

CRS '26

DAILY BUZZ

March 18, 2026, Issue 1

Powered by Country Aircheck



RVA's Real Talk Opens CRS

Personality, localism and AI were among the topics covered as **CRS '26** opened at the Omni Nashville Tuesday (3/17) with bonus sessions courtesy of the **Radio Vendor Alliance**. First up was "Real Talk About Radio in



2026: Problems, Challenges, The Future." Talent coach **Tracy Johnson** pointed out that music, contesting and information are no longer exclusive pillars for radio. "There's one pillar that's left, and that's personality," he said, noting he worries radio is not investing enough in talent. WWKA/Orlando PD **Steve Stewart** agreed. "We did a huge disservice to radio when we changed to PPM," he said. "We are still rebuilding."

KYGO/Denver morning hosts **Tracy Dixon** and **Mike "Fizz" Fisbeck** discussed quickly developing trust in their five years

together, with Dixon saying they "disagree about a lot of things, but we share the same values." Fizz noted that their ability to authentically incorporate local touchpoints within their show often leads to in-studio celebrations. "We high-five after those breaks," he said. "We're so local nobody can touch us."



Real To Reel: Panelists and organizers gather ahead of Radio Vendor Alliance's "Real Talk About Radio" session Tuesday in Nashville. Pictured (back, l-r) are RadioFX's **John Wanzung**, Adcellerant's **Todd Roberts**, Tracy Johnson Media's **Tracy Johnson**, KYGO/Denver's **Fizz**, WWKA/Orlando's **Steve Stewart**, McVay Media's **Mike McVay**, Big Deals Media's **Scott Murray** and (front, l-r) Sun & Fun Media/Key Networks' **Dennis Green**, Envisionwise's **Jackie Parks**, KYGO's **Tracy Dixon** and Cool Radio Streaming's **Tom Dobrez**.

Johnson discussed AI tools, saying they have the ability to accentuate what makes personalities engaging. "AI will help you be better at what you already do," he said. "It will not replace you, it will make you irreplaceable if you use it the right way." Asked by moderator Mike McVay for a big takeaway, Johnson urged radio to "break away from the addiction to the quarterly ratings that come out from Nielsen." Dixon, Fizz and Stewart quickly began talking over each other in agreement. "He stole mine," Dixon said.

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HUDSON WESTBROOK PAINTED YOU PRETTY



IMPACTING NOW!

2026 tour dates with Bailey Zimmerman, Morgan Wallen and George Strait!

RIVERHOUSE
ARTISTS

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RECORDS
NASHVILLE

VAR
RADIO & STREAMING



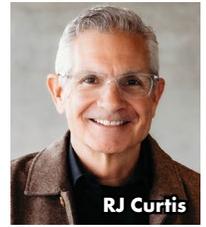
CRS: Key Learnings

What's the most important aspect of CRS – the panels, music or something else? There's no correct answer to that question, but CRS Exec. Dir. **RJ Curtis** has a thought:

"Try to talk to everyone and anyone, no matter their industry status or stardom," he says. "My first four years at CRS I was intimidated by the big names in our format, but swallowed hard and approached them anyway. Guess what I found out? They were friendly, helpful and normal. They were radio people, and radio people are the best people. I discovered I could talk radio with them because we all love this business. I don't think I've ever met a single asshole at CRS."

"I'm going to quote Ted Lasso, who quoted Walt Whitman (inaccurately, as it turns out): When you come to CRS, 'be curious, not judgmental.' Be open to music discovery, people from different places with different approaches and opinions, and be curious about the education offered. It's the core purpose of CRS, and if you learn nothing, well, that's a you problem. Come back next year and try to be more curious!"

That quote is excerpted from a full-length feature in which industry leaders share their biggest CRS takeaways. Read the full story in **Country Aircheck**'s March print edition, available on site at the Omni and digitally via (free!) subscription at countryaircheck.com.



RJ Curtis

"New" Faces On CRS

Also in the March **Country Aircheck**, members of this year's New Faces class share stories, including their impressions of the event.

Chase Matthew: "New Faces is like a rite of passage. You almost have to go through there if you want to be a name in radio, but it's not forced. It's something you want to do. It's a good thing and an honor. I've seen so many friends get New Faces and watched the trajectory of their careers afterward. So it's a blessing that I'm grateful and thankful for."

Kelsey Hart: "When I got the phone call about New Faces, I was just shocked. I've been to CRS a couple times and gotten to be part of the event. Knowing how special it is and seeing so many who had that opportunity go on to do big things, it feels like a really special moment in my career. I'm super excited to be a part of it."

John Morgan: "If someone discovers me for the first time at CRS, I hope they see the work we've been putting in and the consistency. I come from a bluegrass background where you don't have to do a whole lot of showmanship ... you just have to be a good player. Now it's about getting comfortable in our set, mixing in some covers people love, and playing new songs."

Meghan Patrick: "I've been chasing this dream for over 20 years. As an indie female artist who broke through at radio, I'm incredibly proud of my team and what we've accomplished. I hope they see the depth and the longevity in what I'm building. I'm not going to be a flash in the pan or a one-hit wonder. There's a long and successful career ahead."

Josh Ross: "Being named a New Face feels like validation that the work I've put in writing, performing and connecting with fans has resonated. Professionally, it opens doors and connects me with people in the industry who are as passionate about country music as I am. It's humbling and motivating. When I first started coming to town in 2018-19, I remember going to more public-facing CRS events to meet people. I also remember sneaking into some events or asking people to get me into rooms. So it's pretty cool to actually be invited now."

See them all at Friday's New Faces of Country Music show in the Broadway Ballroom.



Chase Matthew



Kelsey Hart



John Morgan



Meghan Patrick



Josh Ross



LIVE AT THE RYMAN
17TH ANNIVERSARY

★ **TOMORROW! DOORS 11:30AM** ★

49 WINCHESTER KASSI ASHTON DALTON DAVIS
CARTER FAITH WYATT FLORES VINCE GILL JACOB HACKWORTH
TYLER HUBBARD VINCENT MASON PARKER MCCOLLUM
MADDEN METCALF NEEDTOBREATHE BROTHERS OSBORNE
JON PARDI KEITH URBAN KENNY WHITMIRE

MCA
NASHVILLE



Lucille



SPECIAL THANKS TO:  **THE ALLEY**
BY WALK

The Week Ahead

Wednesday, March 18

7:30am-5pm

CRS Registration Open

Broadway Hallway

8am-5pm

The Row Open

Riser House, St. Jude Juice Bar, CMA, Texas Red Records

Level 2, 5th Ave. Hallway

8-8:50am

Y'all Means All Breakfast

Amber Anderson Moriah, Al Farb, Ty Herndon, James Marsh

Legends Ballroom A-C

9-9:50am

On Air, Under Pressure: Dealing with Breaking News

Ashley Wilson, Kristen Flowers, Ray Kinney, Mark Starling

Legends Ballroom A-C

9-9:50am

Pack Your Bags: Country's Gone Global

Michelle Tigard Kammerer, Chris Kappy, Milly Olykan, Meredith Goucher

Legends Ballroom D-G

10-10:50am

CRS Research Series: Teen Music Listeners

LeighAnn Rodd, Kenny Jay, Tim Foisset, Conner Smith

Legends Ballroom D-G



Smells Like Team Spirit: The CRS '26 staff breaks it down. Pictured are **Quinton Cook, Ashley Bourque, Audrey Hasley, Allie Bourne, Mason Fuller, Kaelin Kinzer, Matteo Pandolfi, Addison Jackson, Jarett McHale, Sheree Latham, Heather Martin, Brooke Sanders Gourley, Lisa Hendin, Kelly Yeatts** and **RJ Curtis**.

10-10:50am

Pitch Please: Everyone Is in Sales!

Mojo (WKQI/Detroit), Nathan James, George King, Dana Johnson

Legends Ballroom A-C

11-11:50am

Cycle of a Song: Josh Ross "Single Again"

Josh Ross, Damon Moberly, Julia Robert, Jackie Augustus, Tracy Martin,

Julie Adam

Legends Ballroom D-G

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TOP 5 & CLIMBING!
DYLAN SCOTT
 WHAT HE'LL NEVER HAVE
 NEARLY 400 MILLION STREAMS TO
 COUNTRY AIRCHECK'S #3 OVERALL
 TOP AIRPLAY ARTIST OF 2025
POWER UP!

TOP 40
KELSEY HART
FIREWORKS
 COUNTRY AIRCHECK'S #5 TOP AIRPLAY
 NEW ARTIST OF 2025
 OPENING FOR DYLAN SCOTT SPRING 2026
SEE YOU AT NEW FACES!

SHHH!

YOU'RE INVITED TO CELEBRATE ONE OF
BBR MUSIC GROUP/BMG NASHVILLE'S
BIGGEST ACTS FOR A STAR-STUDED
SURPRISE PARTY.

YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS THIS!

(REMEMBER...SHHH. IT'S A SURPRISE TO THIS ARTIST!)

EVENT DETAILS

WHAT: BBR MUSIC GROUP/BMG NASHVILLE
CRS PARTY

WHEN: THURSDAY, MARCH 19TH, 2026

START TIME: 9:00PM

WHERE: OMNI NASHVILLE HOTEL
BROADWAY BALLROOM

PLEASE RSVP TO:
RSVP@BBRMUSICGROUP.COM



11:45am-Noon
Pre-Lunch Performance featuring
Madison Olivia
Broadway Hallway

12pm-5pm
Exhibitor Booths Open
Jewel Box Platinum, Coleman Insights,
Exostage, Strings For Hope, Pat Boone's Gold
Label, Music Master
Level 2, Broadway Hallway

12-1:50pm
Warner Records Nashville Lunch and
Performance
Ashley McBryde, Blake Whiten, Gabby Barrett,
The Band Loula, The Creekers
Broadway Ballroom

12:30-8:30pm
Country Western Photo Booth Open
Omni Lobby Near Elevators

2-2:50pm
CRS Honors
Hardy, Paker McCollum, Frank Ray
Legends Ballroom D-G

3-3:50pm
Living in the Gap: Communicating,
Managing, and Working Across
Generations
Mike Preston, Jennifer Johnson, Kathleen St. Clair,
Regan Donato, Chayim Newman
Legends Ballroom D-G

3-3:50pm
The Showdown of the Top-20:
Comparing the Social, Streaming and
Radio Charts of 2025
Jimmy Rector, Tatiana Angulo, Russ Penuell,
Sarah D'Hilly
Legends Ballrooms A-C

4-4:50pm
DTS AutoStage: The End of the
Measurement Guessing Game
Juan Galdamez
Legends Ballroom D-G

4:30-5:30pm
Programming Happy Hour
Kevin Callahan, Dawn Santolucito, Drew Bland,
Christi Brooks, Ashley Morrison Layfield, Dylan
Salisbury, Brent Michaels
Library/Pick Bar

5-6pm
Scareoke Competition
Sign up on the app to compete
Broadway Hallway

5-6pm
Six One Five Collective Event
Barlines

6-8:30pm
Amazon Music Presents Country Heat at
CRS 2026
Parker McCollum, Max McNown, Carter Faith,
Zach John King
Broadway Ballroom

9-10pm
Winding Branch Entertainment Showcase
Mackynzie McKedy, Austin McKedy, EV Mae
Barlines

10pm-Midnight
A Stone Country Showcase (presented
by Stone Country Records)
Spencer Hatcher, Ben Gallaher (entry with
CRS badge)
Tin Roof Downtown, 2nd Floor

Thursday, March 19

6-7:30am
CRS Believers (sponsored by Curb)
Brandon Lake, Conner Smith
Legends Ballroom A-C

8am-4:40pm
CRS Registration Open
Broadway Hallway

8am-5pm
Exhibitor Booths Open
Jewel Box Platinum, Coleman Insights,
Exostage, Strings For Hope, Pat Boone's Gold
Label, Music Master
Level 2, Broadway Hallway

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LEE BRICE
KILLED THE MAN
NEW THIS WEEK AT KBEQ/KANSAS CITY, WBBS/SYRACUSE
BRAND NEW ALBUM SUNRISER COMING IN JUNE
ADD/CONVERT NOW

THE DEBUT SINGLE
HARPER GRACE
if daddy says no
IMPACTING
NOW
CURB RECORDS

Thank You

We are thrilled to be your **INDEPENDENT ACT OF THE YEAR!**

"Hometown Home" meant so many things
to so many people
so it receiving the most spins of *any* indie act --
that says *everything*.

We have always believed in the people who love this music
who live like we do
who know the power of the places they live, dream, believe

We accept this award for anyone who loves our song --
because you're the reason we do this
year after year after year



8-8:50am

Nielsen Schmielsen: New Platforms for Audience Data & Analytics

Chaz Jenkins, Josh Easler, Lindsey Dodge, Ed Rivadavia
Legends Ballroom D-G

8-8:50am

Protect Your Assets: 20 Micro Actions for Resilience & Balance at Work

Sean Copeland, Christina Barsi, Elizabeth Porter, Cheryl Mann
Legends Ballroom A-C

8am-5pm

The Row Open

Riser House, St, Jude Juice Bar, CMA, Texas Red Records
Level 2, 5th Ave, Hallway

8:30am-5pm

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

Espresso Bar Open

Music Row Room 4

9am-4:30

CRS Media Center Open

Level 2, Broadway Hallway

9-10am

CRS Research Presentation (Presented By Strategic Solutions Research)

Legends Ballroom D-G

9am-Noon

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Juice Bar Open

Level 2, 5th Ave. Hallway

9am-5pm

Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum Access

Show your badge for one complimentary museum admission
Country Music Hall of Fame

10-10:50am

The Disruptors: What If YOU Took a Risk?

Chuck Aly, Travis Daily, Jon Loba, Gregg Swedberg, Brian Michel
Legends Ballroom D-G

11-11:30am

The Power of Music and a Mission

(presented by CRS and St. Jude)
Gator Harrison, Keith Urban
Legends Ballroom D-G

11:30am-1:50pm

Team MCA at the Ryman

Kassi Ashton, Dalton Davis, Carter Faith, Wyatt Flores, Vince Gill, Jacob Hackworth, Tyler Hubbard, Keith Urban, Vincent Mason, Parker McCollum, Madden Metcalf, NeedToBreathe, Jon Pardi, Kenny Whitmire, 49 Winchester, Brothers Osborne
Ryman Auditorium

12:30-8:30pm

Country Western Photo Booth Open

Omni Lobby Near Elevators

2:30-3:20pm

The Conversation: Featuring Ella Langley and Jo Dee Messina

Legends Ballroom D-G

3:30-4pm

Get Local: It's Easier Than You Think

Sarah Kay, Marissa Lanchak, Chad Benefield, Brent Lane
Legends Ballroom A-C

3:30-4pm

Your Mic! Your Market! Your Moment as the OG Influencer!

Kenny Jay, Celine Trimarchi, Stuart Deming Rachel De Hart
Legends Ballroom D-G

4-4:50pm

Cycle of a Song: Chase Matthew "Darlin'"

Tim Foisset, Rod Phillips, Chase Matthew, Michael Chase, Loyd Potts III, Ken Madson
Legends Ballroom D-G

5-7pm

Compass Media Showcase

Barlines

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JOHN MORGAN

CRS 2026 NEW FACES FRIDAY NIGHT

BBR MUSIC GROUP | BBR | BMG | NR

“ When I heard 'Son of Jolene' I thought it was very clever. No one had ever thought of it that way. What a twist, and I'm proud to now be a small part of this version. ”

– DOLLY PARTON

Son of Jolene

Belles with Dolly Parton



IMPACTING 4/20

CRS PERFORMANCES:

Wednesday 3/18 - 2:00 & 4:30

Thursday 3/19 - 2:30 & 4:30

Friday 3/20 - 10:30

SUITE # AVAILABLE IN THE LOBBY



5pm
Bradley Gaskin Hot Damn Did Happy Hour
Suite TBD, Omni Nashville Hotel

6:30-9pm
Bob Kingsley's Acoustic Alley
Jim Beavers, Rhett Akins, The Waren Brothers,
Clint Black, Steve Wariner, Paul Overstreet
Legends Ballroom D-G

9-11pm
BBR Music Group Night of Celebration
Broadway Ballroom

Friday, March 20

7:30-8:45am
Women's Networking Breakfast
Michelle Buckles, Sloane Cavitt Logue, Heather
Froglear, Katie Neal, Jen Morgan, Tay Hamilton,
Stephanie Wagner, Lauren "LT" Thomas, Jamice
Jennings, Rakiyah Marshall, Kathleen St. Clair,
Jess Tomlins, Amber Anderson, Ashley Wilson,
Patti Diaz, Bryce Gravitt, Tracy Martin
Acoustic, Level 4

8am-5pm
CRS Registration Open
Broadway Hallway

8am-3pm
Exhibitor Booths Open
Jewel Box Platinum, Coleman Insights, Exostage,
Strings For Hope, Pat Boone's Gold Label, Music
Master
Level 2, Broadway Hallway

8am-5pm
The Row Open
Riser House, St. Jude Juice Bar, CMA, Texas Red
Records
Level 2, Broadway Hallway

8:30am-4pm
**St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
Espresso Bar Open**
Music Row Room 4

8:50-9:40am
**Embracing the Change: Country Is Cross-
Pollinating and That's Okay**
Steve Knopper, Heather Vassar, Emily Cohen
Belote, Alissa Pollack
Legends Ballroom D-G

8:50-9:40am
**Lead Me Like You Mean It: Intently
Crafting an Environment for Future
Leaders**
Allison Warren, TJ Taormina, Dawn Ziegerer, Mia
Jones
Legends Ballroom A-C

9-9:40am
Workshop Alley: AI - Efficiency Tools
Phil Becker
Music Row Room 1

9-10am
**Workshop Alley: 360° Jock - Fix
Your Feed**
Bo Matthews, Izzy Guit
Music Row Room 3

9am-Noon
**St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
Juice Bar Open**
Level 2, 5th Ave. Hallway

9am-5pm
**Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum
Access**
Show your badge for one complimentary
museum admission
Country Music Hall of Fame

9:45-10:25am
Workshop Alley: AI - Creative Tools
Nick Steele
Music Row Room 1

10-10:30am
**Workshop Alley: 360° Jock - Boosting
Your Leverage In Contract Talks**
Denise Shackelford
Music Row Room 3

10-10:50am
**Workshop Alley: Cycle Of An Ad -
Everyone Is In Sales**
Sarah Frazier, Dina D'Addario, Kari Stoddard,
Bobby Bowen
Acoustic, Level 4

10-11am
**CRS Research Series: The Music Test
(presented by NuVoodoo)**
Legends Ballroom D-G

10:30-11am
**Workshop Alley: 360° Jock - From Sold
To Sound: Imaging & Promos**
Neil Wilson, Jess Jennings, Cowboy Kyle
Music Row Room 3

10:30-11:10am
Workshop Alley: Prompt Writing
Stan Marczewski
Music Row Room 1

11-11:30am
**Workshop Alley: 360° Jock - Breaks That
Land: Relatable, Real, Zero Cliches**
Emily Harlan
Music Row Room 3

11-11:50am
**CRS Presents Jelly Roll with
Humanitarian Award**
Legends Ballroom D-G

11:15-11:55am
**Workshop Alley: 30 Tech Tools In 30
Minutes**
Clay Walker
Music Row Room 1

11:30am-Noon
**Workshop Alley: 360° Jock - Make The
Music Work For You: Music Scheduling**
Nikki Thomas
Music Row Room 3

11:45am-Noon
Pre-Lunch Performance ft. Lucie Tiger
(Sponsored by 2120 Music)
Broadway Hallway

12-1:50pm
**Lunch and Performance (Sponsored by
Big Machine Records/Nashville Harbor
Records & Entertainment)**
Mackenzie Carpenter, Cole Goodwin, Naomi
Carman, Greylan James, Caroline Jones, The
Band Perry, The Jack Wharff Band
Broadway Ballroom

12:30-8:30pm
Country Western Photo Booth Open
Omni Lobby Near Elevators

2-2:50pm
**Creative Talent: Why "Playing It Safe" Is
the Death of Your Radio Career**
Phil Becker, Katie Neal, Woody of The Woody
Show, Greg Beharrell
Legends Ballroom A-C

2-2:50pm
The New R&R: Roles and Relationships
(sponsored by FAM)
Justin Cole, Matty Jeff, Miranda McDonald, Chris
Fabiani, Marci Braun
Legends Ballroom D-G

3-3:50pm
**It's Not the Size That Matters: It's How
You Use It**
Clay Hunnicutt, Scotty Lindy, Allyn Walker
Legends Ballroom D-G

3:30-4:20pm
**Cycle of a Song: Koe Wetzel "High
Road"**
Josh Easler, Gemma McInturff, Chad Rufer, Jeb
Hurt, Ben Maddahi, Koe Wetzel
Legends Ballroom D-G

4:30-6pm
**Quartz Hill/ Stone Country Ball In The
Hall**
Country Music Hall of Fame BMI Hall, 4th Floor

4:30-6:30pm
Tennessee Songwriters Week Showcase
Barlines

5-6:30pm
New Faces Cocktail Reception
Broadway Hallway

6:30-10pm
New Faces of Country Music
Kelsey Hart, Ella Langley, Chase Matthew,
John Morgan, Meghan Patrick, Josh Ross (Host:
Elaina Smith)
Broadway Ballroom

Saturday, March 21

9am-5pm
**Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum
Access**
Show your badge for one complimentary
museum admission
Country Music Hall of Fame