

**MUSIC
DECISIONS
ANNUAL PD/MD
SURVEY**

★ ★ ★
**ARTISTS TELL
CRS
STORIES**
★ ★ ★

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**COUNTRY
AIRCHECK**

FEBRUARY 2018

INTRODUCING



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JASON ALDEAN

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"YOU MAKE IT EASY"

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Artists Tell Their CRS Stories



BEST, FIRST OR WORST

The tales are legend. Some may actually be true, and many are long forgotten. For almost 50 years, Country Radio Seminar has drawn radio and the music business together for education, musical discovery and the occasional cocktail. Rarely heard from when the “remember that time” conversations start? Artists, whose experiences at seminar often come from a much different perspective. Country Aircheck reached out for their strongest memories of the industry’s biggest event.

LOCASH

Preston Brust: “I Love This Life’ was just starting to break at Country radio and we secured one of those big rooms right off the escalator down from the Bridge Bar and invited everyone to come. We’d played Bob Kingsley’s Songwriters Series before, so it wasn’t our first CRS, but this was the first time it was really the LoCash party. We really weren’t sure if we’d have a big turnout or not.”

Chris Lucas: “Even though we were with an independent, we finally had a team backing us. We felt like we already had a lot of friends at Country radio. They’d seen the struggle. They’d seen two labels fold and the rough path we’d been handed. So it was like, alright, let’s see if these relationships are what we thought. They started walking in and it was goose bumps. It really felt like we had a lot of friends happy to see us and proud to be there. We’ll never forget it.”

DEVIN DAWSON

“The first time I went to CRS with my manager, meeting people and taking notes. I got to go up to the

Warner suite for their late-night performance. It was Ryan Kinder and Brandy Clark. Hanging out with all those heavy hitters in this top floor, high-rise room was really cool. The next year I found myself playing that show, which was crazy to come back around to that.

“I was just starting to bond with the promotion staff and my rep Stephanie Hagerty took me into Barlines at the Omni, where everyone hangs out. Tosh Jackson from KNTY/Sacramento and Nate Deaton from KRTY/San Jose were there in a big crowd of awesome people. I didn’t know any of them at the time, so Stephanie was like, ‘Hey, let’s all do a shot!’ I said, ‘I’m in! Anything but a Jägerbomb.’ What does she come back from the bar with? Jägerbombs. Of course. I drank it, but I think either she didn’t hear me or it was her way of preparing me for the radio tour. She was christening me for the year ahead.

“The other tough one was the Warner hangover suite. I was there, wide awake at 7am, bonding with KKBO/Houston’s Johnny Chiang and Cumulus’ Greg Frey, eating burritos after we’d all been up until 4am.”

RAELYNN

“I was a baby fresh off *The Voice* the first time I went – 18 years old. The radio tour for ‘God Made Girls’ was about to start and I just remember meeting so many people. One of my favorite things was going to a bunch of different sessions about radio and how it was changing. I remember seeing artists like Eric Paslay, Cassadee Pope, Charlie Worsham and Brett Eldredge performing and thinking how incredible all the new talent is. I definitely took in those moments and really enjoyed it, which is good because you don’t always get to do that. Last year I was in and out of tours and only got to be at CRS for one day. I love going to CRS. There’s nothing else like it.”

CHRIS LANE

“I’ve been to three and the first one, to be honest, was the most memorable. This was before I was signed so I had a lot of different people courting me, dragging me to parties and making introductions. Along the way I got to meet so many artists I looked up to, not even knowing whether I would ever get signed. I just remember thinking how cool it was to be in those rooms with all those people. A couple years later, I got to walk around doing interviews and would see younger artists. They’d stop and say they were a fan and I’d think how nuts it is that I was in that situation just a few years ago.”

COLE SWINDELL

“Playing *New Faces* was a big moment and very nerve-racking being in front of all the programmers who have your career in their hands. A couple of my big radio supporters came down and started dancing and singing along to help loosen the mood of the room and I’ll never forget that. The show ended well and



Hubbard and Swift

ARTISTS TELL THEIR CRS STORIES

FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE

Tyler Hubbard: "Our favorite memory is playing the *New Faces Show* and being able to have Taylor Swift come out and surprise everybody. That was a super cool moment for BK and I so early in our career."

Brian Kelley: "She came up on the bus to rehearse before we went on and came out on the second verse. We were just as stunned by it as everyone in the room. It's one thing to be sitting with her on the bus, but something else 20 minutes later when she walks out and gives us that stamp of approval. We were so young then and the room was just electric. We'll never forget that!"

we went on to have seven straight No. 1s, so I'm very thankful for all their support. Going back each year, I love getting to see everyone in one spot. It's become one of my favorite weeks of the year."

DIERKS BENTLEY

"It's such a big deal for country singers, having all these people who hold the key to the gate come to your city. I remember really well playing *New Faces* over at the old convention center, which has since been demolished. You'd hear stories about how Tim McGraw got up there and played 'Don't Take The Girl,' which launched his career. So you know how important it is. But my favorite memory is when my '90s country band Hot Country Knights played at The Stage during CRS. The place was packed full of people I've known a long time - lots of PDs and other friends from radio. It wasn't just cover songs, we had a whole bit. It might be generous to call

it a Broadway production, but it was definitely theater. There was some acting involved, bottles were broken and blood was spilled onstage that night. I was hearing from programmers for the next several years, hoping we'd do it again."

BRETT ELDREDGE

"My *New Faces* performance was both the best and the worst for me. As my big moment to show the entire industry I have what it takes is happening, my mic cuts out completely during 'Mean To Me.' I just kept singing because it was out of my control, but don't get me wrong. I was bummed. [WMN's] Kristen Williams, being the amazing woman she is, ran up to the sound booth trying to save the moment. I knew she'd always have my back from then on.

"Once the mic came back, everyone cheered. They probably felt bad for the guy singing silently

onstage. It gave me time to take a breath and sing my heart out with a single spotlight, a piano, and a heartbroken song called 'One Mississippi.' I sang like it was my last song on earth ... and got a standing ovation. I believe that moment changed my career. I guess it just goes to show when shit goes off the rails, hang on, it will get better!"

MIDLAND

Jess Carson: "We played the Big Machine brunch for basically every programmer in the US last year. Like 1,600 people. I didn't realize how big of a deal that was until we went on the radio tour and every single PD we came upon was like, 'Yeah I saw you guys at that show.' The day before, I was in the elevator at the Thompson Hotel with one of the Big Machine staff. I don't know if he was just trying to rattle my cage or what, but he said, 'Well, don't

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ERIC CHESSER

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5 consecutive hits

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INTRODUCING

ABBY ANDERSON

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2018 CMT Listen Up Artist - #18for2018

The Boot's "2018 Artists To Watch"

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Performing live during the Black River CRS Show
at The Bell Tower, Monday, February 5th at 5 pm



ARTISTS TELL
THEIR CRS
STORIES



KELSEA BALLERINI

“My first CRS was four years ago, which is crazy. I had just signed my record deal, but I was introducing myself as a writer at that point. I remember we sat on this little Bluebird stage, which was really cool because it was in this big convention center room, but it felt like the Bluebird Café. A couple of friends and I got to sing a few songs we had written, and I got to sing a part of ‘Love Me Like You Mean It,’ which ended up being my introduction to radio. It was my single, my first No. 1, and we didn’t even know at the time that it would be the song that kicked everything off for me. Looking back now at that stage, almost four years ago, as a songwriter, introducing myself with that song, it’s a big full circle.”

blow it tomorrow. Most important show you’re ever going to play in your life. It’ll pretty much make or break your career.”

Mark Wystrach: “So Jess had to sleep on that.”

Carson: “And I opted to not share that information with Cameron and Mark because, if I put myself in their shoes, that’s what I would prefer.”

Wystrach: “Cam and I were oblivious, thinking that we were literally playing the brunch crowd.”

Cameron Duddy: “And serving omelets.”

Wystrach: “They said we were playing to just help remedy people’s hangovers or something. Nobody would give a shit. Ignorance is bliss.”

WATERLOO REVIVAL’S GEORGE BIRGE

“We quit our day jobs in Austin the week before and moved to Nashville in a Ford Explorer pulling a U-Haul. Within the first two hours of getting started at CRS we had played an acoustic set for some of the best radio stations in the country, shook hands with

Darius Rucker and Luke Bryan *and* took a picture with the Eli Young Band, who were some of the Texas guys who inspired us to play music to begin with. We’ll always remember that first CRS.”

DARIUS RUCKER

“Getting to be onstage singing ‘Stuck On You’ with Lionel Richie. I still can’t believe I did that live with him. That is definitely one of my favorite memories, not just of CRS, but of my musical career.”

CHRIS JANSON

“Being voted in for *New Faces*, then getting a standing ovation after ‘Holdin’ Her,’ a song I wrote for and about my wife and family, is a memory I will have the rest of my life. I am so thankful for the opportunities Country radio has provided, and CRS is the perfect way to say thanks in a personal way.”

JOHN RICH

“The year was 1994 and Lonestar had a song called ‘Tequila Talkin’’. I remember we sat in a cubicle as all the radio guys and girls with their big hand-held Marantz recorders came by and we’d do liners. That’s the first time I’d heard the word ‘liners.’ We sat there for two or three hours seeing people from all of these towns I’d never been to, who were about to play our music.”

WILLIAM MICHAEL MORGAN

“During last year’s CRS I was on tour with Justin Moore and Lee Brice. I remember being nervous and Justin knew I was one of the *New Faces*. One night after our show, he asked me to meet him out back and brought me on his bus for a talk. He said, ‘William, I was a *New Face* at CRS one time, too. And it kills your nerves, but I’ve seen you perform and sing. Just go out there and do what you do out here every night, and you’ll be solid.’ It was an honor to hear him say those kind words to me and that always stuck with me.”

C H E R I E
Brennan

M Y S T E R Y



at radio now



Country Radio, I'm All

Yours,

Thank You For My First #1 Single!



R U S S E L L



D I C K E R S O N

ARTISTS TELL
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STORIES



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C H E R I E
Brennan

M Y S T E R Y



at radio now





★ COUNTRY ★

#NEXT

UP

SHOW

CASE

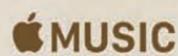
#NEXTUPSHOWCASE

WED., FEB. 7 10-12PM

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CRS 2018 'NEW FACES SHOW' - OMNI, LEVEL 2



FEBRUARY 5-7
CRS 2018
COUNTRY RADIO SEMINAR



ARTISTS TELL
THEIR CRS
STORIES



GRANGER SMITH

"We have this Earl Dibbles, Jr. character, sort of an alter ego who makes appearances on my normal tour dates. It's fun, lifts the show and is a creative release for me that we've been doing for the last five years. When I got invited to do *New Faces* last year, I wasn't going to do it. When it's a sit-down, listening crowd, that's just not really part of the night. A couple of people, one of them being Lon Helton, told me they couldn't wait to see Earl at *New Faces*. I said I wasn't going to do that and the advice I got back was to just do your normal show.

"That's interesting, because I'm always preaching to the guys in the band that we need to just do what we do. And there I was contradicting myself. So we decided to do it and, if you're going to do Earl, you can't do it half way. You have to do the whole rip-off-the-shirt, Stone Cold Steve Austin, two-beers-spraying-the-crowd thing in all its glory. Well, good, bad or worse, I did it, and I definitely think there were a couple people there who were very scared. But walking off the stage, I just thought there are some people who are really excited and happy about this performance and others who were very confused. We sprayed beer all over the *New Faces* ceiling and it feels better having pulled it all off."

SCOTTY MCCREERY

"Getting to do a headline show at the Ryman Auditorium was one of my best memories of CRS, but it was also sort of nerve racking. It had been a long time since I'd done an industry show in Nashville, probably all the way back to the *American Idol* tour, and there's the added pressure of all those radio people there. One of the best things that came out of it was my manager at the time was trying to get Scott Stem to take me on for publicity, but he wanted to see me live first. So he came to the show, liked it and now he's my day-to-day manager. So that's a great thing to come out of that show."

CARLY PEARCE

"The best aspect of CRS is playing in front of the curtain at the BMLG luncheon last year, and this year

it's getting to play full-band at the *New Faces Show*. The worst was going around doing interviews last year and one media outlet that will go unnamed asked me to play the 'pie in the face' game. I said no, of course, and they gave me the list of artists who'd already played – not that any of them actually got a pie in the face. Well, I'm competitive, so I agreed. First question, I lose and they pie me. I walked around the entire rest of the day with bits of pie still in my hair and eyelashes. No, I won't be doing anymore interviews with them."

CHRIS YOUNG

"Actually getting a chance to be on the *New Faces Show* is one of those things you hope you get. That's one of the highlight nights of CRS and being onstage in front of that crowd is insanely

special. That's one of the reasons I always get excited when I have the chance to go back to CRS and watch the *New Faces*."

MICHAEL RAY

"A few weeks after my first CRS we were going to be releasing 'Kiss You In The Morning.' So my Warner radio team set up a really cool suite hang and invited all the PDs. This was my first introduction to a lot of them and it was a really cool time. It wasn't that different from how I grew up playing little bars in Florida, just a chair and an acoustic guitar. There were a lot of other places people could have gone and, being new, I had no idea if anyone would show up, but we ended up with people out into the hallway. That was really the first moment of feeling I was being welcomed into the country music family." **CAC**

JESSICA MEUSE

Coming Soon

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jimmy@JessicaMeuse.com
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VP Radio: Jordan Zucker
jordan.zucker@WarriorRecords.com
(615) 258-5558 (Ext. 714) | 770.833.3994 Cell

Dir. Radio: Tim Smith
tim.smith@WarriorRecords.com
(615) 258-5558 (Ext. 715) | 661.524.3082 Cell




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**COUNTRY AIRCHECK
TOP 100 SONGS OF OUR DECADE
2006-2016:**

#1 "WATCHING YOU"

#6 "IF YOU'RE GOING THROUGH HELL"

#21 "TAKE A BACK ROAD"

#37 "THESE ARE MY PEOPLE"

#43 "CLEANING THIS GUN"

#53 "FARMER'S DAUGHTER"

**285 MILLION ON-DEMAND STREAMS
12 MILLION ALBUMS SOLD**

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CAUGHT UP
IN THE COUNTRY**

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THE FISK JUBILEE SINGERS**

IMPACTING: MARCH 26TH

FINALS WEEK



As chosen by their radio and music business peers, here are the nominees for the 2018 Country Radio Seminar/Country Aircheck Awards. Winners are honored annually during the CRS New Faces dinner and performance.

-1- Major Market Station

KEEY/Minneapolis
KILT/Houston
KMLE/Phoenix
WUSN/Chicago
WYCD/Detroit

-2-

Large Market Station
KWNR/Las Vegas
WGAR/Cleveland
WMIL/Milwaukee
WSM-FM/Nashville
WUBE/Cincinnati

-3-

Medium Market Station
WAMZ/Louisville
WBCT/Grand Rapids
WIVK/Knoxville
WSSL/Greenville, SC
WYRK/Buffalo

-4-

Small Market Station
KTTS/Springfield, MO
KUAD/Ft. Collins, CO
WGSQ/Cookeville, TN
WKSF/Asheville, NC
WYCT/Pensacola, FL

-5-

Platinum Label
BMLG Records
Broken Bow
Capitol
EMI Nashville
RCA

-6-

Gold Label
Black River
Curb
Red Bow
Stoney Creek
Triple Tigers

-7-

Major Market OM/PD
Johnny Chiang, KKBQ/Houston
Shelly Easton,
WXTU/Philadelphia
Lance Houston, WBWL/Boston
Tim Roberts, WYCD/Detroit
Meg Stevens, WKKT/Charlotte

-8-

Large Market OM/PD
Casey Carter,
WTQR/Greensboro
Grover Collins, WUBE/Cincinnati
Gator Harrison, WSIX/Nashville
Cindy Spicer, WQIK/Jacksonville
Kerry Wolfe, WMIL/Milwaukee

-9-

Medium Market OM/PD
Jay Cruze,
WAMZ/Louisville
Kix Layton, WSSL/Greenville, SC
Wendy Lynn, WYRK/Buffalo
Brent Michaels, KUZZ/Bakersfield
Sue Wilson, WQMX/Akron

-10-

Small Market OM/PD
Scott Donato, WGTY/York, PA
Jesse Garcia,
WBYT/South Bend, IN
Mark Grantin, KTTS/Springfield, MO
Dave Michaels,
WQHK/Ft. Wayne, IN
Justin Tyler, KUAD/Ft. Collins, CO

-11-

Major Market MD
Marci Braun, WUSN/Chicago
Christi Brooks, KKBQ/Houston
Chris Huff, KILT/Houston
Savannah Jones, KWJJ/Portland
Mark Razz, WXTU/Philadelphia

-12-

Large Market MD
Big D, KWNR/Las Vegas
Ryan McKiddy, WSIX/Nashville
Bob Pickett, KASE/Austin
Mimi Wheeler, WQDR/Raleigh
Wookie, WDSY/Pittsburgh

-13-

Medium Market MD (tie)
Tim Cotter, KXLY/Spokane
Kay Manley,
WGKX/Memphis
Aaron Michael,
WSSL/Greenville, SC
Newman, WRBT/Harrisburg
Brian Taylor,
KCCY/Colorado Springs
Jody Svoboda Wheatley,
WQMX/Akron

-14-

Small Market MD
Brian Gary,
KUAD/Ft. Collins, CO
Brad King, WBYT/South Bend, IN
Charli McKenzie, WNCY/Appleton, WI
Rachel Rodes,
WSLC/Roanoke, VA
Brook Stephens, KZPK/St. Cloud, MN

-15-

SVP-VP/National Promotion
Lee Adams, Broken Bow
George Briner, Valory
Katie Dean, MCA
Kris Lamb, Big Machine
Royce Risser, UMG

-16-

Director/National Promotion
Katie Bright, WMN
Michelle Kammerer, BMLG Records
Erik Powell, Big Machine
Ashley Sidoti, Valory
Lauren Thomas, Sony

-17-

Major Market Market Manager/GM
Dan Bennett, KSCS & KPLX/Dallas
Sarah Frazier, KILT/Houston
Debbie Kenyon, WYCD/Detroit
Linda Little, KNIX/Phoenix
Dave Pugh, KMLE/Phoenix

-18-

Large Market Market Manager/GM
Glynn Alan,
KWNR/Las Vegas
Nate Deaton, KRTY/San Jose
Dan Endom, WSIX/Nashville
Tom Langmyer, WKTJ/Milwaukee
Michael Young, WDSY/Pittsburgh

-19-

Medium Market Market Manager/GM
Bob Bloom, WXYC/Wilmington
Tim Feagan, WBCT/Grand Rapids
Patty Hixon, KSKS/Fresno
Bill McMartin, WKSF/Asheville
Mel Owens, KUZZ/Bakersfield

-20-

Small Market Market Manager/GM
Gene Guinn,
WBUL/Lexington, KY
Rex Hansen, KTTS/Springfield, MO
Mary Hoxeng, WYCT/Pensacola, FL
Stephanie Michel,
WBYT/South Bend, IN
Jonathan Monk,
WGSQ/Cookeville, TN

-21-

Major Market Personality/Show
Bud & Broadway, WIL/St. Louis
Chris Carr & Company, KEEY/
Minneapolis
Colton Bradford, WBWL/Boston
Lois Lewis, KNIX/Phoenix
Mason, Remy & Alabama,
WEBG/Chicago

-22-

Large Market Personality/Show
Big D, KWNR/Las Vegas
Bree Wagner, KAJA/San Antonio
Marty McFly, WSM-FM/Nashville
Tige & Daniel, WSIX/Nashville
Woody & The Wake Up Call,
WCOL/Columbus

-23-

Medium Market Personality/Show
Aaron Michael, WSSL/Greenville
Brent Michaels, KUZZ/Bakersfield
Nancy & Newman, WRBT/Harrisburg
Opie Joe, WCYQ/Knoxville
Sunny Leigh, KVOO/Tulsa

-24-

Small Market Personality/Show
Brent & Candy,
WYCT/Pensacola, FL
Cash Williams,
KTTS/Springfield, MO
Eddie Foxx,
WKSF/Asheville, NC
Mackey & Miles,
WBYT/South Bend, IN
Tim Leary, WUBB/Savannah, GA

-25-

National/Syndicated Personality/Show
AfterMidNite with Cody Alan
American Country Countdown
with Kix Brooks
Big D & Bubba
The Bobby Bones Show
Country Countdown USA, Lon Helton

-26-

Regional Promotion (tie)
Raffaella Braun, WAR
Brooke Diaz, Big Machine
Mallory Opeim, WMN
Annie Sandor, Capitol
Jane O'Malia Staszak, Black River
Tyler Waugh, Big Loud

-27-

Independent Promotional Team or Executive
In2une
New Revolution/New Vision
Nine North
Richey Promotions
Jeff Solima

-28-

New Face of Country Music
Todd Cavanah, WUSN/Chicago
David Corey, WKLB/Boston
Kyle Due, KAJA/San Antonio
John E. Kage, KYGO/Denver
Dennis Reese, RCA

CreativeArtistsAgency
congratulates our clients

LAUREN ALAINA
LUKE COMBS
MIDLAND
CARLY PEARCE
MICHAEL RAY

2018 CRS New Faces

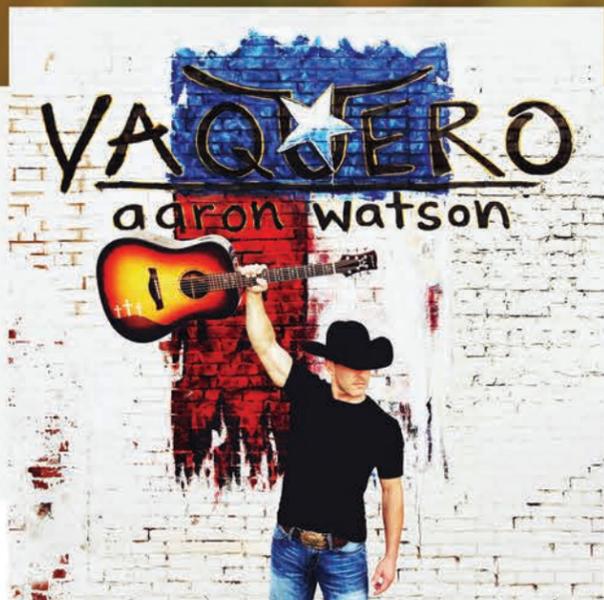
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RUN WILD HORSES

GROOVY,
SEXY,
FUN,
COUNTRY,
HIT!



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HISTORY MAKING TOP TEN HIT

OUTTA STYLE

FROM THE CHART-TOPPING ALBUM VAQUERO.

[AARONWATSON.COM](#)

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Available now on Play MPE

IMPACTING RADIO 3/5



*Southern
Halo*

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

DATA REVISITED

Intangibles Lead Second Annual Reporter Survey

Call it “golden ears” or natural talent, but PDs and MDs continue to base playlist add decisions on three “intangible” factors more than any others. Data-based factors have seen growth, however, in the second annual Country Aircheck/Stone Door Media Lab Music Decision Survey of reporting Mediabase stations.

Right out of the gate, gut feeling, artist stature and playlist fit are the top considerations in add decisions, as they were in 2016. Label/artist relations matter a lot, too, but the big story is that programmers are increasingly focusing on sales and streaming consumption, as well as the artist’s recent airplay history and current chart data. For instance, sales ranked first (fourth overall), but moved up from 74% to 82% year-to-year as having a “very likely” or “somewhat likely” influence on add decisions. Proof of performance also gained in significance, as the artists’ success or failure with their prior single jumped from 71% to 80% importance.

How these and other factors influence decisions on conversions – i.e. increasing airplay for songs already on the air – will be the focus of the second part of this feature (page 18). But first, on with the adds:

DO THE LOCAL-MOTION

While national statistics abound, it is local research that attracts the most interest for new music decisions. Included as a survey question for the first time, local streaming data scored highly, with more than three-fourths of respondents saying it was very or somewhat important – far more than those interested in national streaming figures. And local callout, ranking ninth last year, moved up to No. 7 and was the next-highest-scoring factor, ranking No. 2 among “very likely” responses (excluding “somewhat likely” mentions). Even if some respondents don’t have access to their own local callout, they certainly say they value it.

Also growing in importance was the network effect of word-of-mouth from other PDs, as two-thirds of respondents said it was at least “somewhat likely” to influence new adds. But one voice looms particularly large: Among stations indicating they have a corporate mandate, corporate PD or consultant, nearly seven in 10 regarded the mandate as a “very/somewhat likely” factor. Looking at only those who cited a factor as “very likely” to shape their decision, the corporate mandate came in No. 1; the next four-highest-scoring “very likely” considerations were the same as in 2016, and in the same order, as well.

GREATEST GAINERS

Although they were not generally the most significant factors, airplay- and research-related considerations posted nearly all of the 10 largest increases year-to-year. Three of the four biggest gainers regarding new adds were chart-related. Leading the pack was the “Most Added data/ranking,” jumping from 20% to 37% as a “very/somewhat likely” influence. Consensus among programmers also rose in relevance for conversions (see separate story).

Coming in at No. 2 was “National airplay chart growth,” tracking station/spin increases as measured, for example, by Country Aircheck’s “Airborne” designation threshold; it climbed in importance from 54% to 69%. “Playlist fit” grew from 75% to 88%, while “National airplay chart position” (reaching top 40, 30, etc.) was fourth, achieving a majority by rising from 49% to

Factors Influencing Add Decisions

		Intangible	Research	Airplay	Internal	Marketing	Other media
2016 Rank	2017 Rank			2016	2017	Factor type	
2	1			90.5%	96.7%		intangible
1	2			95.9%	90.2%		intangible
3	3			75.4%	88.0%		intangible
4	4			73.7%	81.5%		research
6	5			70.7%	80.4%		airplay
New	6			...	76.1%		research
9	7			68.5%	69.6%		research
10	8			64.0%	69.6%		intangible
New	9			...	68.6%*		internal
5	10			71.7%	68.5%		marketing
12	11			54.0%	68.5%		airplay
8	12			68.9%	67.4%		intangible
15	13			48.7%	60.9%		airplay
13	14			52.1%	60.9%		research/other media
New	15			...	58.7%		research/airplay
11	16			58.6%	54.3%		intangible
7	17			70.3%	51.1%		marketing
14	18			49.3%	48.9%		airplay
New	19			...	43.5%		research
21	20			32.0%	42.4%		research
19	21			34.1%	40.2%		research
17	22			41.9%	40.2%		intangible
16	23			48.0%	39.1%		research
27	24			20.0%	37.0%		airplay
22	25			32.0%	35.9%		intangible
18	26			37.9%	34.8%		intangible
New	27			...	34.2%*		internal
20	28			33.8%	29.3%		marketing
24	29			31.6%	29.3%		research
25	30			31.1%	27.2%		other media
New	31			...	23.5%*		internal
28	32			19.5%	21.7%		other media
23	33			32.0%	20.7%		other media
26	34			20.3%	20.7%		other media
29	35			17.6%	14.1%		marketing
30	36			13.6%	14.1%		other media
New	37			...	10.9%		airplay
31	38			9.3%	5.4%		other media
32	39			6.7%	3.3%		other media
33	40			6.7%	1.1%		other media

Top Gainers: New Add Influencers

(Overall rank trend in parentheses)

Rank		2016	2017	Change	Factor type
1	Most Added data/ranking (27-24)	20.0%	37.0%	+17.0%	airplay
2	National airplay chart growth (12-11)	54.0%	68.5%	+14.5%	airplay
3	Playlist fit (tempo, sound, etc.) (3-3)	75.4%	88.0%	+12.6%	intangible
4	National airplay chart position (15-13)	48.7%	60.9%	+12.2%	airplay
5	Shazam data (21-20)	32.0%	42.4%	+10.4%	research
6	Prior single’s success/lack of (6-5)	70.7%	80.4%	+9.7%	airplay
7	Streaming data (overall)(13-14)	52.1%	60.9%	+8.8%	research
8	Sales data (4-4)	73.7%	81.5%	+7.8%	research
9	Gut feeling (2-1)	90.5%	96.7%	+6.2%	intangible
10	Listener requests (19-21)	34.1%	40.2%	+6.1%	research

Top Decliners: New Add Influencers

(Overall rank trend in parentheses)

Rank		2016	2017	Change	Factor type
1	Local concert appearance (7-17)	70.3%	51.1%	-19.2%	marketing
2	Social media data (23-33)	32.0%	20.7%	-11.3%	other media
3	National callout (16-23)	...	48.0%	39.1% -8.9%	research
4	Artist stature/reputation (1-2)	95.9%	90.2%	-5.7%	intangible
5	Music video (33-40)	6.7%	1.1%	-5.6%	other media

Top “Very Likely” New Add Influencers

(Excluding “somewhat likely” responses)

2016 Rank	2017 Rank		2016	2017	Factor type
New	1	Corporate mandate	...	58.8%*	internal
1	2	Local callout	55.3%	57.6%	research
2	3	Gut feeling	50.0%	47.8%	intangible
3	4	Playlist fit (tempo, sound, etc.)	38.7%	45.7%	intangible
4	5	Artist stature/reputation	37.8%	41.3%	intangible



Factors Influencing Spin Increases

2016 Rank	2017 Rank	Factor	2016 %	2017 %	Factor type
1	1	Local callout	90.8%	87.0%	research
2	2	Gut feeling	79.7%	82.6%	intangible
3	3	Playlist fit (tempo, sound, etc.)	78.7%	81.5%	intangible
6	4	Sales data	72.0%	81.5%	research
5	5	Artist stature/reputation	74.7%	69.6%	intangible
New	6	Local streaming data	...	68.5%	research
8	7	Artist free show for station	61.3%	63.0%	marketing
12	8	Prior single's success/lack of	50.0%	63.0%	airplay
7	9	Local concert appearance	65.8%	59.8%	marketing
9	10	National airplay chart growth	60.0%	58.7%	airplay
New	11	Corporate mandate	...	58.5%*	internal
New	12	Consumption per spin	...	57.6%	research/airplay
10	13	Word-of-mouth from PDs	54.7%	54.3%	intangible
13	14	Relationship with artist	48.7%	53.3%	intangible
15	15	Streaming data (overall)	45.8%	52.2%	research/other media
13	16	National airplay chart position	48.7%	51.1%	airplay
11	17	National callout	53.3%	42.4%	research
17	18	Relationship with label	44.0%	41.3%	intangible
17	19	Airplay at specific stations	44.0%	40.2%	airplay
16	20	Listener requests	44.4%	39.1%	research
22	21	Mscore	30.7%	38.7%	research
New	22	Input from corporate PD	...	38.0%*	internal
New	23	National streaming data	...	37.0%	research
23	24	Shazam data	27.4%	35.9%	research
27	25	Label reputation	24.0%	30.4%	intangible
25	26	Persuasion of nat'l label exec	25.3%	30.4%	intangible
20	27	Persuasion of regional rep	32.9%	29.3%	intangible
New	28	Input from consultant	...	25.9%*	interna
24	29	Streaming data: Spotify	27.0%	25.0%	other media
35	30	Most Added data/ranking	9.3%	21.7%	airplay
29	31	Artist visit to station	20.6%	18.5%	marketing
31	32	Streaming data: YouTube	17.6%	18.5%	other media
32	33	Streaming data: Apple	16.7%	18.5%	other media
25	34	Social media data	25.3%	17.4%	other media
30	35	Concert tix/meet-and-greets	18.9%	15.2%	marketing
34	36	Streaming data: Pandora	12.2%	15.2%	other media
New	37	Airplay on syndicated shows	...	12.0%	airplay
36	38	National TV performance	6.8%	6.5%	other media
39	39	SiriusXM airplay/data	1.4%	4.3%	other media
37	40	Music video	5.3%	1.1%	other media

Top Gainers: Spin Increase Influencers

(Overall rank trend in parentheses)

Rank	Factor	2016 %	2017 %	Change	Factor type
1	Prior single's success/lack of (12-8)	50.0%	63.0%	+13.0%	airplay
2	Most Added data/ranking (35-30)	9.0%	21.7%	+12.7%	airplay
3	Sales data (6-4)	72.0%	81.5%	+9.5%	research
4	Shazam data (23-22)	27.4%	35.9%	+8.5%	research
5	Mscore (22-20)	30.7%	38.0%	+7.3%	research
6	Label reputation (27-25)	24.0%	30.4%	+6.4%	intangible
6	Streaming data (overall) (15-14)	45.8%	52.2%	+6.4%	research/other media
8	Persuasion of nat'l label exec (25-26)	25.3%	30.4%	+5.1%	intangible
9	Relationship with artist (13-13)	48.7%	53.3%	+4.6%	intangible
10	Streaming data: Pandora (34-36)	12.2%	15.2%	+3.0%	other media

Top Decliners: Spin Increase Influencers

(Overall rank trend in parentheses)

Rank	Factor	2016 %	2017 %	Change	Factor type
1	National callout (11-16)	53.3%	42.4%	-10.9%	research
2	Social media data (25-34)	25.3%	17.4%	-7.9%	other media
3	Local concert appearance (7-9)	65.8%	59.8%	-6.0%	marketing
4	Listener requests (16-19)	44.4%	39.1%	-5.3%	research
5	Artist stature/reputation (5-5)	74.7%	69.6%	-5.1%	intangible

Top "Very Likely" Spin Increase Influencers

(Excluding "somewhat likely" responses)

2016 Rank	2017 Rank	Factor	2016 %	2017 %	Factor type
1	1	Local callout	80.3%	77.2%	research
New	2	Corporate mandate	...	49.1%*	internal
3	3	Playlist fit (tempo, sound, etc.)	30.7%	42.4%	intangible
5	4	Gut feeling	24.3%	35.9%	intangible
New	5	Local streaming data	...	29.4%	research

61%. Notably, Shazam gained in attention, as well. Correlations between these various activity statistics, Shazam and chart outcomes have been previously reported, and an update on those findings will be presented at CRS 2018 during the "Matrix of the Metrics" panel.

WHAT OTHER MEDIA?

Although streaming data increased sharply in significance for new add consideration, none of the major streaming sources – Spotify, Pandora, Apple or YouTube – scored well individually. In terms of new adds, programmers' interest in other competitors vying for listener attention, including social media, SiriusXM, national TV performances and music videos, all declined. So did local concert appearances, and to a much less extent, station visits.

SPIN ME RIGHT ROUND

Are the factors PDs and MDs consider very different when it comes to increasing spins, compared to those for adding new singles? Not too much, actually. As you see in the box scores, the rankings certainly vary, but just three of the 40 factors in this survey scored significantly higher percentages for being "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to influence bumping up spins over adds. No. 1 was overall leader local callout (reported to be influential among 87% of respondents for spin increases vs. 70% for new adds); it also ranked No. 1 among "very likely"-only mentions. The second-largest difference was local concert appearances (60% vs. 51%); and although not regarded by the majority as a major force, Mscore (38% vs. 29%) posted the third-biggest differential between conversions and new adds.

Among spin increase factors themselves, the top five remained the same from 2016, led by a combination of local callout and sales, coupled with equally important "gut feeling" and the all-purpose "playlist fit" considerations. The new category of "Local streaming information" ranked sixth as a key conversion factor, just as it did for new adds.

Beyond the leading indicators, there was somewhat less consensus on factors for spin increases vs. new adds. Two-thirds of respondents cited 12 factors as "very" or "somewhat likely" to shape their decisions on new adds, but the same proportion recognized just six for spin increases. Of course, once a single is seen as gaining enough traction to move beyond evenings and overnights, many other factors start to grow in relative importance including artist shows, consumption data, national callout and the aforementioned Mscore.

The biggest increases year-to-year? The artist's prior single's success (or lack of), up 13%, followed closely by Most Added data/ranking. Sales, Shazam and Mscore rounded out the top five, while label relationships also grew beyond the margin of error.

Although most of radio's streaming and satellite competitors gained a bit in relevance among programmers for spin increase consideration, they still collectively ranked at or near the bottom among influences, just as they did for new adds.

One powerful force is the corporate mandate, which came in nearly as prevalent in motivating spin increases as they are for new adds. Nearly 60% of respondents with corporate mandates regarded them to be "very" or "somewhat likely" to influence conversions. **CAC**

NOTE: While the 2016 survey also did ask about corporate mandates, input from a corporate PD, and input from a consultant, the questions didn't specify that responses were sought only from those for whom they were relevant, and so those percentages were excluded from this report. The 2017 survey addressed this caveat, and the percentages listed recognize the proportions among the relevant respondents, indicated with an asterisk (*).

ABOUT THE SURVEY: Conducted in November-December 2017, the second annual Country Aircheck/Stone Door Media Lab's Music Decision Survey generated a record 92 responses from 78 CA/Mediabase-reporting stations in 66 markets (28 PPM, 38 diary), providing an 80% confidence level with a 5% margin of error.



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2018...

#ONLYGARTH



PEARL
RECORDS



UNDENIABLE: [uhn-di-nahy-uh-buh l] (adj.)

1. incapable of being denied or disputed:
2. unquestioned as to quality, merit, etc.; indisputably good:



MICHAEL RAY

UNDENIABLE HITS

UNDENIABLE VOICE

UNDENIABLE PERFORMER

UNDENIABLE HEART

CAREER ARTIST.



HUNTER HAYES



charlie worsham



Zac Brown Band



FRANKIE BALLARD



ASHLEY MONRO



BRETT ELDREDGE



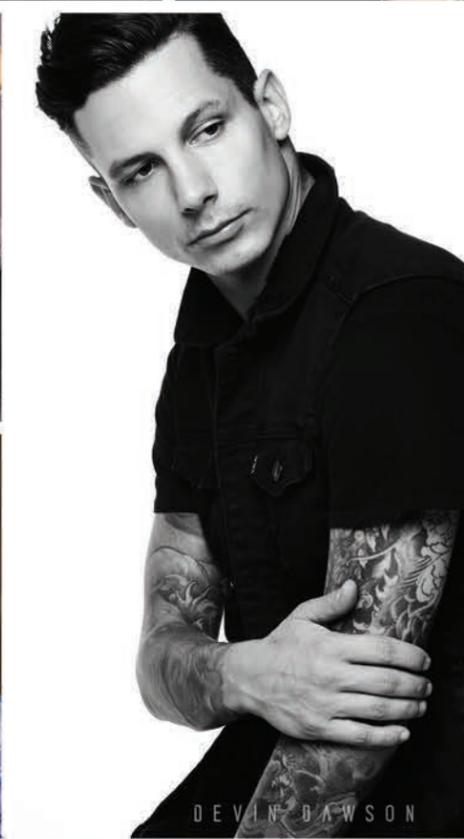
BAILEY BRYAN



MICHAEL RAY



MORGAN EVANS



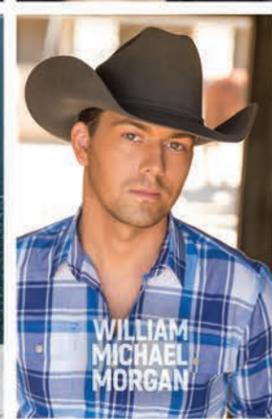
DEVLIN DAWSON



CALEB DODS



THE LAST BANDOLEROS



WILLIAM MICHAEL MORGAN



ASHLEY MCBRYDE



KENNY CHESNEY



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FEATURING
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BRETT YOUNG
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JOSH PHILLIPS
TYLER RICH
DRAKE WHITE



ENTRY WITH VALID CRS REGISTRATION

CRS **NEW FACES** PERFORMANCE **MIDLAND + CARLY PEARCE**

WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 7TH
6:30PM
OMNI BROADWAY BALLROOM

ENTRY WITH CRS NEW FACES TICKET



NEW & APPROVED

After logging thousands of miles on radio tour and learning to travel light, here are the chart-topping artists radio chose to perform at the **CRS 2018 New Faces of Country Music Show**.



Lauren Alaina

Fans first met Mercury's Alaina in 2011 when she was the Season 10 *American Idol* runner-up. She and the title cut of her album *Road Less Traveled* logged many miles last year, finally topping the charts as she hits her stride.

I love CRS. One of the biggest moments for me was last year at Universal's Ryman Auditorium show. I got to play "Three," a song I wrote about the last six years of trying to get on the radio. The Ryman is where everything started for me. I auditioned for *American Idol* on that stage. It was pretty full circle. I sang "Three" and got a standing ovation. It took my breath away.

I've spent the last seven years going to radio stations, playing them my music, trying to establish relationships and earn their respect. To be one of the *New Faces* told me they do respect me. We had such a big year, and this was the icing on the cake. They gave me the shot I needed. I'm just so thankful. Radio changed my life this year. I got my first No. 1 with "Road Less Traveled," and then another one with Kane [Brown's "What Ifs"].

If we have a show, I'll write the station's call letters on my set list. I don't have a trick for remembering names – I'm just really good at it. Sometimes at my meet and greets, I'll learn everyone's name and then go out of the room and have them all get in new places, and I'll tell everybody their name. Those people are very important for me to know, so I try to do my best to know who they are.

I've got packing mastered. I pick an outfit for each of the shows. I try to wear the same shoes with those outfits because I don't want to be lugging around five suitcases. I have this shrug that I do, and if it hurts my shoulder, it's over 50 pounds. If it doesn't, it's under. On my last road trip, my bag was always exactly 50 pounds.

I eat a lot of chicken. I've been on a healthy kick in the last year and half. Typically I'll eat a protein and a veggie, and some brown rice. I try to stay healthy on the road. It's very hard.

I am the kind of person that will just go non-stop. Traveling has taught me that it is important to rest. I've learned it's okay to be by yourself and relax sometimes. It's so hard because I'm such a social butterfly.

My favorite moment in the last year was when I got the call that "Road" was No. 1. Damon Moberly jokes that he's always going to be the one to call me with good news and with bad news. I had five singles before "Road" that didn't do what we wanted them to do. He had to be the one to call and tell me that, too. But this time, he called and said I had the No. 1 song in the country. It's my favorite moment in my life so far, because I worked towards that moment for seven years.

If you're coming to Nashville, go to The Pfunky Griddle in Berry Hill. It's a breakfast spot, kind of like a hibachi grill, and you cook the food. You can make pancakes or whatever your little heart desires. It's so much fun.

You can't put everything about your life on social media. I'm really cautious about posting pictures of my house and my neighborhood. I don't have my "locations" turned on. I don't think people need to know where I am all the time. If I find somewhere I really like and I want to post about it, I will, but I've already left there by the time I do.

If I could trade places with someone in Country radio, I'd like to be able to give a new artist a big break. And I wish that they could see the creative process of writing a song, recording it and then sending it to them – and being super vulnerable, hoping they connect with it. Because when they do, that's the best feeling in the world.



Luke Combs

Combs' success echoed the title of his River House/Columbia No. 1 debut single, "Hurricane." The follow-up, "When It Rains It Pours," also rose to the top spot and buoyed his debut album *This One's For You* to gold.

I was on the road when I got the phone call from my manager about being chosen for *New Faces*. It's a big-time honor to get invited to play this show. I'm excited to be a part of it and see everyone. I hope they're ready to have a good time.

Making a memory with somebody is important to do on a radio tour. It helps me remember people's names. Obviously, having a great radio team helps, too, but I think sitting down and trying to have a conversation with everybody is how I do it. I try to make it at least a little bit more personable than it could be when you're visiting three or four stations a day.

I can probably pack my suitcase 10 minutes before my flight leaves and still make the boarding on Southwest. I've become an expert, having packed hundreds of times just in the last 12 months. If you know how many days you're out, that's how many show shirts and pairs of underwear you need. You really only need one pair of boots if you're a guy. That's the key to staying light. Gotta have a different hat for every show, though.

My go-to dinner is steak when I'm out on radio tour. But I'm not too much of a picky eater. You can probably tell from my pictures that I like to eat.

The most important lesson of the radio tour was to get your rest. The first six months, you want to go out and have a big party. But it is a job at the end of the day. So you have to get your sleep and treat it like a job. Making these relationships is important, and obviously having a good time is part of that. But you've got to make sure you rest.



We had a lot of cool moments in the last year. "Hurricane" going No. 1 was huge for me. Then, the record came out and did so well. We toured last fall and sold out every date. That was kind of amazing to see. At that point, you start to see how much of an impact Country radio has. Because we came into this with a little bit of our own fan base, but having the ability to get your music out to 60 million listeners a week is unbelievable.

My favorite place in Nashville is Arnold's Country Kitchen. They're only open for lunch during the week. That's where I would take somebody if I was trying to impress them.

An important social media moment for me was when I posted a photo of us playing at *Route 91 Harvest*. We played our set about an hour before the tragedy. In

light of what happened, I felt like I needed to share a picture of what the night was supposed to be about – everybody having a good time. I wanted us all to remember that we're a huge community of country music fans and we stick together.

I would love to host a morning show. I know that sounds kind of wild, but I grew up listening to morning shows on the way to school or on the way to work in college. I always felt there was a fun dynamic between the hosts and I always found it interesting. It's kind of like listening to the news with a little bit of comedy and a little bit of music. And I would love to give everyone in Country radio the experience of being onstage and having thousands of people singing a song that you wrote, because that experience is equally as cool.

Midland

The Texas trio (Jess Carson, Cameron Duddy and Mark Wystrach) took their Big Machine debut single "Drinkin' Problem" all the way to No. 1. That hit also earned them Grammy nominations for Best Country Song and Best Country Duo/Group Performance.

Mark: To get the news about *New Faces* definitely validated us and pulled into focus what a rocket ride 2017 was – and how far we had come since we did our first CRS just last year. We got nominated for a couple Grammys the week before. We didn't get any kind of notice or message from [BMLG Pres./CEO] Scott Borchetta about that. But when we got *New Faces*, we instantly got a celebratory email from Scott. So as far as radio goes, we know that's a really big deal.

Cameron: On our radio tour, we would be briefed on the stations in the car, before going in. And I took notes on my phone so I would remember certain details about people because ultimately, you want to create an actual bond.

Mark: Packing is definitely an art form.

Cam: For instance, Mark's art form is free form. He likes to pack the morning of.

Mark: You gotta keep it simple. You end up wearing the exact same thing every single day on the road anyhow.

Cam: If you want any great example of simplification, just tear open Mark's man-purse and you'll see.

Cam: If there's one thing you could always rely upon, it's that [Southeast Regional] Jeff Davis is going to order a Shepherd's pie at any given pub that we're in. You can set a clock to it. He loves Irish pubs and he loves Shepherd's pie.

Mark: But we do have one place that we like to go. We've been to most major cities in America at least twice this year and we've gone to one place twice. McGuire's in Pensacola, and it happens to be an Irish pub. Thank you [Southwest Regional] James Marsh.

Cam: On radio tour we learned to pace ourselves. And don't fall for going to a little bar in Sugartit, KY with [WUBE/Cincinnati PD] Grover Collins.

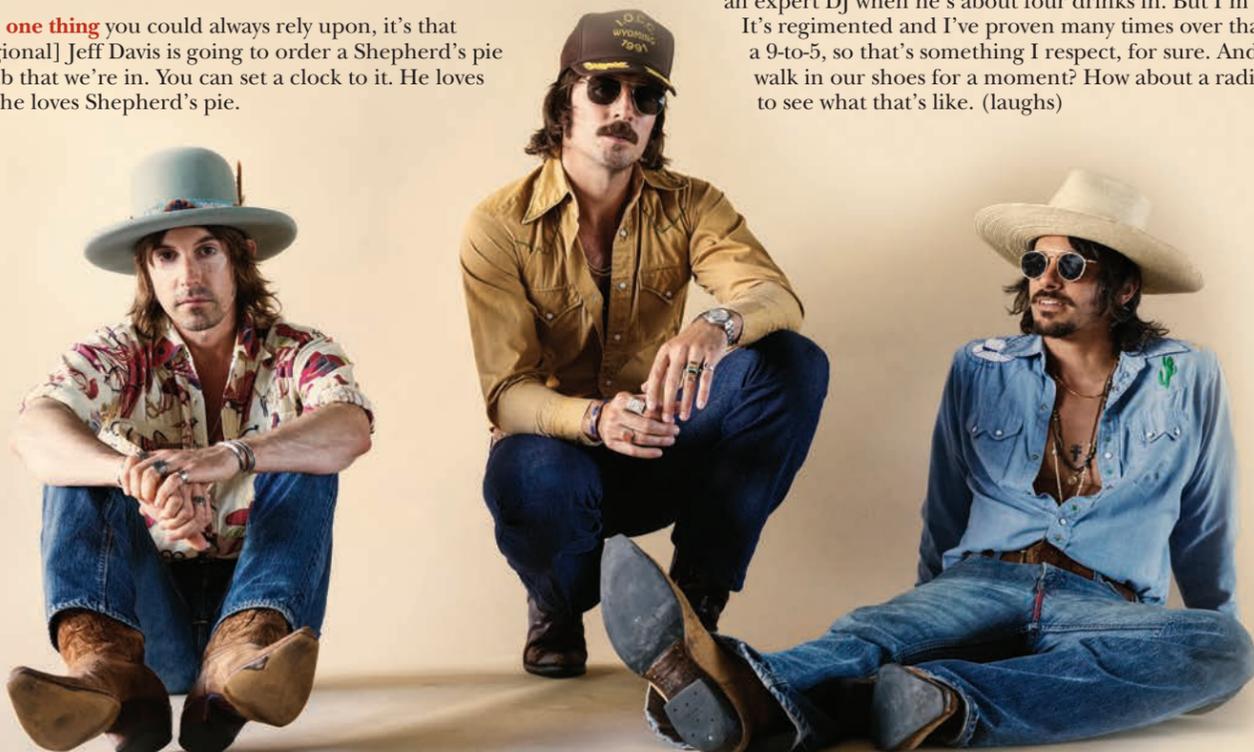
Jess: A lot of things came together when we were in Boston playing the Gillette stadium dates with Kenny Chesney, Thomas Rhett and Old Dominion. That was when "Drinkin' Problem" was No. 1. It was just a crazy place to be, you know? I mean, Gillette stadium, it's as big as it gets. Thomas Rhett brought us out onstage during his set to do "Drinkin' Problem" with him. We had a blast playing those two shows.

Mark: Whenever we're in Nashville, you can find us at Bartaco. They have our favorite tacos and it's also a good bar that stays open late. Great margaritas and guacamole, too.

Mark: We adopted a dog from Houston the weekend of our *On The Rocks* album release. We saved him from a kennel that he was getting beat up at because he's not an alpha dog. We decided he was gonna live on our tour bus, and he became a famous little dog named Randy Travis. That created quite a [social media] stir with all of our fans.

We traveled all across the country with Randy. He came at a time when the year had been starting to wear down on all of us. Randy seemed to bond the whole team back together. Randy is now living on my family's ranch in Arizona after Cameron and his wife fostered him for a couple months.

Cam: I think we all have an inner DJ inside of us. Mark fashions himself an expert DJ when he's about four drinks in. But I'm not cut out for it. It's regimented and I've proven many times over that I'm no good at a 9-to-5, so that's something I respect, for sure. And if radio were to walk in our shoes for a moment? How about a radio tour? Just once, to see what that's like. (laughs)



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Carly Pearce

Big Machine's Pearce remembers "Every Little Thing" about 2017 – the release of her debut single and its chart-topping success being standouts. But she says the biggest gift of the year was finding out she'd been chosen for the New Faces Show.

Last year was my first CRS. I was part of the Big Machine luncheon. It's an overwhelming, intimidating thing because there are all the faces who make the decisions about whether or not to play your song. It's the who's who of first impressions for new artists. This year with the New Faces Show, I'm excited to go a little deeper than just one song. I'm sure a lot of the radio people have not seen a full show from me.

My drummer is my tour manager and was on radio tour with me. Every time we would leave a radio station, he would pull his laptop out in the car and we would write the PD and the MD names, write the city, the station, and one fun fact that we remember. I would send out my thank you notes and put that [fun fact] back in there, just so they knew I was paying attention. You really are building relationships and I genuinely did want to make them understand I was in this for the long haul.

I'm terrible at packing. I bring a suitcase that my entire band could fit in. It's really hard to be a girl – you always want options. I like to travel with my hair products separate from my clothes just in case something spills, so I really have a massive suitcase and have way too many shoes and jackets in it and then a whole separate duffle bag full of hair products.

I'm pretty healthy, so at a station lunch or dinner, I usually just order a



salad – and red wine, of course. The thing I could do without is the staple of a radio tour, a steak dinner. There's a lot of steak. I'm over it.

I learned a lot about my limits on radio tour, with the traveling and uprooting your life to live in a suitcase. I learned I can be pushed to a limit and go a little bit past that. One day, I visited four states. As an artist, I learned to be diligent. Sometimes you may go to a station and the PD doesn't show up. Or the staff may be heating up their lunch while you're performing in the kitchen. Or people may be coming in just to get the free pizza and then they walk out while you're playing. So I learned to own my craft and stay confident in that, trying to give the best representation of myself as an artist as I can.

Watching "Every Little Thing" go top 20 was the first moment that I was like, "Oh my goodness. This is a big deal." Watching it go to No. 1, having so many PDs texting me and rooting for me every week was a little bit bigger of a build. You don't get your first No. 1 climb ever again in your career, so that was really exciting.

My favorite place on the planet is the Grand Ole Opry. So for the folks coming to Nashville for CRS, if you haven't been there, you have to go.

I played the Today show and randomly, Dolly Parton was there promoting her album. We released albums on the same day. I really wanted to meet her as an adult and as an artist and tell her that I once worked at Dollywood. That was a huge moment for me. She's the best.

I'm an open book on social media. I post about my family, my friends, my career. But I probably wouldn't post a photo of the outside of my house so I can keep that a secret.

If I could switch places with someone at radio, I would love to get inside PDs' minds and figure out what they look for when they meet new artists. We're all doing the same thing. What makes people stand out? As for my job, I would love to handpick a few PDs to go on radio tour as a new artist. That would be hilarious.

Michael Ray

Atlantic/WMN's Ray followed his first No. 1 "Kiss You In The Morning" with his second chart topper "Think A Little Less."

When I got the call about *New Faces* it was a "pinch me" moment just to be selected and be part of such an amazing class. So many people I look up to also stood on that stage, from Randy Travis to Alabama to Keith Urban. It's an honor and something I don't take lightly. Thanks to everybody at Country radio and to my promotion team.

I have a notebook on radio tour. Every time I'd leave a radio station, I would write everything down that I could remember: the PD's name, wife, kids, how many kids, the call letters. And fortunately, I'm good at remembering faces.

I over-pack. But I am prepared for anything coming my way. If I pack for two days or two weeks, I feel like I pack the same amount.

I am sick of barbecue. We eat so much of it on the road because it's easy and it feeds a lot, so I understand why it is a thing. And everywhere you go, it doesn't matter, it's the best you've ever had! (laughs) I also ate a lot of Mexican food on radio tour – and that was completely fine with me because I love Mexican food.

On radio tour I learned to be present in every moment 'cause they go by quick. I'm a "Where are we going next, what do we need to do?" type of person. My mind's always going. So that's something I learned: just be present and focus on where you're at, and really take in and learn that city.

One of my favorite moments from last year was when "Think A Little Less" went No. 1. I was in my hometown and we were playing a festival. Everybody on my promotion team worked really hard. Country radio really had my back and helped us break that song. It was great to celebrate a No. 1 in my hometown, in my home state, with everybody singing

along. Another favorite moment was on the *Get To You Tour*, playing places that we never had and selling out shows. Just to hear everybody in a place you've never played, singing even the album cuts, as loud as they could, completely blew my mind.

If I were playing tour guide to the folks coming to CRS, I'd tell them to go to the *Grand Ole Opry*. If you've never been to Nashville and you want to know what this town was built on, tour the *Opry* and also the Ryman Auditorium. Start your trip off with the energy and the vibes of the artists who paved the way for us to be where we're at today.

One of the best social media moments of my career so far was at the end of 2017. My Dad had his second open heart surgery December 28. It's a scary thing. Even though you have your family and friends around, you feel alone. You're just

sitting there, waiting. I went on Twitter, and one of my fan pages had posted about 100 pictures and messages about my dad. For fans to take time out of their busy holiday schedules was something I'll never forget, and I'll never be able to thank them enough for it. When he was in recovery, I couldn't wait to show him all those messages of love.



One of the coolest parts about a radio job would be seeing the evolution of an artist's career. Take

Kenny Chesney. They've all seen him play with 15 people in a conference room, and now they see him selling out football stadiums. I'd love for them to experience the reaction they help artists get onstage. When you hear fans singing your songs back to you, it's because they heard them on Country radio. I wish they could feel that energy and love. The reason why you can't sleep after a show is because of moments like that. **CAC**





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ABBREVIATION KEY:

A Assistant
AD Artist Development
AIP Activator & Indicator Promotion
AP Audio Production
AR A&R
B Business
BO Booking
CD Client Development
CO Coordinator
CS Chart Strategy
CSI Content Strategy & Innovation
CT Central
D Director
DI Digital Initiatives
DM Digital Marketing
DMS Digital Media Strategist
DS Digital Streaming
DSM Digital Sales & Marketing

EA Exec. Asst.
EC East Coast
LC Label Consultant
LR Label Resources
M Marketing
MAS Marketing & Artist Strategy
MG Manager
MP Managing Partner
MR Music Row Promotion
MW Midwest
ND National Director
NE Northeast
O Owner
OC Original Content
P President
PD Production
PR Promotion
PRM Promotion & Marketing
PRS Promotion Strategy
PTM Project Manager

RC Radio Consultant
RD Regional Director
RI Radio Initiatives
RM Radio Marketing
RP Regional Promotion
RS Radio & Streaming
RSGS Radio Syndication & Group Strategy
RT Radio Tour
S Secondary
SC Senior Coord.
SD Senior Dir.
SND Sr. National Dir.
SE Southeast
SM Social Media
SR Streaming
ST Specialist
SW Southwest
TX Texas
WC West Coast



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ABBREVIATION KEY:

A Assistant	ND National Director
AD Artist Development	NE Northeast
AIP Activator & Indicator Promo.	O Owner
AP Audio Production	OC Original Content
AR A&R	P President
B Business	PD Production
BO Booking	PR Promotion
CD Client Development	PRM Promotion & Mktg.
CO Coordinator	PRS Promotion Strategy
CS Chart Strategy	PTM Project Manager
CSI Content Strategy & Innov.	RC Radio Consultant
CT Central	RD Regional Director
D Director	RI Radio Initiatives
DI Digital Initiatives	RM Radio Marketing
DM Digital Marketing	RP Regional Promotion
DMS Digital Media Strategist	RS Radio & Streaming
DS Digital Streaming	RSGS Radio Syndication & Group Strategy
DSM Digital Sales & Marketing	RT Radio Tour
EA Exec. Asst.	S Secondary
EC East Coast	SC Senior Coord.
LC Label Consultant	SD Senior Dir.
LR Label Resources	SND Sr. National Dir.
M Marketing	SE Southeast
MAS Marketing & Artist Strategy	SM Social Media
MG Manager	SR Streaming
MP Managing Partner	ST Specialist
MR Music Row Promotion	SW Southwest
MW Midwest	TX Texas
	WC West Coast



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MIKE MOORE

Locally National

Entercom's November closing on its acquisition of CBS Radio rewrote the radio landscape. For the expanded company's format captain Mike Moore, getting 18 stations on the same page isn't quite as daunting as might be expected. Pointing to "shared values" between the two companies, Moore sees national resources being applied to a locally focused operational structure as a blueprint for success. As a 14-year company veteran and seasoned radio pro with prior stops including WSIX/Nashville, WWYZ/Hartford and WWKA/Orlando, Moore has more than proven his ability to ably apply his experience. With an expanded roster of stations and influx of programming talent, he's also excited for the chance to keep learning.



CA: How did you hear about the merger and what was your initial reaction?

MM: This is a business of rumors and there have certainly been rumors of mergers or acquisitions regarding Entercom in the past. I chose not to react or overreact to any of that. The first official confirmation that a deal was happening came from [Entercom President/CEO] David Field. They do a pretty good job of keeping us abreast of those things

How quickly and how has this affected your day-to-day?

Well, I'm included in an awful lot more emails. (Laughs) I have more conference calls and things like that. I feel really good about the conversations I've had with many of the folks that were formerly with CBS. Like I said, I know a lot of them and some I haven't gotten to know over the years, but I was excited to jump in with resources they haven't had in a while. I know we've done some things in Philadelphia and Houston that Bruce and Shelly seemed to appreciate; access to tools they hadn't had recently.

It's been really nice to exchange notes with people and figure out how I can lend a hand ... and also how I can learn from them. Someone who's been super helpful as the former format head for CBS Radio is Tim Roberts. I've known him for years, but we've never worked together. So it's exciting to get to do that and tackle all these challenges together.

What does your day-to-day look like?

First and foremost, speaking about local, I'm involved here programming KWJJ on a daily basis and, thankfully, I've got a lot of help with that. We have a good support staff, a great group of people I've been working with for a while. I also serve as the VP/Programming for this cluster, which has a Classic Rock station, Hot AC, Alternative, Adult Hits and Sports stations. So the plate is pretty full from a local standpoint. And then where necessary, I jump in to act as an in-house resource, if you will, for some of these other Country stations we've picked up. We went from seven great Country radio stations to 18, so the job has definitely changed. It's so much bigger, but I feel really good about the folks we have in place.

You mentioned providing resources to Houston and Philadelphia. Can you share examples of the kinds of things that have opened up for the stations that have joined Entercom?

I don't know that I want to get into specifics. There are things we will be doing as a group where it makes sense. For instance, I was really proud of the fact that less than two weeks after the merger, we launched the *Count on Country* program to benefit the victims and families of the tragedy at the *Route 91 Harvest* festival in Las Vegas.

We produced the hour-long special and ran it across all of the stations. I leaned on a lot of the former CBS guys for input on that. We really worked hard to get it right. What we didn't want was an hour-long, maudlin sort of procession. That would have been disrespectful – and who would want to listen to it?

We wanted it to be hopeful, inspiring and focused on the strength of country music. That's why we called it *Count on Country*, because you can

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and, before it was made known to the press, he sent out a note telling everybody what was about to happen. Not paying attention to rumors and being inclined to hear things from the source, I appreciated the job they did keeping us informed.

At any point did you get the two companies' lists of Country stations, line them up and think, "Could be cool!"?

Yeah. I mean, with CBS Radio and Entercom there are a lot of shared values. I thought it made a lot of sense without an incredible amount of overlap. And you're talking about some great radio stations and some great programmers, so I was pretty excited to hear and think about the merger.

Having been in the business and worked for a number of companies, you've either been through or seen a lot of mergers. What have you observed or experienced in terms of the challenges and opportunities they present for programmers and managers?

I mentioned shared values, and CBS Radio as a company offered a lot of autonomy to their people. Likewise, Entercom certainly does and has. That's certainly been my experience over the 14 years I've been here. The company has a national footprint, but there's still a tremendous amount of local control and effort. That's the difference between us and some of our competitors in being national but curating and hosting local content in our marketplaces. We're very connected to that as far as our audiences, advertisers and everything else. Some folks have chosen a different model where they rely on more national sorts of programming and content piped in from various places. So it was a good match for CBS, because that seemed to be their primary strategy as well.

The biggest thing is just trying to get to know everybody and meld the cultures. That comes with time. I'm fortunate in that there are tremendous programmers at these stations, many I've known and even worked with over the years. [KILT/Houston's] Bruce Logan and I worked together at Clear Channel. Same with [WXTU/Philadelphia's] Shelly Easton. Country radio and country music are close-knit families and I'm fortunate to know a lot of great folks. I hope that helps the process, and beyond that it's a matter of getting to know each other, adopting best practices and getting everyone marching in the same direction so we can do the best for our local markets and our companies will hold.

count on this format to respond to real life situations in a more meaningful way than many other musical genres do. You can count on country music for healing and for inspiration. You can count on country listeners to lend a helping hand to those in need. That was the spirit in which the program came together.

I leaned on several people including [KSON/San Diego's] Kevin Callahan, who obviously was part of the legacy Entercom team, as well as [WBEE/Rochester's] Bob Barnett, Bruce Logan, Tim Roberts and others. Suddenly, I realized I had all these resources in them. We wanted to get the playlist and the tone of the show right. We wanted to have it feel like a respectful and inspirational effort across our entire chain. I was really glad to have all of those folks to tap into to pull that off.

CBS Radio has had a number of platform-wide initiatives, whether they were efforts like *Launch* or an event like *Stars & Strings*. Have you sorted out yet what will carry forward and what won't?

We're still in that process. There are some things both from the Entercom and CBS stations I would imagine we will continue to do. In terms of things across all the stations, we have a very exciting event coming up around spring training down in Phoenix. This is a double-header that will feature artists and also be about baseball. I mean, who doesn't want to

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go to Phoenix in March?

We have a lot of exciting plans, and we're still sorting out which things we'll continue and which haven't turned out how we hoped they might. And I also look forward to working with this very esteemed group of program directors on creating some new opportunities. There's an awful lot of knowledge and a lot of very, very, smart people in this company.

Is the spring training event new?

It's an advancement of something I believe was started by Tim Richards and the team at KMLE/Phoenix. We have decided to put a national effort behind it and the details of that will be coming.

Have you put any thought into where this combined group now puts Entercom in terms of its place within the broader country industry?

It's natural to compare the broadcasters in the space, and we're now up there with the biggest groups. But I think our focus will be slightly different than theirs. We've always been like a farm-to-table operation in that we really look to empower our local markets. We like to create unique and original content that is relevant for those marketplaces. Both from a programming and a sales standpoint. And that will continue to be our focus.

That's not to say we won't have best practices and things we'll do as a group to take advantage of the scale we now have. But again, Entercom has, in my 14 years here, been a company that relies on the people in their local markets to run that business. I don't look for that to change.

You talked about the shared values, but in merging cultures, there are inevitably adjustments to be made. One we've heard is that former CBS PDs are experiencing a more active role from their market managers than they were used to. Is that one of the things Entercom does that might be a shift for the new stations?

I can't obviously speak intelligently to how CBS operated in the past. The market managers within Entercom, I mean, they run their business. They are involved, but whether or not they're more involved than what the previous CBS market managers were, I don't know that because I didn't work there.

Several years ago we interviewed Entercom President/Programming Pat Paxton for this story, and the thumbnail version of the programming philosophy he outlined was to be focused on product and deliver great content. How does that core concept get applied specifically in Country, and how might it be shifting with market dynamics?

We spend an awful lot of time researching our marketplaces, trying to figure out what music the audience wants. We spend a lot of time coaching talent. We spend a lot of time trying to tap into the core values of a local marketplace, by way of charitable efforts or ways we can impact the community in a positive way. So don't look for that to change. What's changed in the 10 years since you've spoken to Pat is we probably have more resources and tools to do those things.

There's also the whole world of digital now with apps and people connected to us on their smartphones and through social media. All of those things, in combination with our traditional broadcast signals, are about trying to meet the audience wherever they want to engage us. Then, provide them with a unique, compelling and engaging experience. That's really the mission.

What do you see as the key challenges and opportunities for radio beyond those broadcast towers?

Radio works brilliantly with digital. It's great to



amplify digital efforts and drive leads for businesses, help with recruitment or whatever it may be. We have a subsidiary entity at Entercom called Smart Reach Digital in many of our markets and I'm sure that will be rolling out to the markets where we don't have it. That's a real opportunity for radio to help drive digital efforts, because every bit of research I've seen, be it from Nielsen and other sources, indicates those two really compliment each other well.

“I'm fortunate in that there are tremendous programmers at these stations, many I've known and even worked with over the years.”

Do you see the way music decisions are made evolving, and how involved are you or other members of the team in communicating about the music on the air at each station?

We don't have an official "list" that people add records from. Those decisions are made locally. That's not to say we don't discuss those things. We do conference calls with PDs and we talk about what may be working in their individual markets. We see each other's research, and so I would imagine some of those things weigh into local decisions. I don't look for that to change. Our brand managers – our PDs – are really in charge of their radio stations. We provide them the resources – research and other tools – to figure out what the audience has an appetite for.

How involved were you in the decision to go to one Country station in Seattle?

I don't really want to get into that.

Overall, how do you think we're doing as a Country format and in terms of the business of country music?

I want to believe we're beginning to find our way again. For a while we had a lot of music that sounded the same. Very pop influenced, guys singing a love song with a drum machine behind it. We've moved away from that a bit and I applaud those who have taken a different path. In general, I'm pretty excited about some of the things out there. I don't want to get specific with names, but I am hopeful the music is on an upswing and I've been encouraged by the upticks in the ratings as of late.

Operationally, how do you see the interaction between the music and radio businesses?

The country business ... it's funny. You talk to anybody who has come to this format from the pop world – I'll use Todd Cavanah, who has done a brilliant job for us at WUSN/Chicago. His background is Pop and now I think you'd be hard pressed to pry the guy away from Country. He loves it. It's a great format and unique in the relationship that exists between radio, the labels and the artists. We have a greater degree of access.

I heard from some friends of mine who program Pop that Kelly Clarkson recently had an album preview event at her home in Nashville for some influential Pop PDs. And she said, "Man, Country does this all the time. We should do this more often at Pop." I think a lot of the Pop guys felt the same way. Sometimes we take that access for granted in Country. We meet the artists in conference rooms as they're coming up, yet years later when they're selling out stadiums, we still have access to them. It's exciting that we can use that access and bring it home to the fans. That is a powerful, powerful tool we have that other formats just don't enjoy.

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Jason Aldean

"I used to sit down and write the Top 10 on a piece of paper every Sunday night and I would bring it to class in high school and everybody'd say, 'Hey Blake, what's the Top 10 songs?' And I would read 'em off because I was listening to Bob's Countdown. I discovered music through listening to Bob Kingsley's Countdown."

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