friends at Mediabase. It starts at the top: **Kraig Kitchin**, **Rich Meyer**, **Philippe Generali**, **Susan Larkin** and newly-minted President **Alissa Pollack**, who has long been our champion. Our Mediabase partners also include **Cathy Downs**, **Joshua Medlock**, **Robin Rhodes** and **Anthony Acampora**. Thank you for all you do for us.

Thank you to our advertisers; none of this happens without you. You have trusted us with your artists, your messages and your businesses, and we are deeply grateful for that partnership. This industry is built on the relationships between radio and records, and advertising has always been about more than selling space. It has been about supporting a community. Your commitment has helped us invest in the journalism, products and services that connect our industries.

All of us at **Country Aircheck** are grateful for the artists, programmers, personalities, executives, record labels, managers, consultants and countless others who have allowed us to be part of their professional lives. Thank you for trusting us to tell the stories of this industry, report the news, highlight the music, spotlight its leaders and document the moments that mattered.

Thank you for opening **Country Aircheck**, whether it was delivered to your desk, read online or pulled up on your phone. Thanks, too, for grappling with this oversize monster the postal worker struggles to deliver to you four times a year. Your feedback, your ideas, your encouragement — and even the occasional disagreement (think TomatoGate) — have made us better. Above all, your passion for Country radio and country music has inspired us every step of the way.

We are especially grateful to you — the readers and advertisers who have been with us for this remarkable journey. Twenty years is a milestone worth celebrating. But it is also a reminder that the best stories are still ahead. Thank you for making **Country Aircheck** part of your world for the past 20 years.

Here's to the next 20!

-Lon

Twenty Years Of Music



In the 20 years since **Country Aircheck** debuted its first Mediabase chart, Country radio stations monitored by Mediabase have played 2,249 songs that have reached the Top 50. Those songs featured 441 artists and generated 291,034,508 plays. That span has seen 769 tunes from 147 artists hit No. 1 between that first chart on Aug. 21, 2006 and the chart of Aug. 26, 2026. (All information included here is based on songs that charted in that time frame.) For the real numbers-nerds among you, over the last 20 years, Mediabase monitored Country stations have played a total of 58,764 different songs 1,710,670,860 times. *[Ed. Note: Special thanks to Mediabase's Moses Araya for his expert help in compiling this data.]*

Our 20-year airplay leader is **Jason Aldean** who has charted a total of 41 songs in the last 20 years, 31 of which have gone No. 1 for a total of 52 weeks. (All totals include collaborations with other artists.) Aldean's charted-songs airplay is an incredible 11.9 million spins. **Luke Bryan** follows his good buddy with just over 10.6 million plays. He, too, has posted 31 No. 1s that have spent a total of 49 weeks at the top. Their 31 No. 1s are the most of any artist over our two decades. **Luke Combs** takes third with 26 charted songs, all of which have gone to No. 1 for a total of 48 weeks. In fourth is **Blake Shelton** who has 42 songs that have made the Top 50 in two decades. He has 27 No. 1s on top for 40 weeks. Rounding out our top five is **Morgan Wallen** with 26 charted songs, 23 of which have spent 38 weeks at No. 1.

The **Zac Brown Band's** "Chicken Fried" is the most-played song in **Country Aircheck**'s history, amassing almost 1.5 million plays. **Sam Hunt's** "Body Like A Back Road" comes in second, about 130,000 spins behind ZBB's hit. **Darius Rucker's** "Wagon Wheel" is just 18,000 plays behind Hunt, and a likewise 18,000 plays ahead of **Blake Shelton's** "Honey Bee" at No. 5. At No. 5 is **Jake Owen's** "Barefoot Blue Jean Night," garnering almost 1.24 million plays.

In **Country Aircheck**'s life span, 769 songs have hit No. 1. Only one song in the last 20 years has spent six weeks at No. 1: **Kenny Chesney's** 2007 monster "Don't Blink." A quintet has snagged that spot for five weeks, **Rodney Atkins'** "Watching You" (2007), Chesney's "Never Wanted Nothing More" (2007), **Taylor Swift's** "Our Song" (2008), **Tyler Hubbard's** "Dancin' in the Country" (2023), and **Koe Wetzel** and **Jessie Murph's** "High Road" (2024). See more Top Artists and the Top Song from each year below:

TOP SONGS BY YEAR

The most-played songs from each year according to cumulative airplay since.

2006	CARRIE UNDERWOOD/Before He Cheats (19/Arista)
2007	RODNEY ATKINS/Watching You (Curb)
2008	ZAC BROWN BAND/Chicken Fried (Atlantic/HomeGrown/BPG)
2009	DARIUS RUCKER/Alright (Capitol)
2010	JASON ALDEAN/My Kinda Party(Broken Bow)
2011	BLAKE SHELTON/Honey Bee (Warner Bros./WMN)
2012	FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE/Cruise (Republic Nashville)
2013	DARIUS RUCKER/Wagon Wheel (Capitol)
2014	SAM HUNT/Leave The Night On (MCA)
2015	ZAC BROWN BAND/Homegrown (SouthrnGrnd/Varvatos/BMLG)
2016	THOMAS RHETT/Die A Happy Man (Valory)
2017	SAM HUNT/Body Like A Back Road (MCA)
2018	LUKE COMBS/She Got The Best Of Me (River House/Columbia)
2019	MORGAN WALLEN/Whiskey Glasses (Big Loud)
2020	LEE BRICE/One Of Them Girls (Curb)
2021	CHRIS YOUNG & KANE BROWN/Famous Friends (RCA)
2022	COLE SWINDELL/She Had Me At Heads Carolina (Warner/WMN)
2023	LUKE COMBS/Fast Car (River House/Columbia)
2024	NATE SMITH/World On Fire (RCA)
2025	THOMAS RHETT/After All The Bars Are Closed (Valory)
2026	ELLA LANGLEY/Choosin' Texas (Sawgod/Col. NY/Triple Tigers)

TOP ARTISTS 2006 ★ to ★ 2026

The most-played artists at Country radio over the last 20 years.

1. JASON ALDEAN
2. LUKE BRYAN
3. LUKE COMBS
4. BLAKE SHELTON
5. MORGAN WALLEN
6. KENNY CHESNEY
7. TIM MCGRAW
8. ZAC BROWN BAND
9. KEITH URBAN
10. CARRIE UNDERWOOD
11. ERIC CHURCH
12. RASCAL FLATTS
12. DIERKS BENTLEY
14. THOMAS RHETT
15. BRAD PAISLEY
16. CHRIS YOUNG
17. DUSTIN LYNCH
18. LADY A
19. JUSTIN MOORE
20. FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE

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SETH ENGLAND

On To Phase Two

Three straight years as the top airplay chart share record label – and four straight with the top airplay artist, Morgan Wallen (see page 26) – has Big Loud poised for its next adventure. As CEO, England has helped guide the company through a decade of rare success and, with his partners Craig Wiseman and Joey Moi, is doubling down on their commitment to each other, their culture and the music. They're calling it Big Loud 2.0. And as England says in the Power 31 (page 3), the journey started with a "classic music publishing" internship on Nashville's Music Row.



THE INTERVIEW

How did you get hooked into the idea of working in music in the first place?
My mom was the musical one, singing in church and also a drummer – played full kit in the high school pep band. When I was in grade school, she put me in percussion, but by middle school I wanted to get into cooler music and play guitar. My parents agreed to let me out of band if I took lessons with a State Farm insurance agent who went to our church. After sports practice, I'd go over to his office where Rick would chain-smoke cigarettes and show me classic rock riffs. He taught zero music theory, but he had a stack of CDs and we would learn whatever I wanted as my dad sat there and watched. Good bonding time for us.

One of the biggest RCA record plants was in Terre Haute, IN near where I grew up, and we'd go every Tuesday to buy CDs. Our exposure there was heightened compared to most places. Eventually, I started thumbing through the pamphlets and became a liner note junkie. I have a vivid memory of the first John Mayer album coming out. I saw him in concert and was musical enough to realize this wasn't just bubblegum pop music. I started telling my friends he was going to be bigger than Dave Matthews. They told me I was crazy and we had a debate all year. That kind of got me into the predictive nature of the music business.

How many irons do you have in the fire now? Label, publishing, Big Loud Rock, DeVille Records, Big Loud Texas ... what else?
We stopped management at the end of 2024. That was something I never intended to do, and I knew I'd want to trade that in at some point – especially when my kids came along. So we're back to what we intended to do, which was records and publishing. Joey, Craig and I do venture capital on the side, just because we're passionate about it.

So it's publishing and records, which includes partnerships for Rock and Texas. Then we have a few creator-formed ventures in DeVille with Ernest, and Hardy's got a rock and country line of business. Rock has some subsidiary teams under them, one called Parallel Vision, which was masterminded by Brad Schultz from Cage The Elephant. And there's Steve Robertson from Severance Records who's got Dexter And The Moon Rocks and a lot of other great things going. I don't know if the strategy was to have so many partnerships; I think we just let our gut lead us in the same way you would in signing an artist. The point is adding other people who passionately develop young artists.

Those have mostly been about Big Loud Rock flourishing with Joey now running it. I'm in Nashville with this operation and he's in L.A. We've added merchandise under Big Loud Records, which you're starting to see at a lot of the music companies. I did that for years in management, of course, and it's fun. It has its own staff under Ben Foley, who's amazing.

Is the VC work music focused?
Music is starting to come back into it. It was more diversification focused when we were living on management commission. We also introduced these things to our clients over the years. Florida Georgia Line got into quite a few things. Morgan [Wallen] certainly is into all sorts of various strategies – some that we introduced him to, of course, and some we didn't.

As far as the Big Loud partnership goes, I got us into it first because I was super-engaged. I don't know how many episodes of *Shark Tank* I watched, but that's where the core love of it came – listening to founders talk about their idea. I'm a sucker for it and was so curious. I read an article about Troy Carter, Scooter Braun and Guy Oseary – prominent music managers who became equally interested in the venture space, and were collaborating in it with some of their clients. I met with each of them and we actually sold part of our management company to Guy.

He and Ashton Kutcher got me involved, which led me to another firm in Venice, CA called Plus Capital. They're now in their second fund and will start their third fund soon, but I sit on the advisory committee for their second. It doesn't require a ton of my time, but I chuckle because I'm the only one on those Zooms who's not a family-office guy or institutional investor.

Obviously you all believed in Morgan from the jump or you wouldn't have signed him, but when did you realize he was going to be dominant?
Being A&R and artist development-minded – as is Joey – our answers are always going to be early on. Not to say we called it, but because you're in the studio and watch lots of people work, you observe the differences. He was really special in the studio. Joey's pretty tough when it comes to vocals. He wants to make it imperfectly perfect and will keep retrying – even if we don't get one full song done in a day. But I watched Morgan get four lead vocals and his background parts done in a day. It's not like that all the time, but his ability to adjust in the studio is second to none.

Another moment was when we put out the *If I Know Me* album. I went to a house party hosted by the duo Seaforth and, walking in, the title track was playing. It's a bit progressive with its beat and I saw kids dancing to that song and realized his music was letting a lot more people into country music. But the better answer would be the release of *Dangerous*. That's when you knew he was going to be a global star.

When you aligned with Republic, you chose to remain autonomous at a time when I imagine they'd have let your write your own job description on top of a really big check. Why did you decide to remain focused on Big Loud?
Any time you have success, others who would like to be a part of that come to you and it can be a very flattering conversation. The toughest hurdles would be stopping what Big Loud is to take on something like that. Two, it would be a different mission. When I thought about those two things, I realized I was already living my dream. Joey was living his. Craig started as a fierce entrepreneurial independent.

And it wasn't just our dream, it was also the dream of some of the artists who are here. Morgan certainly likes how he can move through this building and collaborate. Hardy and Ernest have partnerships within this. They are some of our biggest supporters and, I assume, would have felt some version of bittersweet or sad had we decided to move to another chapter too soon. Never say never, but that's not part of my daydream.

THE INTERVIEW

That Big Loud logo – creating something from scratch – is what was neat. When I read Berry Gordy's book, I felt connected to it because he built that out of publishing. I flew to Detroit multiple times to see it and talk to everybody I could talk to just short of Berry himself. When I thought about it, he was living his dream. That was it. "Big Loud," those two words, signify our partnership, and it's a beautiful thing. I'd rather be part of that.

What was the thought process behind elevating Stacy and adding Jordan Pettit as co-Presidents?
Austen Adams and Candice Watkins left for Warner Chappell and Capitol/CCMG [respectively], and we were aware as those interviews were happening. If we'd been thinking about co-presidents, Candice would have certainly been at that sort of level for us. Not to speak for him, but Austen would have stayed here forever. We miss working with each other daily, although we're administered by Warner Chappell, so he's our partner. Those were good choices for them, and they're doing great, which makes us proud.

You can't lose two great people like that and not think about how to adjust, grow and re-supplement the company. Austen had a done a great job training and elevating our legal, finance, analytics and management teams – that's Jeff Tanner, Stefanie Carter, Eric England and Patch Culbertson – who were ready to take over their areas and communicate to the partnership. So that's what we chose to do on the operations side. What we needed was to boost resources in the marketing, promotion, A&R and artist relations side. I was starting to feel a tug of war between running the company and being there for the artists directly.

Stacy and Jordan are tier-one executives in this town – incredible custom thoughts, great artist encouragers, some of the best people you could have standing side-stage or backstage. And let's not leave out Sara Knabe [A&R], Brianne Deslippe [Marketing] and some of our other executives who are equally talented. We wanted more people in the boat who could help out, particularly in the co-President realm, with artists and managers.

You told us once that when you started Big Loud, country music was a two-lane highway with radio, then streaming came in and it became an eight-lane highway. What is it today?
The Autobahn. Is there a 20-lane interstate out there? Maybe it's like how some of the bridges in Manhattan have gone to upper and lower decks. I'm trying to stay on my transportation analogy.

We hear chatter that TikTok isn't as useful as it used to be for breaking music and we're so fragmented in terms of platforms. The noise is tremendous and artist teams seem to think the only way to fight noise is with more volume, which creates more noise ...
Because, what choice do you have? I hear what you're saying. A decade ago, Republic's Avery Lipman told me that he believed artists need three years and 30 songs to break through. Now that could be three years and 30 songs of Stephen Wilson Jr., who has had big moments and big songs, but hasn't had his 100-million streamer. It could be someone with a rocket ship song to start and they then need to fill in the picture. Whatever the trajectory, it takes three and 30 to wind up in kind of the same place in terms of concert tickets, t-shirts and having a sustainable business for a decade or more. Avery's latest update is that it's now five years and 50 songs, and I believe that to be true

Why is it taking longer?
What we're talking about is the attention-based economy. [Getting on playlists] used to be people's marketing plans and now it's an inverse relationship. The apps have gone to more algorithmic recommendation – which isn't the devil, by the way, it's giving a real-time response like a stock ticker. It's new and feels like there's no heart in it, but the biggest change as a record label is our relationship to those algorithms. Let's not have disdain for it, let's lean in and learn. The more active the audience is and the more profile streams you get, the more playlist recommendations you're naturally going to get.

We normally want to parade a new signing around town introducing them to every single gatekeeper as soon as humanly possible. I fear that might have been last decade's strategy. It's not that we won't do that now, we will, but it's order of allocation. How can we get [an artist's] train rolling a little bit with fans showing up to shows before we push for more traditional marketing partnerships?

Is that different in country versus other genres?
Nashville is a traditional marketing town. Having the rock label has been enlightening. It's not that they don't have radio They do. Or that they don't have playlists. They do. It's just most of those bands wake up and think about the fan. How do I get my music to them? How do I engage with them? There aren't as many cultural meeting places as we have, but that also means more than one way to go. In Nashville, we go to lunch together and want to work with our friends. That feels great. But we need to rethink order of allocation and focus on the fan before focusing on the music industry.

So we're on our way back to being a 10-year town, and the five and 50 is the second half of that, right?
I couldn't agree more. Back to your question about the competition online, every post isn't going to work. For many people, no posts work. When we meet an artist we start checking boxes. Love the music, love the songs, love the voice, love the production. The look is cool. I know people who would like this. All those are still factors, but the most real factor is looking them in the eyes and wondering what kind of work ethic they have. Do they strike us as having five years and 50 songs in them? Can they run that marathon? Because it's going to be tough. There will be misfires. Can they get through it, keep their head down and keep trying?

Former Arista head Tim DuBois had a great line about how the plans and meetings can't account for the magic that separates this business from most others.
I've said before that the music business is 10% originators, 90% replicators. And the replicators aren't a bad thing. They're making music based on music they're inspired by, but maybe weren't the originator of the sound. Still, they can have 20-year careers. No shame in that. It's the 10-percenters who set trends, create culture and light the fires that inspire others. Relative to venture capital, they're looking at a protein bar or whatever. We're in the human magic business. And that's unique. Sometimes we're suckers for pain, but we love it because when that story unfolds, seeing it firsthand is a very cool thing.

Along the way, the business is hanging ribbons on these rising artists – No. Is, tour slots, nominations and awards – hoping they can grow their small businesses into being arena and stadium-filling standard bearers for the genre that pull the other 90% along behind them.
What those of us in the industry can sometimes forget – and maybe it depends what belief systems you have – is humans are not made to be worshiped. So isn't it interesting we want to put ribbons on people like tails on a donkey at a birthday party, and also expect them to have perfect responses and reactions?

We make people into products. We objectify.
No question. I struggle with that sometimes, probably from my years in management. I think about the artists as humans often, only because I had to ride that shotgun seat so many times. Even when the night seemed like it was amazing, when you get in that safe place afterward, you see that they are tired and overwhelmed. Not specific to Big Loud, but I'd guess half of the artists struggle with the performative extracurriculars ... the backstage, shake hands, look happy please, if you would. Encouraging humans to perform better in those ways so people want to know them and their music is part of our job, but I also think about doing that every day to someone. The human product.

At the artist level, it's an unnatural experience, but some are really good at it ... or get good at it over time.
Figuring that out is a big part of the artist's job, but the community plays a part, too. At the highest level of shaking hands, radio rooms and such, we're trying to build trust both ways.

The sad thing that can happen is wanting your music played on a radio station, and the proper human coaching is to say, "Let's go be present to win. Let's show them how much this means to us." And then I have an artist explain to me that because of their schedule, the only way to do it was to fly from the East Coast to the West Coast to deliver a box of donuts to someone who barely looked them in the eye and definitely didn't play the record. By the way, there was no guarantee of that when they got on the airplane.

Perhaps our friend on the West Coast was having a tough week. Maybe their boss is on their neck about something. They're a person, too. But the box of donuts and exhausting flight didn't pan out, and the artist is left tired and disappointed. That's where we get back to the work ethic we talked about earlier. I don't know what to change, and I'm definitely not just talking about radio. Still, we have a thing in country music of wanting the artists to be unique, inspiring and make lots of music, "but can we exhaust your calendar and suck the creative soul out of you, too?"

As far as community goes, you've avoided serving on boards ... are you on any now?
No. I haven't avoided. I did earlier in my career, but needed a bit of a break during a particular stretch of time where my involvement was less about the role I can play to the community ...

There is an aspect to CMA and ACM where it can seem they want managers on the board just to gain access to their clients.
It wasn't even that, but certainly through some of Morgan's moments to persevere through ... it just got ... I had to step away for a while to get some space. But



I'm fully supportive and actually didn't do that without finding another executive in our organization to step up. Big Loud is represented on every board I can think of – ACM, CMA, NARAS, T.J. Martell, St. Jude, CRB. With Jordan coming in, he's got affiliations and attachments to places I don't think we necessarily had yet. So I'm pro-board, and we had a lot of executives eager to serve for whom those were career goals. I love Nashville, what it's given me and what I've been able to be a part of. That was just a short-term moment step back.

You told us a last year that your only crime in starting this company was under-dreaming. What do you dream about now?
We've been calling our first decade Big Loud 1.0. Starting with year 11, we're calling it Big Loud 2.0, which is an aspirational phrase. It doesn't mean everything needs to change, but let's be willing to evaluate everything, some of which we've talked about. The headline answer is not only do I want to keep having success as a company, but I want to create an experience unlike anything you'll find in town ... because we can. What can we do in phase two that's going to leave a lasting memory for the partnership – a smile on our face about what we got to curate and create. And also, "Man, wasn't that fun?"

Craig, Joey and I bought a building in Nashville's MetroCenter, not too far from the Titans practice facility. We miss the early days of Big Loud when we were all in the publishing building. Studio on the first floor, business offices on the second, writer rooms on the third. Music was created above and below us, and musicians and writers were in the building all the time. We're now across four different buildings on Music Row because of our expansion, but have kept our eyes open for a way to get us all back under one roof.

The new building is one floor and a bit more than 50,000 square feet. Phase one is done, which is the center of the building that includes record label and publishing offices. Phase two is a café on one side of the long building, and the studios on the other side. There will be 20 state-of-the-art writer studios, its own lounge, bar and coffee shop. We're finally going to have our own tracking room, as well as a fitness center.

This is intended to be a place where our artists – and other artists – want to hang out because it's safe and fun. Music's being created everywhere and you can hear it from your office at times. Should be finished at the top of next year, and you'll be able to walk from the tracking room all the way down to the merchandise showroom. That's the experience – something unlike any other building in music. For whatever time Craig, Joey and I have left being partners in this way, that's what I dream about. **CAC**

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ADD 11.2

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