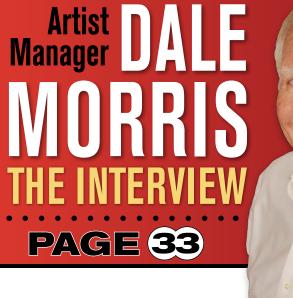


THE YEAR'S BIG STORIES

Swift Rise, Economy's Fall

PAGE 3

Artist DALE THE INTERVIEW





AIRCHECK





#4 - KEITH URBAN "Sweet Thing" #6 - DIERKS BENTLEY "Sideways"

#7 - LADY ANTEBELLUM "I Run To You"

#9 - DIERKS BENTLEY "Feel That Fire"

OVERALL MOST HEARD ARTIST OF 2009

#1 – KEITH URBAN

#4 - DIERKS BENTLEY

#9 – DARIUS RUCKER

MOST HEARD MALE ARTIST OF 2009

#1 – KEITH URBAN

#2 - DIERKS BENTLEY

#6 – DARIUS RUCKER

MOST HEARD DUO/GROUP OF 2009

#3 - LADY ANTEBELLUM









2009 THE YEAR'S TOP STORIES

minous may be the best way to describe a year that begins with the economy tottering on the brink and the nation's largest radio group announcing hundreds of layoffs. Certainly, much of the year was consumed with upheaval and, frankly, if we never write another story about someone losing their job it will be too soon.

But a funny thing happened on the way to 1929 ... nothing. That is to say, the economy didn't actually implode, radio transmitters didn't crumble to dust and country fans didn't suddenly decide they preferred silver-lamméed European techno dweebs. In fact, as 2009 drew to a close, Nashville and Country radio could look around and smile at the realization that this format is building new stars.

SWIFT ASCENSION

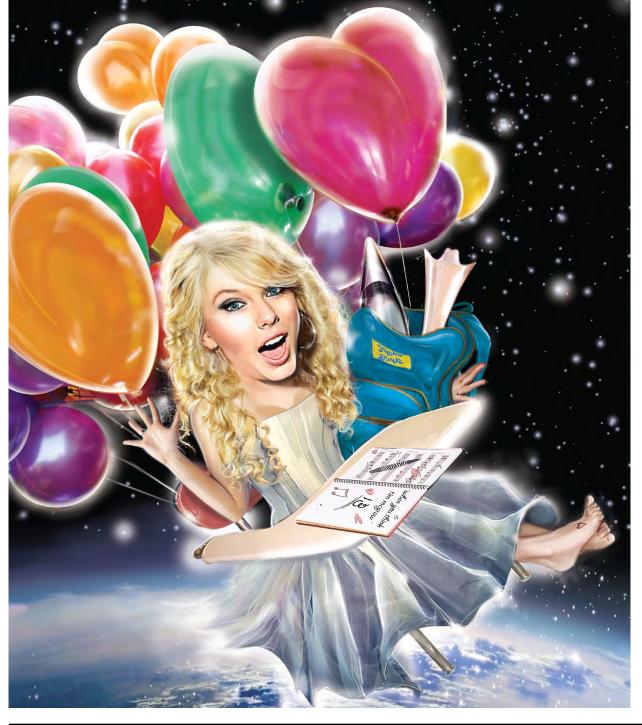
Three years ago, Twitter was something a bird did, Barack Obama was a ridiculous long shot and Taylor Swift was a relative unknown. One of them, certainly, has become the internationally renowned face of a nation ... and that Barack guy's done okay, too.

In all seriousness, Swift's rise from a Hendersonville High School desk to the top of the entertainment world may be the most improbable success story in the history of country music. Improbable, except to those who've seen it up close and, most significantly, had the pleasure of getting to know Taylor.

Becoming the best-selling all-genre recording artist, launching a widely acclaimed headlining tour, hosting Saturday Night Live, taking her show to Europe and Australia, and lining several shelves with awards are astounding accomplishments. But they pale in comparison to – and perhaps owe part of their existence to – the uncanny focus, maturity and grace exhibited by a woman who this month celebrates her 20th birthday.

perhaps owe part of their existence to – the uncanny focus, maturity and grace exhibited by a woman who this month celebrates her 20th birthday.

Detractors and adversity are part of the story as well, and Swift handled a rude interruption at MTV's Video Music Awards with aplomb. She is one of those unique artists with the ability to be exactly who she wants to be while simultaneously embracing the music biz and radio machinery and, in particular, its people. The trail of warm personal interactions she's left behind and her continuing gratitude toward Country radio and all who have supported her reveal a level of understanding beyond expectations. Can Taylor sustain this kind of growth? Not likely. About as unlikely as the idea of that kid doodling lyrics in a school notebook signing a record deal, releasing a single and three years later becoming CMA Entertainer of the Year.



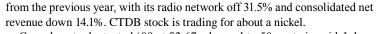
A HARD REIGN'S GONNA FALL

It's white-knuckle time for stockholders of overleveraged major radio groups. Mounting debt threatens to trigger creditor covenants that could force some owners into further restructuring, sell-offs and outright bankruptcy proceedings.

Clear Channel's private equity owners, Bain Capital and Thomas H. Lee Partners, apparently have been scrambling to restructure several bank loans that financed the \$27-billion 2008 buyout. While it's reported that CC could default by the end of 2009 or early 2010, the PE firms say they have not reached out to banks. In August, S&P cut the corporate credit ratings on CC and its parent CC Media Holdings to "CC," 10 steps below investment grade.

Citadel's plight may be more grim. A November SEC filing suggests a possible Chapter

11 bankruptcy, as the company does not expect to meet loan requirements including a \$150 million payment by Jan. 15. After a net loss of nearly \$1 billion in 2008, its Q3 '09 net station revenues fell 9.9%



Cumulus stock started '09 at \$2.67, plunged to 50 cents in mid-July, but rebounded to around \$2.20 in December. The company's net loss was \$144 million for the first nine months of '09, compared to -\$362 million in all of '08.

Amid the dark clouds, there were some silver linings: Entercom, which slashed its dividend, saw its stock quadruple. And after huge losses in '08, CBS posted \$168 million in net earnings through Q3, with its stock also up four-fold between March and November. Regent's stock quadrupled, too, from January to November. And Cox successfully completed its stock buyback plan and went private.

MARCHING To The Meter

No one knows how Arbitron's Portable People Meter will ultimately impact the music industry, but radio is feeling the change like never before. In 2009,

electronic audience measurement spread to 33 of America's top 50 markets, with Baltimore, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Denver, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Miami, Minneapolis, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland (OR), Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Diego, Seattle, St. Louis and Tampa joining the list. Together, PPM-measured stations drive more than half of ad revenue generated among all measured metros. Twelve new markets will achieve PPM currency in spring 2010: Austin, Charlotte, Columbus (OH), Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Nashville, Norfolk, Orlando, Providence and Raleigh. Next fall, Greensboro, Hartford, Jacksonville, Memphis, New Orleans and West Palm Beach join the roster.

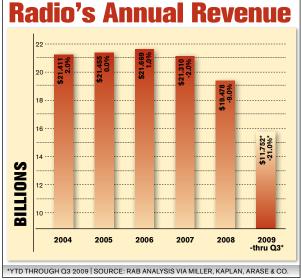
PPM's expansion was not without controversy. Embattled by state lawsuits, new Arbitron President/CEO Michael Skarzynski signed settlements with attorneys general of New York, New Jersey and Maryland last winter. However, a contentious House Oversight investigation is underway, and Arbitron awaits further MRC accreditation beyond Houston and Riverside. Meanwhile, the ratings firm is increasing its sample benchmarks for persons 12+ by 10% by mid-2011, along with a 15% increase in in-tab cell-phone-only households by the end of '09 and a 20% bump next year.





ECONOMY LOBOTOMY

The financial pounding corporate radio has taken in 2009 was only accentuated by broader economic woes. And those body blows reverberated at virtually every station around the country. Facing steep declines in revenue and staggering debt (see "A Hard Reign's" story), most companies took bold



steps, ranging from aggressive expansion into voice tracking and centralized programming (see "Plug & Play Dayparts") to a variety of cost-cutting measures. Many firms were forced to pink-slip employees - including numerous seasoned veterans – and eliminated countless unfilled positions. Some broadcasters initiated mandatory furloughs of 10-24 days per year, while others instituted across-the-board salary deductions of 5-10% to avoid or minimize layoffs.

With Drew Marcus of Sugarloaf Rock Capital calling 2009 the "worst advertising market since 1975" at the NAB Radio Show in Philadelphia back in September, the net effect has left already-anxious radio professionals with even more uncertainty. Estimates for radio's total 2009 revenue decline are as low as 23%, with digital income (websites, streaming, mobile apps) the only category showing growth.

But there is some good news. According to the RAB, certain marketers have significantly increased their radio spending recently, including Taco Bell, Subway, Dunkin' Donuts, MetroPCS, Volvo and Hyundai. And as an election year, 2010 is expected to perform much better for radio, although the industry still expects a further 5% decrease from '09. There also is optimism that more financially sound players such as KUPL/Portland parent Alpha Broadcasting will be lured to radio as troubled group owners refinance and shed some of their holdings.

In Memoriam

Ernie Ashworth

Leona Atkins

Michael Bandy

Barry Beckett

Delaney Bramlett

Tom Brumley

KINDERGARTEN CUTOFF

A major label president recently told us, "Artists more than five years old just aren't selling albums anymore." And it seems to be true. A quick perusal of a late November Nielsen SoundScan country albums chart shows only one artist in the top 10 whose debut album was released prior to 2004: Tim McGraw. The rest? Carrie Underwood, Taylor Swift (twice), Lady Antebellum, Zac Brown Band, Sugarland, Darius Rucker, Jason Aldean and the Hannah Montana soundtrack.

An optimistic view says country music fans are redefining the notion of who this format's biggest stars are, and awards season certainly drove that point home. Surprise CMA wins by Swift, Lady A and Sugarland were punctuated by Swift's win as AMA Artist of the Year and a huge all-genre Breakthrough Artist nod for Gloriana. Aldean, of course, has the year's top single (see page 15) with "She's Country" and arguably the song of the summer with "Big Green Tractor," while ZBB and Rucker have logged three chart-toppers each. With powerhouse performers like Kenny Chesney and Keith





PLUG & PLAY **DAYPARTS**

Long-rumored changes at Clear Channel began Inauguration Day (Jan. 20) with hundreds of layoffs that were explained the next day in an internal memo from CEO John Hogan. "From widely distributed, highly decentralized assets to strategically centralized, consistent local execution," Hogan said of the company's plans. The programming upshot of that philosophy became clear in May as the company rolled out its Premium Choice initiative promising to "improve quality in all dayparts."

In some ways the next logical step after voicetracking, Premium Choice broke ground in providing a menu of centrally produced airshifts and music to the company's programmers. These were implemented not just in small markets and away from prime daytime slots, but across whole stations and in markets including St. Louis and San Diego.

And while Premium Choice was the broadest and most visible manifestation of this ongoing shift, group-sanctioned syndicated weekday programming was also being employed at Cumulus. Aligning with Westwood One for CMT Radio Live with Cody Alan in 60+ markets and rolling out the newly launched Tony and Kris in the Morning show, Cumulus' non-exclusive approach contrasted with Clear Channel's company-centric efforts. Citadel's GAC Nights: Live From Nashville couldn't gain traction and was shuttered late in the year, but the trend toward syndicated dayparts seems to be gaining momentum nevertheless.



Less than three years from its purchase of Radio & Records, Nielsen abruptly shuttered the 36-year-old trade publication June 3, leaving more than 40 staffers unemployed. Created by former KDAY/Los Angeles PD Bob Wilson in October 1973, R&R was built on Wilson's passion for radio and structured around editors who were in many respects advocates for their formats. At its peak, the company employed more than 100 and was a weekly must-read. Wilson sold R&R to Harte Hanks in 1979, with Westwood One and Perry Capital also acquiring it before Nielsen's purchase in August 2006.

'Given the consolidation of the radio and music industries, Nielsen Business Media has determined that the best way to leverage its assets and resources in support of these and events that comprised the industries from which R&R took its name. And if R&R's named Murdoch could be an earthquake. Hey, we report. You decide.

Roy Butler Deano Day **Hal Durham** Tom McEntee Vern Gosdin Elma Greer Jon Hager Dene Hallam **Greg Hilton** Loretta Johnson **Buzz Ledford** Hank Locklin Randall "Poodie" Locke **Noel McFarland Gene Michaels** Les Paul Danny Petraitis Billy Powell Dan Seals Tom Severino

REST WELL, R&R

industries is to consolidate its music brands," Nielsen SVP Gerry Byrne said of the move. It was an unceremonious conclusion to a three-decade chronicle of the people closing rattled the industry, the rumored forthcoming sale of Billboard to someone

Volume 4, Issue 4, December 2009 COUNTRY RCHECK Suite 205, Nashville, TN 37212

615-320-1450

Publisher/CFO: Lon Helton lon@countryaircheck.com

VP/Editorial: Chuck Alv chuck@countryaircheck.com

VP/Sales & Marketing: Mary Forest Findley maryforest@countryaircheck.com

VP/Operations: Jeff Greer jeff@countryaircheck.com

Associate Editor: Erin Duvall erin@countryaircheck.com

Coordinator/Graphics & Administration: Kelley Keith kelley@countryaircheck.com

Coordinator/Graphic Design: Mike Page mike@countryaircheck.com

Shelby Singleton

Penny Allegood Smith

John Sturdivant

Ann Tant

W. Robert "Bob" Thompson

Additional Design: Chris Allen Jerry Holthouse





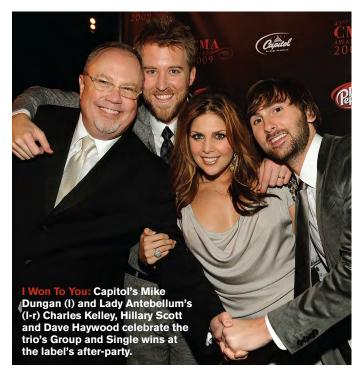
ountry music's budding romance with a new generation of artists seemed to bloom in full at the *43rd Annual CMA Awards*. Taylor Swift became the youngest Entertainer of the Year, while Group Lady Antebellum, Duo Sugarland, New Artist Darius

Rucker, Song writers Jamey Johnson and James Otto (with Lee Thomas Miller) and an explosive performance from Zac Brown Band helped put a fresh, if less familiar, face on the genre. Pictures from the week and the recollections of CMA Broadcast Award winners tell the tale:





Thank The Academy: NARAS President Neil Portnow (I) joins Warner Music/Nashville President John Esposito at the WMGN soiree.





Gator and the StyckMan

Gator Harrison, Greg "StyckMan" Owens Small Market Personality, WGSQ/Cookeville, TN

GH: We're huge fans of country music, and working in our hometown station we just get to play it. But when you're a winner at the CMA Awards, sitting near the artists and industry folks who make this music, for the first time you really get to



feel like you're a part of something you're passionate about.

SM: To come each day to do what you love and make an idiot of myself, which is what I do, and then get an award for it? That's crazy.

GH: Mid-show, Clay Walker says,

"Hey, Gator! Just want to tell you, 'Congratulations." I'm sitting there going, "Clay Walker knows who I am?" You're thinking, "Oh, hey, there's Brooks & Dunn. Rodney Atkins is in front of me. Lady Antebellum just won, and they're sitting next to me. What the crap am I doing here?" Everyone at CMA does such a great job making the radio geeks feel like we're celebrities, too. SM: Two years ago I got to pee with Bill Anderson on my left and Randy Travis on my right. They must have had security a little tighter this year. Backstage, Carrie Underwood went by and said, "Congratulations, guys." I'd like to clarify that she is, in fact, that hot in person.

GH: And for Kix Brooks to reach his hand out and go, "Hey, congratulations," means a lot. Of all his accomplishments, you can tell he has an appreciation and now an understanding of being a radio guy.



Jack Ryan Medium Market Personality, WIVK/Knoxville

"For a night guy to beat all these morning shows after being nominated five years in a row, I was beginning to think, 'This may not happen.'

You're walking around, seeing the biggest names in country music and the business. Sitting across from Reba during the







Remote Access: KFRG/Riverside staffers grab a photo with Tim McGraw at the Premiere Radio remotes. Pictured (I-r) are morning co-host Tommy Carrera, McGraw, morning co-host Scott Ward and producer "JB" Brandon Castillo.









I'mma Let You Finish: Carrie Underwood, Little Jimmy Dickens (c) and Brad Paisley debate the Video award.



interviews, I actually got nervous. It was neat to see cool showcases like Jessica Harp, The Band Perry and 15-year-old Tyler Dickerson. It's been surreal: Walking the red carpet, being onstage and backstage, having my three seconds on national TV, seeing your name on the TelePrompTer being read by Love And Theft. And Lady Antebellum's sitting behind us! And they're congratulating me! It's going to be hard to go home after this week. How can you top this?"

Jim, Deb & Kevin

Jim Denny, Deborah Honeycutt, Kevin Freeman Large Market Personality, WFMS/Indianapolis

- **KF**: This year, Deb was Twittering and taking pictures, so our listeners were able to be a part of the show more than ever before.
- **DH:** They were able to "see" from our perspective. Rodney Atkins is right behind us, and there's Brooks & Dunn, Clay Walker, George Strait, Keith and Nicole. Keith had what looked like slippers with a skull and



crossbones on them. It was neat to get a closer view of what people wear, so our listeners were able to almost feel like they were right there, too. The stars were texting as well, snapping photos; we were all doing it.

- JD: Backstage you can always tell the DJs, as there's never a moment of silence!
- **KF**: And they all laugh at their own jokes. Of course, there's that young upstart DJ known as, what, Kix Brooks? We were showing him how to hang with the DJs.
- JD: I said, "Hey, you've come over to the dark side." It was neat having him back there with us.
- **KF**: As we checked out, Deb pointed out that I didn't have my trophy with me. I had left it in the hotel room! So we had to go back down to the front desk and have a new key made so I could back and get it.
- JD: Ten years ago, I was keeping a CMA award at home for someone, and stood in front of the mirror and practiced with it. I know it sounds silly, but that's how much it meant.
- **DH:** I took mine out at the hotel and put it on the fridge. I ran my thumb across our names etched in the glass, and thought, "That's pretty cool."
- JD: We're standing in line at a cash bar. Justin Moore is right behind me, and says, "Oh, I left my money back in the room." I said, "Well, I'll buy you a beer." I then realized all I had was a twenty, but I'd already offered. He said, "No, no." I said, "Go ahead. Someday you'll be a superstar and you'll have a boat in my driveway." He took it, and was very appreciative, too.

The Cornbread Morning Show

Cornbread, Pat James, Producer Annie (Henson), Father Harry (Harry Schroeder), and 'Captain Mac' (Mac Douglas) Major Market Personality, WIL/St. Louis

CB: It all seems like a dream.

PJ: A lot of people think we get to go backstage and do all this fun stuff all the time, but we really don't because we're giving that stuff away to our listeners all the time.



It's kind of nice to get treated like a celebrity.

AH: We actually had better

- seats than Brooks & Dunn and Rascal Flatts.
- **CB:** Our management set up a great surprise party at John Rich's bar downtown. We walk

in and Gretchen Wilson's handing us a beer. Justin Moore was there and so was St. Louis Cardinals trainer Barry Weinberg, who loves country. We were late because we stopped for a pork chop in Paducah, and missed John by five minutes. Our MD Danny Montana scored tickets to Taylor Swift's classy after-party, which had the most incredible risotto.

AH: I preferred the cheesecake pops.

PJ: I preferred the free booze.

- **CB:** But nothing can beat the actual CMAs. In an interview that day, I gave Brad Paisley an idea to pull a Kanye on Taylor Swift. I don't know if he stole the idea, but it was good! When Taylor thanked everyone for not coming up onstage, the thought crossed my mind to run up there, but my wife grabbed me.
- PJ: I'm keeping my award in the bathroom.
- **CB:** You know that pointy top? No disrespect, but a roll of toilet paper fits right on that puppy just perfect.
- **AH:** It says, "Property of the CMA," so if I were to lose it at a garage sale, I know where to go get it because it reverts back to them or my family.
- **CB**: We liked hearing ourselves mentioned because we had like 18 names to recognize.
- AH: They said them twice, so the slide was up there forever. CB: Next time, we're going to make up five new members of the morning show with long Italian names so we'll get about a half-hour of airtime. We've won for Medium and Major Market, so we're moving to Paducah to try to win for Small Market next.



CMA QUOTE BOOK

"I have such a gratefulness for the people who have been open-minded toward me."

-TAYLOR SWIFT, backstage

"We both thought they were going to get it."

-JENNIFER NETTLES on Sugarland's Duo win over Brooks & Dunn

"I never thought y'all would let me even come to stuff like this."

-JAMEY JOHNSON accepting Song of the Year "This is a record I made with my heart. I would have made it in my basement."

-DARIUS RUCKER, backstage

"And how were we?
We were awesome."
-CARRIE UNDERWOOD on

hosting with Paislev

"I could not believe they went for it."

-BRAD PAISLEY on pitching the idea of Little Jimmy Dickens' Kanye moment to CMA show producers "I'm just excited to be at the CMA Awards. Aren't you excited to be at the CMA Awards tonight?"

-SWIFT deflecting a press room question about the evening's Kanye West jokes

"They all know how to entertain."

-BARBARA MANDRELL on country's female artists

"And a child shall lead them."
-BRAD PAISLEY, backstage,
on Swift's big night

Kix Brooks

American Country Countdown, National Personality

As a huge fan of all the radio guys, this was very humbling for me. That sounds like something I would say, but



it's something I really mean, especially trying in a short time to get a handle on the things they do that make listeners so comfortable and enjoy the music. It's such an art form. I was really nervous – nobody appreciates more how good

they are and how much I can learn from them, and it was a treat getting to share the stage with them. And I'm so proud of the people at *ACC*. As artists, we're the ultimate country fans. The joy of being in the country community is hearing those stories, being backstage, going to parties with George and Reba, and then to get to go on the radio and say, "You won't believe what happened this week!"

WKSF/Asheville, NC

Small Market Station

"In my 17 years of Country, I'd never been to the CMA Awards," says PD Jeff Davis. "CMA treated us magnifi-



cently: To be in the sixth row instead of on the couch, I thought, 'Is this really where we're supposed to be sitting?' Seeing our station on-screen was overwhelming, after years of hard work at Kiss Country and sister WWNC, which goes

back to 1927. Those guys preceding us laid the foundation; it's their award as much as ours. Leaving the Palm, we ran into Phil Vassar. My wife's a big fan, and if I hadn't stopped him to get a picture, I'd be in divorce court now. Our staff will be fighting to take this award home and sleep with it under their pillow."

KUZZ/Bakersfield

Medium Market Station

"This is the first award we've won since Buck passed away, so this one really means a lot," says CEO/GM Mel



Owens. "It was a great show, and the CMA takes such good care of you. We enjoyed the post-Awards party, where Jonathan Singleton was very good. This is our third award [1998, 2002], and they're kept in a lobby display case

so visitors can see them. On the plane, when asked why were going to Nashville, my wife mentioned that we won Station of the Year, and everybody around us turned around, said congratulations and got pretty excited for us. We have such a wonderful staff – they work very hard, and we were so excited about winning. This one was for Buck."

KYGO/Denver

Major Market Station

"I don't want to recover from it," says PD Joel Burke.
"For the first time, the radio winners were brought



onstage individually. We're backstage, and when I heard Love And Theft introduce us, I just kept thinking, 'Keep it together, man.' When they announced the radio winners, the first text I got was from Dierks Bentley: 'Hey, dude,

saw you on television. Congratulations – well-deserved.' And for the next 10 minutes we texted back and forth; it's very surreal. KYGO is coming up on its 30th year, and this was one of the greatest weeks in the history of the station. [With the 2009 Marconi and third Station CMA], we're at a level of momentum I don't ever recall us having in my nine years here."

WUBE/Cincinnati

Large Market Station

"Our three young daughters are fanatic Taylor Swift fans," says VP/GM Mike Fredrick, "and we got great pictures with



her. My wife Nicole, a Girl Scout leader for our two oldest, asked Taylor if she'd been a Girl Scout. Taylor said, 'Oh, yeah, and my mom was a troop leader.' Nicole got to talk with Taylor's mom and recognize her on the incredible role model Taylor's been to

young women. It was the thrill of a lifetime to be among other great stations and the stars we play every day. But I'm just the front man accepting for the team that's done such an outstanding job. I wish I could've brought 'em all with me because they're really the ones who earned and deserved it."









Write On The Money: BMI honored songwriters at its annual awards dinner the night before the CMAs. Pictured (I-r) are BMI Pres./CEO Del Bryant, Icon honoree Kris Kristofferson, Song of the Year winner Taylor Swift, Songwriter of the Year winner **Bobby Pinson and** BMI VP/Writer-**Publisher Relations** Jody Williams.





Capitol

ARISTA

BIANS BNA RECORDS LABER

Mercury
NUNIVERSAL MUSIC COMPAN

RECORDS 5.9%

MCA NASHVILLE 5.6%

BIGGER PICTURE 5.3%

CURB 5.1%

Lyric Stree

1 (tie)



LABELSEYEAR

fter three years at No. 2, Capitol/Nashville's promotion staff hasn't simply cracked through the glass ceiling, they've exploded through to claim their second Label of the Year distinction in the 12-year Mediabase chart era. Having the top overall performer, Keith Urban, is the cornerstone. Urban is also the year's top male artist, followed by Dierks Bentley at No. 2 and Darius Rucker at No. 6. Lady Antebellum are the No. 3 duo or group. Add in Trace Adkins and Luke Bryan, and Capitol boasts five of the year's top 10 records and 15 of the top 100. In sum, the label earned an astounding 17.4% chart share, besting the second place label by more than six percentage points and setting a new Mediabase record. Country Aircheck sat down with Capitol President/CEO Mike Dungan and SVP/Promotion Steve Hodges to discuss the dominating performance.

CA: You've been building toward this, but it all came together this year, didn't it?

Mike Dungan: Well, it's definitely the year that Lady Antebellum and Darius Rucker were realized. We had high hopes for them the prior year, and we actually had music out there that was received pretty well. But this year, we definitely got the feeling that everything these two artists touched was gold, and it was. For Darius to have three No. 1 singles right out of the chute – we couldn't have ever predicted that as even a

possibility under the best of circumstances. And Lady Antebellum were just everybody's darling.

You had a significant transition with SVP/Promotion Jimmy Harnen leaving May 1, but you didn't miss a beat.

MD: No, and it's probably the thing that I'm most proud of. I'm sure Steve is humbly proud of it, but won't want to bang his own drum. But we didn't miss a beat. You know, to the largest extent, this is a team that was put together jointly by Jimmy and Steve, so the transition wasn't as brutal or as stark as one might imagine. But I wondered how Steve would handle it. There are a lot of different personalities on this staff, let's put it that way.

Steve Hodges: It also helps make us successful. **MD:** We are drawn to a diverse roster. One artist is dramatically different from the other. There's nobody on this roster that competes with anybody else on this roster. And in our promotion staff, we have the same kind of personalities. I remember when we hired [West Coast Regional Mike] Krinik [soon-to-be KBWF/San Francisco PD], there was concern about him being known as one of the wild guys from radio. Jimmy, Steve and I sat around one night and decided having "a" Krinik on the staff could be the best thing we could ever do. It's never bad to have one guy that you might occasionally have to bail out of jail. Everyone brings a different talent, a different special quality that makes them go. And everybody can learn from that. You get the organizers, and those who are disorganized can watch and learn from that. You get the sweet one, and those who are cranky and pushy will learn how to work with sweetness. You get the cranky one, and those who are sweet will learn how to be occasionally cranky. And you get the wild one, and I think it makes the staff better.

SH: They definitely feed off each other. Conference calls are fun. Five, six different ideas flying around become

one great one. Kudos to all of them, that they realize their importance on the staff. It's a team, there's no other way to go about it. We can't miss one of them, and they know that they can't miss one of us. It's 24/7.

What was your biggest triumph at radio this year? SH: The wild card was probably Dierks' "Sideways" because we didn't have a whole lot of success at retail and people didn't really think it was a big hit.

It researched pretty well and sounded so great on the air that it just kind of took on a life of its own. We got to that No. 1 battle and won by a very few points and very small audience. But it was Saturday and Sunday night at 11:59pm watching real-time, going to bed with your fingers and toes crossed hoping that when you wake up at 5am you'll see the numbers. And we got the nod.

MD: There are two others that we were almost there on. We've always known Luke Bryan to be a star, and we kind of fumbled on our second single from the first record. This year he's got a No. 2 record. If the damn Lady Antebellum record would get out of the way, we would have a shot at No. 1. The other is Eric Church. We had enormous sales success without really a hit record last go-round. "Love Your Love The Most" not only worked, but worked really well for a lot of radio people.

SH: Eric had a show booked in Milwaukee that started out in an 800-seat club, and they sold it out. We moved it to a 1,800-seater and sold it out. [WMIL PD] Kerry Wolfe went to the show and we started getting texts about how great it was. He didn't get [Eric] early on, but now he does and will add every Eric Church record out-of-the-box. if not early.

MD: Kerry sent me a text message that said, "This is honestly Garth-like, in a different way. And the guy's on a damn stool, for God's sake. There's as much energy, electricity and interaction with the fans as when Garth was up there."

What were the disappointments?

MD: No question, Emily West. Just a massive, massive star. She's been on this label almost five years, which is torturous for any one artist to have to sit still for that long. We have invested a lot of emotional and personal sweat equity into this one, and so has she. One of these days we're going to break it. We know how tough it is to break females in general, and this one in particular really, really hurts.

How do your artists approach working with radio?

RECORDS NASHVILLE

MD: Honestly, that's one of the things that makes our jobs so easy to come to. One hundred percent of our artists are good to work with. And we've had a few go the other way over the years. They come in different forms, from the openly gregarious Darius and Lady A to the shyness of Keith Urban to what appears to be the grumpiness of Trace Adkins. They're all really goodhearted, decent, committed, dedicated people. [Former Arista Nashville colleague] Tim DuBois used to say, "There's way too much talent to work with assholes." **SH:** When we put together the first radio tour, Darius wanted to go to every station. That's 155 just to hit the reporters. He said, "Well, let's try." Keith Urban still goes to the CMA radio remotes. He knows and is still very appreciative. I can't name one artist on our roster who doesn't realize that radio plays a huge part in their success. MD: Last year, we had that thing at Dierks' piece of land. SH: He had a new album, but more than anything he wanted to thank the people that put him there. MD: We had virtually nothing to do with that except helping him coordinate invites. He did it all. And I don't mean his staff. Dierks was out there that day on a 4x4 stringing lights; he literally did it all.

Passing 17% market share is pretty remarkable.

MD: Well, yeah, I can't say enough about Steve and [VP/

Promotion] Shane [Allen] and the way they've run this whole thing. It hurt when Jimmy left. He was walking around the hall singing that "Where Are You Now" song all the time; it got to be pretty annoying after awhile.

What does this success say about Capitol's commitment to radio?

MD: I told the promotions staff that was here when I came in, "Look, I've done what you've done. I know how tough it is to take 'No.' And I know how many reasons there are

not to play a record." We're very attuned to radio's needs. There are things that happen that don't even really upset me the way that they would a normal person. Because I understand the kind of pressure that radio guy's under. It's like, "Okay. We'll get him on

another one tomorrow."

SH: We don't hold grudges and it's usually not the last record you're going to ask them to play.

MD: It's all about win-win. We don't hold grudges because it just tears you up inside. It takes too long and you beat yourself up when you do that. Although

CAC

there are a few guys...





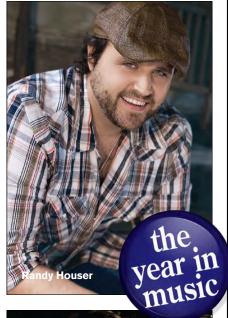


		1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1			AVII.	
JASON ALDEAN	She's Country	(BBR)	5 1	RASCAL FLATTS	Here	(Lyric Street)
ZAC BROWN BAND	Whatever It Is	(Atlantic/Home Grown/BPP)	52	ALAN JACKSON	Sissy's Song	(Arista)
B DARIUS RUCKER	It Won't Be Like This For	(Capitol)	53	ZAC BROWN BAND	Toes	(Atlantic/Home Grown/BPP)
4 KEITH URBAN	Sweet Thing	(Capitol)	54	JACK INGRAM	Barefoot And Crazy	(Big Machine)
5 TOBY KEITH	God Love Her	(Show Dog)	55	JAMEY JOHNSON	In Color	(Mercury)
6 DIERKS BENTLEY	Sideways	(Capitol)	56	MARTINA MCBRIDE	Ride	(RCA)
7 LADY ANTEBELLUM	I Run To You	(Capitol)	57	LOST TRAILERS	How 'Bout You Don't	(BNA)
RODNEY ATKINS	It's America	(Curb)	58	TOBY KEITH	Lost You Anyway	(Show Dog)
9 DIERKS BENTLEY	Feel That Fire	(Capitol)	59	DAVID NAIL	Red Light	(MCA)
ZAC BROWN BAND	Chicken Fried	(Atlantic/Home Grown/BPP)	60	LEE ANN WOMACK	Last Call	(MCA)
1 1 BRAD PAISLEY	Then	(Arista)	61	LUKE BRYAN	Do I	(Capitol)
1 2 BILLY CURRINGTON	People Are Crazy	(Mercury)	62	REBA	Strange	(Starstruck/Valory)
1 S BROOKS & DUNN f/REBA	Cowgirls Don't Cry	(Arista)	63	KENNY CHESNEY f/D. MATTHEWS	I'm Alive	(BNA)
1 4 GEORGE STRAIT	River Of Love	(MCA)	64	TIM MCGRAW	Let It Go	(Curb)
1 5 DARIUS RUCKER	Alright	(Capitol)	65	CRAIG MORGAN	Bonfire	(BNA)
1 6 JAKE OWEN	Don't Think I Can't Love	(RCA)	66	LADY ANTEBELLUM	Lookin' For A Good Time	(Capitol)
1 7 RANDY HOUSER	Boots On	(Universal South)	67	CARRIE UNDERWOOD	Cowboy Casanova	(19/Arista)
1 🖴 KEITH URBAN	Kiss A Girl	(Capitol)	68	JIMMY WAYNE	I Will	(Valory)
19 SUGARLAND	It Happens	(Mercury)	69	LADY ANTEBELLUM	Need You Now	(Capitol)
Z. KENNY CHESNEY	Out Last Night	(BNA)	70	JOHN RICH	Shuttin' Detroit Down	(Warner Bros.)
2 1 KENNY CHESNEY f/M. MCANALLY	Down The Road	(BNA)	71	PAT GREEN	Let Me	(BNA)
22 TAYLOR SWIFT	You Belong With Me	(Big Machine)	72	JACK INGRAM	That's A Man	(Big Machine)
28 BLAKE SHELTON	She Wouldn't Be Gone	(Warner Bros.)	73	TRACE ADKINS	All I Ask For Anymore	(Capitol)
24 JUSTIN MOORE	Small Town USA	(Valory)	74	TRACE ADKINS	Marry For Money	(Capitol)
25 BILLY CURRINGTON	Don't	(Mercury)	75	RANDY HOUSER	Anything Goes	(Universal South)
26 JASON ALDEAN	Big Green Tractor	(BBR)	76	TAYLOR SWIFT	Fifteen	(Big Machine)
27 RASCAL FLATTS	Here Comes Goodbye	(Lyric Street)	77	CRAIG MORGAN	Love Remembers	(BNA)
28 ALAN JACKSON	Country Boy	(Arista)	78	MIRANDA LAMBERT	More Like Her	(Columbia)
29 CARRIE UNDERWOOD	I Told You So	(19/Arista)	79	MARTINA MCBRIDE	I Just Call You Mine	(RCA)
TAYLOR SWIFT	White Horse	(Big Machine)	80	REBA	Consider Me Gone	(Starstruck/Valory)
S 1 BLAKE SHELTON	I'll Just Hold On	(Warner Bros.)		DIERKS BENTLEY	I Wanna Make You Close	(Capitol)
3 2 MONTGOMERY GENTRY	Roll With Me	(Columbia)	82	TIM MCGRAW	It's A Business Doing	(Curb)
33 MONTGOMERY GENTRY	One In Every Crowd	(Columbia)	83	JOSH TURNER	Everything Is Fine	(MCA)
34 CHRIS YOUNG	Gettin' You Home (The	(RCA)		BROOKS & DUNN	Honky Tonk Stomp	(Arista)
35 RASCAL FLATTS	Summer Nights	(Lyric Street)		BROOKS & DUNN	Indian Summer	(Arista)
36 GEORGE STRAIT	Living For The Night	(MCA)	86	RODNEY ATKINS	15 Minutes	(Curb)
37 KELLIE PICKLER	Best Days Of Your Life	(19/BNA)		JOE NICHOLS	Believers	(Universal South)
38 SUGARLAND	Already Gone	(Mercury)		MILEY CYRUS	The Climb	(WDR/Hollywood)
39 TOBY KEITH	American Ride	(Show Dog)		JAKE OWEN	Eight Second Ride	(RCA)
40 BRAD PAISLEY	Welcome To The Future	(Arista)		DEAN BRODY	Brothers	(BBR)
4 1 KEITH URBAN	Only You Can Love Me	(Capitol)		SUGARLAND	Joey	(Mercury)
42 ERIC CHURCH	Love Your Love The Most	(Capitol)	92	BUCKY COVINGTON	I'll Walk	(Lyric Street)
43 TAYLOR SWIFT	Love Story	(Big Machine)		JASON MICHAEL CARROLL	Hurry Home	(Arista)
44 DARRYL WORLEY	Sounds Like Life To Me	(Stroudavarious)		TIM MCGRAW	Southern Voice	(Curb)
45 LOVE AND THEFT	Runaway	(Carolwood/Lyric Street)		DARIUS RUCKER	History In The Making	(Capitol)
46 ELI YOUNG BAND	Always The Love Songs	(Republic/Universal South)		BOMSHEL	Fight Like A Girl	(Curb)
47 TIM MCGRAW	Nothin' To Die For	(Curb)		MIRANDA LAMBERT	White Liar	(Columbia)
48 JASON MICHAEL CARROLL	Where I'm From	(Arista)		MONTGOMERY GENTRY	Long Line Of Losers	(Columbia)
49 BRAD PAISLEY & KEITH URBAN	Start A Band	(Arista)		GARY ALLAN	She's So California	(MCA)
50 GLORIANA	Wild At Heart	(Emblem/Warner Bros./BPP)	100	HEIDI NEWFIELD	Cry Cry (Til' The Sun)	(Curb)



TOP 15 0F 2009









	Autica	Title	Label	Peak Position (wks. at No.1)	Peak Date	Wks. on Chart	2009 Rank
I ♣	Artist TRACE ADKINS	Marry For Money	(Capitol)	(WKS. at NO.1)	4/13/09	17	74
	TRACE ADKINS	All I Ask For Anymore	(Capitol)	13	11/9/09	27	73
	JASON ALDEAN	She's Country	(BBR)	1 (2)	5/4/09	25	1
$ \mathbf{A} $	JASON ALDEAN	Big Green Tractor	(BBR)	1 (4)	9/14/09	19	26
	JASON ALDEAN RODNEY ATKINS	The Truth It's America	(BBR) (Curb)	15 2	11/16/09 4/27/09	8 25	8
	DIERKS BENTLEY			1 (1)	2/9/09	14	9
	DIERKS BENTLEY	Feel That Fire Sideways	(Capitol) (Capitol)	1 (1) 1 (1)	2/9/09 7/6/09	14 21	6
	DIERKS BENTLEY	I Wanna Make You Close	(Capitol)	8	11/16/09	16	81
В	BROOKS & DUNN f/REBA	Cowgirls Don't Cry	(Arista)	2	3/16/09	18	13
	BROOKS & DUNN Brooks & Dunn	Indian Summer Honky Tonk Stomp	(Arista) (Arista)	15 15	8/3/09 10/26/09	14 12	85 84
	LUKE BRYAN	Do I	(Capitol)	3	11/16/09	29	61
	IACON MICHAEL CARROLL	Where I'm From		10	E/0E/00	91	40
	JASON MICHAEL CARROLL KENNY CHESNEY f/M. MCANALLY	Down The Road	(Arista) (Blue Chair/BNA)	10 1 (1)	5/25/09 2/17/09	31 15	48 21
	KENNY CHESNEY	Out Last Night	(BNA)	1 (2)	6/22/09	15	20
c	KENNY CHESNEY f/D. MATTHEWS	I'm Alive	(BNA)	6	11/16/09	16	63
-	ERIC CHURCH BUCKY COVINGTON	Love Your Love The Most I'll Walk	(Capitol) (Lyric Street)	8 15	10/5/09 11/24/08	33	42 92
	BILLY CURRINGTON	Don't	(Mercury)	1	1/20/09	12	25
	BILLY CURRINGTON	People Are Crazy	(Mercury)	1	7/27/09	22	12
E	ELI YOUNG BAND	Always The Love Songs	(Republic/Universal South)	10	5/18/09	28	46
	GLORIANA	Wild At Heart	(Emblem/Warner Bros./BPP)	13	8/3/09	30	50
G	PAT GREEN	Let Me	(BNA)	12	2/2/09	13	71
Н	RANDY HOUSER	Boots On	(Universal South)	3	8/31/09	29	17
⊢							
	JACK INGRAM JACK INGRAM	That's A Man Barefoot And Crazy	(Big Machine) (Big Machine)	15 8	2/23/09 8/31/09	18 23	72 54
		<u> </u>					
_	ALAN JACKSON	Country Boy	(Arista)	2	1/20/09	12 20	28 52
J	ALAN JACKSON Jamey Johnson	Sissy's Song In Color	(Arista) (Mercury)	9 7	6/8/09 12/8/08	20 8	52 55
	TOBY KEITH	God Love Her	(Show Dog)	<u> </u>	2/23/09	16	5
K		God Love Her Lost You Anyway	(Show Dog) (Show Dog)	1 (1) 8	2/23/09 7/6/09	16 17	5 58
	TOBY KEITH	American Ride	(Show Dog)	1 (2)	10/5/09	16	39
	LADY ANTEBELLUM	Lookin' For A Good Time	(Capitol)	12	12/15/08	7	66
	LADY ANTEBELLUM	I Run To You	(Capitol)	1 (1)	7/13/09	26	7
ᆫ	LADY ANTEBELLUM	Need You Now	(Capitol)	1 (1)	11/16/09	13	69
	MIRANDA LAMBERT LOVE AND THEFT	White Liar Runaway	(Columbia) (Carolwood/Lyric Street)	12 10	11/16/09 11/16/09	12 35	97 45
	MARTINA MCBRIDE	Ride	(RCA)	10	4/13/09	23	56
	TIM MCGRAW	Let It Go	(RCA) (Curb)	2	12/8/08	6	64
	TIM MCGRAW	Nothin' To Die For	(Curb)	5	4/20/09	17	47
	TIM MCGRAW	It's A Business Doing	(Curb)	11	8/24/09	12	82
М	TIM MCGRAW MONTGOMERY GENTRY	Southern Voice	(Curb) (Columbia)	11	11/16/09	9 7	94 32
• •	MONTGOMERY GENTRY	Roll With Me One In Every Crowd	(Columbia)	1 (2) 6	12/15/08 6/8/09	20	33
\	JUSTIN MOORE	Small Town USA	(Valory)	1 (1)	9/21/09	34	24
	CRAIG MORGAN	Love Remembers	(BNA)	8	12/1/08	6	77
	CRAIG MORGAN	Bonfire	(BNA)	4	11/16/09	24	65
N	DAVID NAIL	Red Light	(MCA)	2	11/16/09	35	59
	JAKE OWEN	Don't Think I Can't Love You	(RCA)	2	4/13/09	23	16
	BRAD PAISLEY & KEITH URBAN	Start A Band	(Arista)	1 (1)	1/12/09	10	49
P	BRAD PAISLEY	Then	(Arista)	1 (3)	6/8/09	14	11
	BRAD PAISLEY KELLIE PICKLER	Welcome To The Future Best Days Of Your Life	(Arista) (19/BNA)	1 (1) 8	11/2/09 8/3/09	20 33	40 37
		<u> </u>					
	RASCAL FLATTS	Here	(Lyric Street)	2	1/5/09	8	51 27
	RASCAL FLATTS RASCAL FLATTS	Here Comes Goodbye Summer Nights	(Lyric Street) (Lyric Street)	1 (2) 2	4/20/09 8/31/09	15 18	27 35
	REBA	Strange	(Starstruck/Valory)	10	7/27/09	18	62
R	REBA	Consider Me Gone	(Starstruck/Valory)	5	11/16/09	14	80
	JOHN RICH	Shuttin' Detroit Down	(Warner Bros.)	12	4/6/09	11	70
	DARIUS RUCKER DARIUS RUCKER	It Won't Be Like This For Long Alright	(Capitol) (Capitol)	1 (2) 1 (1)	3/23/09 8/3/09	20 18	3 15
	DARIUS RUCKER	History In The Making	(Capitol)	13	11/16/09	10	95
	BLAKE SHELTON	She Wouldn't Be Gone	(Warner Bros.)	1 (2)	2/2/09	13	23
	BLAKE SHELTON	I'll Just Hold On	(Warner Bros.)	6	9/14/09	31	31
	GEORGE STRAIT	River Of Love	(MCA)	1 (1)	4/6/09	22	14
	GEORGE STRAIT SUGARLAND	Living For The Night	(MCA)	2	9/14/09	18	36
S	SUGARLAND SUGARLAND	Already Gone It Happens	(Mercury) (Mercury)	1 (1) 1 (1)	1/5/09 5/18/09	9 15	38 19
	TAYLOR SWIFT	Love Story	(Big Machine)	3	11/24/08	2	43
	TAYLOR SWIFT	White Horse	(Big Machine)	1 (1)	3/30/09	20	30
	TAYLOR SWIFT TAYLOR SWIFT	You Belong With Me	(Big Machine)	1 (2) 7	8/17/09 11/16/09	20 12	22 76
		Fifteen	(Big Machine)				
	CARRIE UNDERWOOD CARRIE UNDERWOOD	I Told You So	(19/Arista)	1 (1) 1 (1)	5/11/09 11/9/09	19 11	29 67
١,,	CARRIE UNDERWOOD KEITH URBAN	Cowboy Casanova Sweet Thing	(19/Arista) (Capitol)	1 (1) 1 (2)	11/9/09 3/9/09	11 18	67 4
U	KEITH URBAN	Kiss A Girl	(Capitol)	3	6/15/09	15	18
	KEITH URBAN	Only You Can Love Me This Way	(Capitol)	1 (1)	10/19/09	17	41
	LEE ANN WOMACK	Last Call	(MCA)	11	2/23/09	17	60
W	DARRYL WORLEY	Sounds Like Life To Me	(Stroudavarious)	11	10/5/09	36	44
V		Cottin' Vou Home (The Dist.)	<u> </u>				2/
Y	CHRIS YOUNG	Gettin' You Home (The Black)	(RCA)	1 (1)	10/12/09	34	34
_	ZAC BROWN BAND	Chicken Fried	(Atlantic/Home Grown/BPP)	1 (2)	12/1/08	6	10
Z	ZAC BROWN BAND ZAC BROWN BAND	Whatever It Is Toes	(Atlantic/Home Grown/BPP) (Atlantic/Home Grown/BPP)	1 (1) 1 (1)	6/29/09 10/26/09	25 17	2 53
	ENG BROTTH BAND	1063		י (י)	. 3/20/03		JU



KEITH, ZAC BROWN BAND, TAYLOR, AND RANDY HOUSER TOP 2009 **AIRPLAY**



Eight artists had top 15 hits for the first time in 2009. The list includes three groups, a few songwriters who've penned hits for others and one-half of a hit-making duo who released solo singles this year. And offering further testimony to how hard female artists have it these days (see lead story), no women had their initial top 15 hit this year. Only two artists-Justin Moore and Chris Young-had songs hit No. 1 in 2009.

Eli Young Band

Gloriana

(Emblem/Warner Bros./ Bigger Picture)

> **Randy Houser** (Universal South)

Love And Theft (Carolwood/Lyric Street)

Justin Moore

(Valory)

David Nail

(Mercury)

John Rich

(Warner Bros.)

Chris Young (RCA)

'eith Urban is the new king of Country radio airplay and reigns as 2009's Most-Heard artist and Top Male Performer, breaking Kenny Chesney's three-year run atop both lists. Securing his seat as the year's leading airplay act were three weeks at No. 1 - two with "Sweet Thing" and another with "Only You Can Love Me This Way" - with the No. 1 "Start A Band" duet with Brad Paisley thrown in for good measure. Rounding out Urban's great year was "Kiss A Girl," which peaked at No. 3.

Bursting on the national music scene to produce a stunning 2009 that sees them first on the Duo/Group list and placing an amazing second overall is the Zac Brown Band. "Chicken Fried" hit No. 1 the first two weeks of this chart year (11/24/08), and the guys lit up the charts for another pair of No. 1s, "Whatever It Is" and "Toes."

Taylor Swift dominated the Top Female Performer Category, more than doubling the airplay points garnered by Carrie Underwood. Taylor posted a No. 1 with "Love Story" the last week of the 2008 chart year. She had a pair of No. 1s, topping the charts with "White Horse" for a week and "You Belong With Me" for two weeks. Her current single,

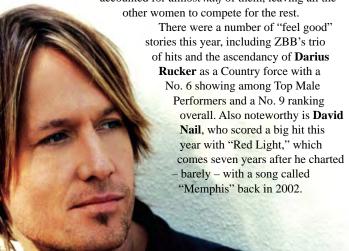
"Fifteen," made it into the top 10 in the 2009 chart year and currently resides inside the top five on this week's Country chart.

Pacing this year's New Artist list is Randy Houser, who managed to get a guest shot on Letterman before his song "Anything Goes" even cracked the top 40 in 2008. Airplay from that song, plus a ton of spins from "Boots On," which peaked at No. 3, along with his current hit "Whistlin' Dixie," propelled him to the top of the 2009 Class.

A total of 204 songs charted in 2009, up from 194 last year, and 190 in 2007. There were 84 songs reaching the top 15, compared to 86 in 2008, 77 in '07 and 84 in '06. Nineteen artists took a total of 34 songs to No. 1. There were 27 No. 1s in 2008, 23 in '07 and 28 chart-toppers in '06. Jason Aldean's "Big Green Tractor" was the only song to grace the top of the charts for four weeks this year, and the only song to spend three weeks on top was Brad Paisley's "Then." Twelve tunes spent two weeks at No. 1.

The plight of getting female artist airplay these days is fairly well documented. To put it in greater perspective, there were a total of 18.3 million airplay points in 2009. Of that, male acts accounted for more than 11.6 million and duos/groups yielded about 4.3 million. Of the 2.4 million airplay points left for female artists, Swift and Underwood together

accounted for almost half of them, leaving all the







Country Radio's **Top 2009 Perfomers**

OVERALL

- Keith Urban (Capitol)
- Zac Brown Band (Atlantic/Home Grown/BPP)
- **Taylor Swift** (Big Machine)
- **Dierks Bentley** (Capitol)
- 5. Rascal Flatts (Lyric Street) **6. Kenny Chesney** (BNA)
- **Brad Paisley** (Arista)
- **Toby Keith** (Show Dog)
- Darius Rucker (Capitol)
- 1 . Jason Aldean (BBR)

MALE

- Keith Urban (Capitol)
- 2. Dierks Bentley (Capitol)
- 3. Kenny Chesney (BNA)
- **Brad Paisley** (Arista) **Toby Keith** (Show Dog)
- Darius Rucker (Capitol)
- **Jason Aldean** (BBR)
- **Billy Currington** (Mercury)
- **George Strait** (MCA)
- 1 □. Blake Shelton (Warner Bros.)

FEMALE

- **Taylor Swift** (Big Machine)
- **Carrie Underwood** (19/Arista)
- Martina McBride (RCA) Kellie Picker (19/BNA)
- Reba (Starstruck/Valory)
- Miranda Lambert (Columbia)
- Lee Ann Womack (MCA) Miley Cyrus (Walt Disney/Lyric Street)
- Sarah Buxton (Lyric Street)
- Heidi Newfield (Curb)

DUO/GROUP

- 1. Zac Brown Band (Atlantic/Home Grown/BPP)
- Rascal Flatts (Lyric Street)
- 3. Lady Antebellum (Capitol)
- **Sugarland** (Mercury)
- **Montgomery Gentry** (Columbia)
- **Brooks & Dunn** (Arista)
- Eli Young Band (Republic/Universal South)
- Love And Theft (Carolwood/Lyric Street)
- **Gloriana** (Emblem/Warner Bros./Bigger Picture)
- **Lost Trailers** (BNA) 10.

NEW ARTIST

- Randy Houser (Universal South)
- **Justin Moore** (Valory)
- **Chris Young** (RCA)
- Eli Young Band (Republic/Universal South)
- Love And Theft (Carolwood/Lyric Street)
- **Gloriana** (Emblem/Warner Bros./Bigger Picture)
- David Nail (MCA)
- John Rich (Warner Bros.) 8.
- 9. **Dean Brody** (BBR)
- **Bomshel** (Curb) □.





year of upheaval, to say the least, is well-chronicled in our Top Stories feature (page 3), but 2009 has so many other tales to tell: the less obvious, the personal, the quiet moments the people who make up these industries will remember the rest of their lives. No less a part of the fabric of this business than the cataclysmic shifts chronicled elsewhere, these memories offer just as much insight into the year we've all passed through. Country Aircheck has collected a tiny sample of these reflections, and we share them with you here.

BRAD PAISLEY

Invited to represent country music at a White House performance, **Brad Paisley** told *Country Countdown USA*'s Lon Helton he worried about performing for the President after becoming emotional while rehearsing a song that includes the line, "They burned a cross in his front yard."

"President Obama's chair was as far away as you are to me ... he was that close. There's something pretty amazing about the fact that within even a lifetime, let alone my young lifetime, that we elected a president of mixed race. Like or hate his politics, that's an achievement for a society. I wanted to sort of celebrate that advancement. So 'Welcome To The Future' is my song about our times. I'm standing there in that room and got to say a couple of things representing country music, and felt like I had a lot on my shoulders that night. I'm looking right at him and something came to mind. What I said to him, which was meant to be 'You better not screw everything up,' was essentially, 'You are the first president my two young sons will remember.'

"With President Obama sitting 10 feet away, the only thing I could think of to get through it was to think about the Cleveland Browns! 'Wow, they're going to stink this year! They're not going to be any good.' I really had to take myself, just for that second, [to] something that had nothing to do with it. Because when I was doing it in rehearsal, I got to the word 'burned' and just clammed up.

"[That evening,] on the outro, when I'm just playing the guitar, I was able to let myself go a little bit and really did soak it in, in a way that I never thought I could. I walked off the stage very emotional about it, because I felt pressure ... pressure to represent country music that night."

ROCCO COSCO BIGGER PICTURE

The home of Bigger Picture rep **Rocco Cosco** was among those destroyed by the tornado that tore through Murfreesboro, TN on Good Friday (4/10). Cosco and his sons were in the house at the time, with Rocco sustaining the most serious injury, a concussion, after the stairway under which he was huddled collapsed. A benefit held at Nashville's Tin Roof six days later raised more than \$17,000 for the family, whose home was a total loss but has since been rebuilt. They moved in the first week of December.

"Reliving it is really difficult," Cosco says of the fateful day. "You try to block it out, and then it all comes back up again. I tell people, 'I wish you could experience it without having to go through it.' The power of the tornado itself is beyond description. I remember everything, and the moment the stairs fell on us was really the end of the tornado, thank goodness, because I don't think we could have survived much more.

"It really hit me the day after, seeing April Rider and Keith Kaufman come up to what used to be my house and helping us try to pull our most valuable possessions out of the rubble, which were really just pictures. We were all overwhelmed by how supportive so many people were.

"The night at the Tin Roof, I was struck by the brotherhood in this industry. Not only working colleagues, but also the friendships beyond those that run so deep. It was just unbelievable, but not really unexpected. It seems like just about everyone would do that for anyone who needed it. People want to help, they want to come to your rescue, and that's incredible.

"What's really amazing is that there were 289 homes destroyed, 500 families displaced and only two fatalities. It really was a Good Friday, compared to what it could have been."

MIKE DUNGAN CAPITOL/NASHVILLE

"The night of the CMA Music Festival that **Darius Rucker** was slated to perform, he really demonstrated to me his enthusiasm, appreciation and sheer joy in being a part of this format. It's the first time he'd played the Music Festival; he wasn't invited before, even though we'd had a hit. And if you remember, that was the night we had the tornado – the threat of the tornado – and everyone had to





MEMORY RAIN

leave. They were shuttled out, there were cars leaving for miles, and those who did stay were out in the concourses. Artists were bailing out left and right.

"We were all with Darius, and it was a pretty wild time because it was pouring down rain. And he said, 'Man, I've waited my whole life to play this. I don't give a damn if there's one person out there, I'm not leaving.' I was almost falling asleep, but he was *not* leaving. And the CMA people were thrilled. By the time Darius came out, he was handicapped by the fact that we had lost two-thirds of the lighting; it had become too dangerous. But it didn't matter to him. Darius put on a hell of a show, and you could tell he was having a blast. It was something that he'd looked forward to, and he was going to enjoy every minute of it. And the crowd responded in a huge way. It was emotional for me just to see a guy who was so happy."

MATT MCALLISTER KNIX/PHOENIX

"It all started in 2006, when I read a blog about these guys in Washington, DC who had just set the Guinness World Record for most t-shirts worn at once by one person. The guy had put on around 121, and I remember thinking I could probably do a little bit better. That year in Santa Barbara, CA, I put on 155, setting a new record.

"We made a YouTube video that now has more than 11 million hits, and the producers of *Live with Regis & Kelly* saw it. This summer they called the station and asked if we'd like to be on an episode featuring people breaking their own records. They flew us out and we spent three or four days in New York. They couldn't have treated us any better. We got to do a lot of stuff, and I ended up on QVC inside an



American Girl store. I have two daughters, and I promised to go to there and buy them some stuff.

"QVC was filming an episode, and as I was walking out with a couple of bags of stuff, one of the producers asked me to go stand in the window to make it look really busy. I called my kids and told them to turn on the channel and they were like, 'Aw, Dad, there you are!' And I held up the bags and said, 'Here are your presents, I got 'em.' That was the coolest experience I had.

"Regis & Kelly was surreal because it was live. The day we were on, so was Eli Manning, my daughter's favorite football player, so I got to tell him that and to tell her I met him. When things started to go wrong with the t-shirts and I knew I wasn't going to last, it was a hard decision because the last thing I want to do is freak anyone out by passing out on live television. We went big and came up a little bit short, but near-death makes for a better story. I am officially retired from the stupid sport of putting on t-shirts."



TOM ENGLISH CLEAR CHANNEL/NASHVILLE

"For me, it was standing with my wife Lisa at BMI watching our 'other daughter' **Bridgette Tatum** get her first No. 1 song recognition for Jason Aldean's 'She's Country.'

"We met Bridgette four years ago through our work on the advisory council of the Charley Foundation, which benefits at-risk children in Middle Tennessee and stages the annual black-tie 'Rumble On The Row: Ringside – A Fight For Kids' boxing match in Nashville. At the time, Bridgette was assistant to Carolyn Miller, who runs the foundation. [Carolyn is now Bridgette's manager, runs her Root 49 publishing company and is a partner in Root 49 Records, Bridgette's label.]

"Four years ago, our daughter and only child, Courtney, had just gone off to college. My wife was in the fetal position for about three months, just looking for something to do after being a stay-at-home mom. We went to the event, Lisa loved it and I said, 'How about if I put you in touch in Carolyn, and you can help with the foundation?' Lisa, Carolyn, Bridgette and I went to lunch one day to talk about it, and that's where we first really got to know them. They're just great people and we wanted to do anything we could to help them.

"One day, Carolyn came in and gave me a CD, and said, 'Put this in.' I played it, and said, 'Wow, who's that?' She said, 'Bridgette.' I said, 'Bridgette who?' She said, 'Our Bridgette!' I went, 'Oh, my God!' I didn't even know until then that she even sang. I fell in love with it ... she's the most real singer that I've heard in a long time.

"Having watched Bridgette work so hard for years and having her first-ever cut go multi-week No. 1 [and become the No. 1 song for 2009 on the Country Aircheck Top 100] was amazing. Now Bridgette is launching her solo career, and I'm sure we will be standing there watching her again and again."



When You Wanna Reach For The Stars, All You Have To Do Is Count To 9 And Look North.

NORTH NORTH RECORDS www.ninenorthrecords.com

Passionate People & Personalized Plans For Established & New Artists

Over 150 Years Of Experience in Radio, Music & Beyond

From the inside & out, it's knowing what radio needs & how your music fits.



WHAT WAS FIRST Q

First-Quarter Music Preview

efore you start making, and breaking, personal and professional New Year's resolutions, we've got a look at what your friendly neighborhood promotion teams have resolved to accomplish in the first three months of 2010. Read on for new artists, singles, albums, comments, pictures and everything!

NINE NORTH

"First quarter 2010 is going to be an exciting one for Nine North," professes Pres. Larry Pareigis. "Through all of fourth quarter we've been setting up the first release from Bridgette Tatum (co-writer of Jason Aldean's 'She's Country'). She is a one-of-akind talent, who brings her grit and fire to '(I Like My) Cowboys Dirty,' the first single from her Root 49/Nine North debut." The single impacts Jan. 25.

Brady Seals wrote and produced his next single, "Been There, Drunk That." It's off his StarCity/Nine North release *Play Time* and impacts Feb. 8. "The Nine North team will be working with GAC, Chrysalis Music and MySpace Music to present the debut single from KingBilly," continues Pareigis. "It's an awesome track called 'Surrender,' co-written by Richard Marx, and Trey Bruce produced. We can't wait to roll those boys out for a Feb. 15 add date! We're also going to be working

Also in the pipeline is the second single from **Carrie Underwood**'s *Play On*. "Already rocketing up the charts, 'Temporary Home' will be one of Country radio's biggest hits of 2010," declares Bishop. "**Brad Paisley**'s 'American Saturday Night' looks like it will be the party song of New Year's Eve! It is one of radio's picks and proving to be another monster song from the reigning CMA and ACM Male Vocalist."

AVERAGE JOES

Promotion head **Tony Morreale** promises a well-above-average start to 2010. "We expect a new **Colt Ford** studio album, *Chicken & Biscuits*, and **Brantley Gilbert**'s second album *My Way* to hit stores by the end of the first quarter." A new single from Brantley is also anticipated.

"Colt has recorded over 25 songs for the *Chicken & Biscuits* album so we're in a period of figuring out what will make the final cut,"



singles in years," promotion head **Bill Macky** begins. "He'll be visiting Country radio in the first quarter, playing music from his debut BamaJam CD, which was produced by James Stroud.

"Be on the lookout for **Blackberry Smoke**," he adds. "They will tour Europe in December, then return to the US for a full slate of dates in 2010." The band's label debut *Little Piece of Dixie* is available now.

BLACK RIVER BRMG will begin 201

BRMG will begin 2010 with new music from Emma Jacob and Sarah Darling. "We had fun introducing both Emma and Sarah to the public in 2009," says VP/GM Rick Baumgartner. "I Don't Want It," the second single from Emma Jacob's album entitled 2,232 Miles, will be released in January.

Darling will release "Whenever It Rains" March 8. The song's video was created by Scottsdale Community College in Phoenix, which won the National Collegiate Video contest hosted by BRMG and CMT.com. "Sarah's songwriting strikes a nerve with her fans, and her new single will bring her to the next level," Baumgartner says.

"Jeff Bates is in the studio working on his new project. A live album is in the works featuring Jeff's signature songs, in addition to new material. There are also new artist signings in the works for BRMG that will make for an incredible first quarter of releases for the imprint."

BNA

The year opens with the unveiling of **Chris Janson** by VP/Promotion **Bryan Frasher** and his staff. "The 23-year-old Missouri native moved to Nashville after high school and immediately got himself a gig playing Tootsie's four shows a day, seven days a week for a year," says Frasher. "The universe this singer/songwriter draws from is summed up best with a line from one of his songs, that says, 'What's wrong with rockers driving pick-ups; Johnny Cash was wearing black before Sid Vicious."

Frasher and his team continue to work Kellie Pickler's "Didn't You Know How Much I loved You" and have a new single from Craig Morgan. The Lost Trailers and Kenny Chesney will each be in the studio working on new music.

CAPITOL

"On the heels of **Luke Bryan**'s highest career-charting song 'Do I' comes the next single 'Rain Is A Good Thing," according to SVP/Promotion **Steve Hodges**. Impact: Jan. 11. The second single from **Lady Antebellum**'s sophomore album *Need You Now* is "American Honey." The single ships Jan. 11 with a Jan. 25 add date, and the album hits stores Jan. 26

"Emily West's powerful new single 'Blue Sky' features Keith Urban: shipping Jan. 26, add date Feb. 8, "continues Hodges. Her album follows in late summer.



with **GrandVista Music** for the first new music in years from **Marty Raybon**, 'Daddy Phone.' Listen once, watch the video, play, get bombarded by calls, repeat. We're heading towards a Feb. 22 impact date.

"The super talented singer/songwriter/
entertainer **Anthony Smith** has his own label,
Krankit, and we'll be working with him to bring
a brand new single to Country radio in first
quarter. 'Love Is Love Is Love' is a tempo bloom
of spring in the middle of a slow, chilly winter!
He'll be on the road to see you soon too, with
one of the Nine North crew along for the ride!"

In the meantime, they're working **Hello Dave**'s "Golden," **Jason Crabb**'s "Somebody
Like Me," **Nathan Lee Jackson**'s "Desperate
Man" and **Darren Kozelsky**'s "Real Superman"
through the first of the year and beyond.

ARISTA

No better way to start the year than with "It's Just That Way," the first single from **Alan Jackson**'s upcoming album, due out in March. "Alan at his finest," says VP/Promotion **Skip Bishop**. "A comfortable, moving love song that has become the signature of his multiple No. 1 hits."

Morreale continues. "There are a couple cool special guests like the last album, but they're secret for now.

"Average Joes is also re-packaging and rereleasing **Matt Stillwell**'s *Shine* album. We had considered going back and recording new tracks, but feel that this is one of those situations where the fans don't know who Matt is, and we've got a really solid album already recorded." They'll be focusing on "Dirt Road Dancing" early in the year.

BBR

The BBR crew is amped up with their newest act **James Wesley**. His first single "Jackson Hole" was recently released to Country radio, and SVP/Promotion **Carson James** tells us it is "already getting great comments."

Sometime in the first quarter there will be a new **Jason Aldean** single. In addition, the imprint will introduce 22-year-old North Carolina native **Blake Wise**, who's in the studio now.

Вама Јам

"Matt Kennon's 'The Call' continues to be one of the most impactful and important

BIG MACHINE

The Machine rolls into 2010 with the fifth single release from **Taylor Swift**'s *Fearless*, "Jump Then Fall," which hits radio after the holidays. Swift kicks off the 2010 leg of her *Fearless* tour in Australia in February, with a second North American trek running through June. According to the label, Country radio will continue to see exclusive promotional opportunities on the second leg of her arena tour.

VP/Promotion Jack Purcell also tells us, "Steel Magnolia's debut single 'Keep On Lovin' You' will be a major focus through Q1, as the duo's debut self-titled album will hit stores on Feb. 9. Joshua Scott Jones & Meghan Linsey are currently wrapping production on their Dann Huff-produced album that includes seven self-penned songs, as well as material written by the likes of Keith Urban, Lori McKenna and Hillary Lindsey. And, Jack Ingram's 'Seeing Stars' continues to win over programmers and listeners alike marketby-market." Ingram's road plans include his solo tour and a main stage run on the Country Throwdown Tour.





WHAT WAS FIRST



0.05

Gretchen Wilson's first album on her **Redneck Records**, in conjunction with CO5, is titled *I Got Your Country Right Here*. It will be in stores March 30.

COLD RIVER

Look for a revamped **Katie Armiger** in 2010. "The new year brings new songs and videos from Katie in the first quarter and a new album to follow," says label head **Pete O'Heeron**. "Katie is wrapping up an incredible year; she launched her first national mall tour, scored a top 10 video on GAC, found time to finish high school and wrote her next album."

COLUMBIA

Columbia starts out the New Year partnering with Sea Gayle Music for Jerrod Neimann's "One More Drinking Song." "Those who have heard this project can understand why Big Red is excited to have Jerrod join our family," explains VP/Promotion Jimmy Rector. Josh Thompson's "Beer On The Table" continues to be a priority for the imprint with his debut album Way Out Here due in early February. Montgomery Gentry's currently untitled album is due out in March; their single "Oughta Be More Songs About That" is still climbing the chart. Miranda Lambert's "White Liar" also continues into 2010. Last, Gretchen Wilson's Greatest Hits album has a January street date.

CURB

"We plan on continuing the success of **Bomshel** and **Lee Brice** for the New Year," VP/Promotion **Adrian Michaels** tells us. "We launched a new **Clay Walker** song, 'She Won't Be Lonely Long,' in early December to set up that release in 2010." **Rodney Atkins**' and **Tim McGraw**'s singles are also priorities in Q1.

DEVIL'S RIVER

"Angel flight is a term commonly used by the military for an air flight which carries a body home to its final resting place," explains promoter **Pamela J. Newman**. "It is also the name of **Radney Foster**'s stunning new single from his current album *Revival*." "Angel Flight" will be released to radio in January and proceeds from the sale of the single benefit the Texas National Guard Family Support Foundation.

GOLDEN

"We could not be happier about the early success of our first release 'Country Livin' from Williams Riley," Nat'l Dir./Promotion Darlene Starr says. "We look forward to continued success and breaking this amazingly talented band in 2010.

"Many of you have already had the pleasure of previewing music from our second artist **Benton Blount**. We are thrilled and overjoyed by your amazing feedback. We look forward to Benton's debut in early 2010."

LOFTON CREEK

New is the theme for **Lofton Creek**'s first quarter. January brings singles from **Soul Circus Cowboys** and **Hoyt Hughes**, followed by **Christopher Michael Johnson** and **Will Peppers** in February. March sees new music from **Kristina Cornell** and **Mark Chesnutt**, in addition to Hughes' debut album.

LYRIC STREET

In January, the Lyric Street team will begin visiting radio with 16-year-old **Tyler Dickerson**. VP/Promotion **Kevin Herring** calls Dickerson a "country music prodigy who was raised on Hank, Merle, Willie and Waylon. Tyler has formed a distinctive outlaw sound that will be exclusive to Country radio. Discovered on the world-famous Tootsie's Orchid Lounge stage at the age of 14, Tyler then stepped into the studio with producer John Rich to capture the magic." His first single hits in February. "Make sure you see Tyler at CRS 41," Herring adds.



Sarah Buxton's debut album will be released in February. "As 'Outside My Window' climbs toward the top 10, Sarah



has been putting finishing touches on the record and is excited for everyone to hear it," Herring says.

"The deep emotion of **Rascal Flatts**' current single 'Why' will carry the band into the beginning of a busy and celebratory 2010," Herring explains. "It's the 10th anniversary of their launch and quick rise on Country radio." The second leg of their *Unstoppable Tour* starts in January.

"Love And Theft delivered the highest-charting debut single for any new act last year with their top 10 hit 'Runaway.' Their new single 'Dancing In Circles' is on fire!" Starting in April, the band hits the road with Tim McGraw.

Also on tap for early 2010 are new sophomore albums from **Trent Tomlinson** and **Bucky Covington**.

MCA

"After garnering **David Nail** his first top 10 hit with 'Red Light,' the second TBD single will drop early 2010," VP/Radio Marketing **Katie Dean** says. Carrying into the first quarter are **Gary Allan**'s "Today" and **Josh Turner**'s "Why Don't We Just Dance," each from upcoming albums. Allan's *Get Off On The Pain* streets Feb. 2, and Turner's *Haywire* lands the following week, Feb. 9. "**George Strait** keeps 'Twang' in the winter months and **Lee Ann Womack** is back on the charts with 'There Is A God.' **Mallary Hope** is one of only two new solo females to chart a top 40 in 2009 with 'Love Lives On,' which will continue to be a focus for MCA," Dean says.

MERCURY

First out of the gate is Coldwater Jane, making their Mercury debut in early 2010. "They are a duo comprised of two sisters, Brandon and Leah, who hail from Mississippi," Dean explains. "They wrote all the material for their album." The single is TBD and will be out in January. "Easton Corbin continues his march up the chart with his debut 'A Little More Country Than That,' with an album expected in spring 2010. Billy Currington rolls on with his third single from A Little Bit of Everything, 'That's How Country Boys Roll.' Expect a fourth single in either late Q1 or Q2." On deck for the beginning of the year is new music from Julianne Hough, Sugarland, Randy Rogers Band and Jamey Johnson.

TEAM UMG

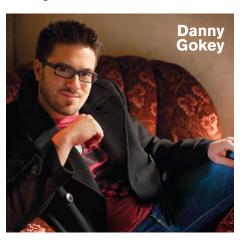
Also out of the **UMG/Nashville** family comes debut singles from recent signings **Josh Kelley, Laura Bell Bundy** (who originated the role of Elle in the Broadway production of *Legally Blonde*) and **Randy Montana**.

QUARTERBACK

The Quarterback team continues to build **Telluride**'s "Stay" in the first quarter. Promotion honcho **Chris Allums** is also focusing on new artist **Jaron And The Long Road To Love**'s debut single "Pray For You." **Katie Armiger** is expected to release a new single in January, as well.

RCA

Nipper's year begins with the introduction of *American Idol* finalist **Danny Gokey**. The first single from the newcomer, who VP/



Promotion **Keith Gale** describes as "a truly great singer," is "My Best Days Are Ahead Of Me." His debut album is expected in March.





WHAT WAS YOUR

FIRST Q?

REPUBLIC

"We will be kicking off the New Year with The Band Perry single, 'Hip To My Heart,' which is climbing the charts," VP/Promotion Bobby Young exclaims. "It's been an amazing launch so far. The radio tours also have been amazing, and by year's end the band will have finished approximately half of their tour, which resumes around mid-January. With the momentum this current single is generating, we could see an April release of their album.

STONEY CREEK

"Megan is already rolling with 'Tradin' My Halos For Horn," VP/Promotion Carson James says. "It's a fun record that is ready to rock at radio." "Lovin' In The Country" is the new single from Crossin' Dixon, out in February. "It's a real cool, uptempo, in-yourface record with those four-part harmonies," he says. Husband/wife duo Thompson Square may make an appearance in the first quarter, in either March or April.



"Fast Ryde have made great strides this year making friends at radio and with their two Republic Nashville releases, 'That Thang' and 'Make It Rain.' James and Jody are currently on tour with Luke Bryan and working on finishing their album. Look for a late February release of their next single 'Top Down,' which is a track programmers have been asking for since our launch!

"Sunny Sweeney has been working in the studio with Brett Beavers, capturing her unique and heartfelt Country stylings for a first-quarter single release, as well."

RHYTHM

On the slate for promotion head **Daryl Price** is **Todd Jones**' "Sitting In Atlanta Station," which has a Jan. 18 release date.

Show Dog

Carter's Chord lead the way with their latest "You Knock Me Out," shipping post-Christmas for a February add date. The trio's LP is coming in April. Hitting your desks in early '10 is Trailer Choir's "Rollin' Through The Sunshine," for a March impact date. Their album will be released in May. VP/Promotion Rick Moxley also sees a Toby Keith single from his current album on the first-quarter horizon.

STROUDAVARIOUS

"January will be busy as Houston
County's debut single 'I Can't Make It Rain'
continues to move up the charts," Bill Macky
foresees. The group's debut single is a James
Stroud production. "We will also introduce
Darryl Worley's new single 'Best of Both
Worlds," Macky says. "Darryl wrote this
song as a tribute to his wife, and he will be
shooting the video in January." The first
quarter brings the introduction of the LoCash
Cowboys. "Jeffrey Steele produced the band's
album and co-wrote several of the songs on
the CD, so you know it's going to be good!"

TREEHOUSE

The first album for this new label is **Blaine Larsen**'s *Not Too Bad*, which hits stores sometime after the first of the year. VP/Promotion **Tony Benken** and crew also continue at radio with his single "It Did."

UNIVERSAL SOUTH

Randy Houser's "Whistling Dixie" is the Q1 opener. It's the first single from his forthcoming album, expected this spring. "This is only Randy's third single," VP/ Promotion **Teddi Bonadies** reminds us. "To accomplish what Randy has in this tough lasting career." Last, the **Eli Young Band** is currently in the studio, and a single is on the schedule for February.



"Reba delivered a true smash for our format with 'Consider Me Gone,'" says Dir./Nat'l Promotion Chris Loss. "Once its airplay coronation is complete, single three from her stellar *Keep On Loving You* will be all over Country radio as 'The Queen of Country Music' tours with 'The King of Country Music' (George Strait) and Lee Ann Womack.

"Next year will cement the **Justin Moore** brand at Country radio even *moore*," Loss quips. "Justin and his amazing band absolutely kill it live and will be making *moore* fans on the road with Miranda Lambert and Brad Paisley. Not to mention, 'Backwoods' is moving even faster than Justin's No. 1 'Small Town USA."

"Jimmy Wayne's album Sara Smile has been racking up impressive reviews, and the title cut continues its chart ascent. Plus, get ready to enjoy new hit music from Jewel end of Q1 or early Q2!"

WARNER BROS.

The sixth album from **Blake Shelton**, *Hillbilly Bone*, starts the year at the Bunny building with a TBA release date. Next up is the title single "A Woman Needs" from **Jessica Harp**'s solo release, with an unspecified release date. **Michelle Branch** is also back with her first solo album since 2003. The second single off the untitled first-quarter release is "Long Goodbye" and it features Dwight Yoakam.



atmosphere for new artists is truly incredible, and we are very proud."

The next single from **Phil Vassar**, "Everywhere I Go," will be released over Christmas. It's the first single from his new album *Traveling Circus*. Currently on the company's agenda is **Joe Nichols**' "Gimme That Girl," which Bonadies says "has been received very well by radio, as well as the critics.

"We're off to a great start with **Jonathan Singleton & The Grove**'s 'Look Who's Back In Love,'" she continues. "They'll be on the *Country Throwdown Tour* this spring. We are very excited about this release, and know this is only the beginning of a long and



UNIVERSAL RECORDS SOUTH

BRINGING COUNTRY RADIO MORE HITS & BREAKING MORE ARTISTS IN 2010!



PHIL VASSAR "Everywhere I Go"

RANDY HOUSER
WHSTLW DIXIE
#1 NEW ARTIST 2009



NEW SINGLE FROM ELI YOUNG BAND (#4 NEW ARTIST 2009) COMING EARLY 2010

THE INTER*VIEW*

DALE Morris

We'll Manage Just Fine

ne superstar client is enough to cement the career, legacy and fortune of any artist manager. Dale Morris has had two: Alabama and Kenny Chesney. The dean of Nashville artist managers and one of the most successful artist managers in any genre, Morris recently sold his company to Irving Azoff's Front Line Management, but continues to run his operation. He's also launched his own imprints, DMP (which stands for Dale Morris Productions) and Treehouse, home to Blaine Larsen. Country Aircheck spoke with Morris about his long career, the changing nature of management and the future of the record business.

CA: Let's begin by combining a little of your history over the last 40 years with the evolution of management – perhaps beginning with your first client, Billy "Crash" Craddock.

DM: I was head of promotion for independent country label Cartwheel Records and began managing Crash on the side in 1969. About three years later we opened the booking side of the business and hired Al Embry to handle that. Back then, a couple blocks along 16th Avenue *was* the music business. There was really no business plan to the business at the time. You made a record, and if the artist got a hit you could book him. That was pretty much management.

So it was quite a leap for the industry and the business when Alabama hit in the early '80s.

There had been nothing in our business like Alabama. Nobody in town was really interested in Alabama in the beginning. I took them, and I didn't know it at the time, but I was the last stop. "My Home's In Alabama" was on MDJ Records and had charted. Then RCA got involved and took it to No. 17. But nobody knew what to do with them. And, of course, I didn't, either. I was learning again.

But it was a total impact record, and our company was booking and managing – the whole thing, just like we're doing now. As they were hitting, we hired Barbara Hardin to just work on booking Alabama. Later we hired Keith Fowler to promote all of our Alabama dates.

We started booking dates on Alabama at \$500 to \$1,500. And then they started getting hot, and we started booking fair dates for \$5,000. Boy, then they zipped – they were really just going straight up. Heading toward the end of the buying time of the fair seasons, I was having offers for \$35,000. I'd sold most of the dates at \$5,000, so I decided to sell the rest of the dates at \$5,000, rather than \$35,000, and not go back and re-negotiate any contracts. So we did that, but told each promoter, "OK, this year, it's on me. Next year, it's on you." That wound up being probably one of the smartest the buying public. The next year, Alabama's prices went from \$5,000 to \$50,000-a-night guarantee, plus \$15,000 a night for production, against 90% of the gross. (Laughs) Nobody had ever heard of that at that time. [In such arrangements, the artist is paid a percentage of ticket sales or a guaranteed amount, whichever is larger.]And it worked great for everybody. Nobody lost a dime on Alabama. If we went out and [the promoter] could show us they didn't make their part, we took care of them. That was the management style and the way we started with Alabama.

And then on to Kenny ...

Kenny started out opening for Alabama, Confederate Railroad, George Strait, Tim McGraw and others. He was growing and learning from them all, and was about six years getting off the ground. We'd have a few little hit records, but none that really amounted to anything. But as he started really showing [potential], we decided to put Kenny out there headlining, going to the B markets where there'd be maybe 5,000 to 6,000 tickets we needed to sell. We knew the markets where we could do that. Then we'd sell as many as we could to the fair buyers. With the ones that we didn't want to gamble on, we got Louis Messina to take him out to the buildings, and we'd do a 90/10 with him. Kenny's dates were always sold out back then, and [outside promoters] really couldn't buy any.

We did that for two or three years, and things started really going his way. Along the way he turned his love for the sun and the sea into a lifestyle that connected hugely with his fans, and that helped take us into the biggest venues and even to stadiums.

But what you see is we took the model of managing and booking we developed with Crash right through Alabama and then into Kenny. As the needs of our artists have grown, we grew by adding people with particular areas of expertise, so we've slowly gotten bigger and better at the business end.

For instance, we brought in Clint Higham as Kenny's manager early on to work with him, and they grew up in this business together. As things grew, we brought in Louis Messina as one of the building blocks for Kenny's career. More recently, we brought Marc Oswald in to work with Gretchen Wilson and Big & Rich to help develop and grow them as artists. And the evolution has continued in this ever-changing part of this business with Irving bringing us into the Front Line family.

Why is having both management and booking under one umbrella such a successful strategy for you?

When you have both management and booking, you can plow money back into your business and the artist. When you just have one, the money is eaten up by overhead – unless you get lucky and get an Alabama or a Kenny Chesney, and there aren't a lot of those in the world.

And, when you have all of it under one roof, you don't have to go through an agency, who goes to the artist, who goes back to the agency and then comes back to management, and then goes through an attorney or road manager, who thinks he is the manager.

Doing everything in one place just helps get things done. Even though Kenny isn't doing a full tour in 2010, 2011 is *done*. And that's because Kenny says I'll work X-many dates, Louis says okay, I have these venues, they run them by Clint and we all look at them to make sure they make sense with regards to where we've toured in previous years.

We have been using and refining the same model we've used through the years. Now, it's just on steroids.

As long as you brought up Kenny and 2011, are stadiums on the docket for him then? Of course! Why wouldn't we? He's the longest-running stadium act there's ever been. That's some of our best real estate.

What's the most significant change in that 40-year span?

There is a total world of difference. The money is just so huge, it's really about business when you're getting out there now. Back when we were doing it with Crash and the early part of Alabama, we were just doing what we loved to do and figuring out a way to make a little money at it. Back then, if you got a hit with a record label, boy, they were there for you in any way they could be. Today, with the financial things the way they are, it's getting tougher and tougher. And with radio, things are getting either tougher and tougher or weirder and weirder - I don't know exactly which it is! (Laughs) But it's still the greatest game in the world, and I love it today as much as I ever did. And no matter what happens, when we finally figure out what the future holds for the structure of record labels, management companies, booking agents, production companies and everything, it's going to be a better business than it ever was before. That's because it's bigger, it's worldwide and more people want to be involved.

How has the manager-artist relationship changed over the years? Does a manager have to relate to the artist differently?

I relate to them the same way I always have. I really feel for each one of these artists and really want to see them make it. We have a better blueprint for success today, but paying attention to the artist, making them feel secure and making sure they *know*

that you're there for them are still the biggest things you can give the artist, whether 40 years ago or today.

What about the manager-to-label

relationship? For me and us personally, that hasn't changed a lot. But again, I guess you'd say that between Alabama and Kenny, we've got some 30 years of really heavyweight stuff to deal with. So maybe my side of the field would not be the same as that of a lot, or most, of the other managers.

True, but you have some younger acts under management now. And, 360 deals seem to be the new business model under which many new acts are being signed.
We haven't had to do

one of those 360s with anyone we manage. That's because the management is 20% and the bookings are 10%. So that's 30% right ther And then the label wants their part of it. And I don't blame them, but there's just not enough to spread around there. That's the reason that the big flip of the coin right now is, "What is a record label? What are the companies?" See, what we are now is what a record label needs. And then they can be the 360 because they do come up with the management, the booking and all of this stuff. But for them to get 360 and [if] they don't come up with that, then there's no margin in there for

What do you mean, that what you're doing now is what labels need?

Take our company, for instance. We book, we manage, we promote, we own the production. Everything that an artist needs, we do it, except for being the label.

If a label wants a 360 deal and wants to extract

that kind of percentages from the artist, they're going to have to get in the business of doing all the things we already do. In the past, an artist would get a 15% deal, and that's pretty good. So the labels have made an 85% deal. But now that things are changing and we don't happen to have any product that people today have to hold in their hand, the business is changing again. And I'm lovin' it because there's no telling what's going to shake out on the other end of this. To me, that's what keeps our

What's your best guess about what might shake out of the other end?

business exciting.

Management companies are going to have a good shot at being labels. I look at it a lot like the way the movie business has gone. The big movie houses today are not the ones that put the money in and pay for the movies and all that. Normally, it's investors. They'll come up with their \$100 million or whatever, and the movie companies may be in there brokering it. But that may be where our business is going.

Back to the earlier point, is it almost easier for you to add the record component to what you already have in place than it is for labels to add all of those things that your company is?

It would be a lot simpler. If labels could still go out there and sell albums, we wouldn't have a problem. But today we're back in the singles business, whether we want to admit it or not. And labels can't afford to do what they do in a singles business. If the album business is not there, then how are we going to meet in the middle? The

artist cannot afford to pay [managers] the kind of monies that we get, and then pay the kind of monies that the label's going to want. It's just not in there. I know the labels are doing it, but for them to do that they need to be management, booking and everything. But [Front Line Management CEO] Irving [Azoff] tells me that labels can't do all these parts of the business because of the union laws in L.A. and New York. Here in Tennessee, you can do anything; it's a right-to-work state. So there are a lot of things that come into play that will tilt the playing field one way for me and another way for them.





THE INTERVIEW

Can this new management company-as-label model you're talking about work for superstars and new artists? Or only superstars?

It can work for both – if you get out there and get hit records. But the way the game is being played right now, you can't afford to break a new artist and bring in the kind of monies that you need compared to what it costs to break them. If you're doing it independently, and the people you are paying to do it are getting paid like it was back in the heyday for the labels, there's no way that the math works. But for people like us, if we put maybe a half-dozen promotion people on what we're doing here – people who come in and work just like a regular job – then *that* may be where this next thing is heading.

So in the next three-five years, will more management companies have labels or will labels have management/booking companies?

I think it's going to be a combination. And then there's going to be a third option where things are going to be opened up for investors to look at.

You mean projects? Or artists?

Both. Let's say that three years from now we've got Kenny Chesney and he's not signed

to a label. Now, this is just speculation. We look around and decide that maybe we want to make a 12-cut project and any record label will have a shot to bid on it. Or maybe it's the album, plus a certain number of dates for that year, and we would put it on sale for \$50 million or \$100 million. Now who's going to be the buyer? That opens things up for investors who own casinos or other kinds of investors to get a shot at it. I think this is where things are going.

What are your plans going forward for DMP and Treehouse? I'm hearing rumors that you might even have a third imprint. Yeah. (Laughs)

Sounds like you're in the record business to me!

What it is right now is about survival of a particular artist. The ones we may be talking about [are] something that the major labels are not interested in. And if they are, it's at that 360 [level]. With Blaine, we're trying to keep him there with radio and everything, [hoping] we can get maybe some magic. Once we get that magic, then there are opportunities along the way to bring Blaine along. But if we don't

do that, Blaine is not going to be able to make it because we haven't had the kind of bites we want from the [labels].

So you're saying that when you believe in an artist ...

We've got to get him heard some way. And we don't have the answer. But that's what we're doing; we're trying to find it.

Front Line Management has bought a number of management firms lately, including several in Nashville, and yours among them. How is that changing the business? And, what does it mean?

What Irving's doing going forward means more than what it does presently or in the past. Being in business with Irving now, and with all businesses partnering with Front Line and Ticketmaster, affords somebody from Nashville the opportunity to be able to do things that they may not [otherwise] be able to do, *if* you have that kind of artist. It just opens up worlds of opportunities when you've got something that the people really want.

The hardest part of our business – where most of the money is spent – is on the artists that don't really make "the big time." It's going

to be interesting to see how much is going to be invested in new artists and how long people will hang on to see if they can *make* that big time. It costs a lot of money to have a No. 1 record. And even though you are having some No. 1 records, you are never going to make that back on most of these artists.

So, has this entire industry come down to a gamble on an artist hitting the big time because the price of poker is so high?

That is what carries our business. And costs are unbelievably high. I would have never in my life thought I would see what's going on here in country music today.

Going on in terms of ...?

Of the high stakes. And I love it.

Just the costs? Are we talking radio and retail?

I'm talking everything. I'm talking about what it costs to get in the game, to play the game, and then what the rewards are if you win the game.

Perhaps because of your background in promotion you've always been pretty close to radio, airplay and the records. What are your thoughts on the way you work today with Country radio? And what are your thoughts on the way Country radio's working today?

Working with Country radio is one of the most important things that an artist can do, and it's also one of the most important things that managers need to promote. If you've got an artist that works with radio, then you're going to do pretty good if you keep cutting the right records.

I don't think that radio today has the passion for music that it's had in the past. Like everything, it's big business; the stakes are huge. Still, artists need to work and promote radio, and the management company does, too. I know my partners [Morris Management Group EVP] Clint [Higham] and Marc Oswald are involved 24/7 in coming up with new ways to get something promoted that gets radio involved. It's just what you've got to do.

The scale is bigger today, but it seems as if we have come back full circle to the Crash Craddock days of "get a record on the radio and book shows."

Yeah. In other genres, radio is not as important for touring. But in country, we have to have hit record after hit record to go out and tour the way we do. On the pop and the rock side, artists don't need the heavy airplay as much to tour. Kids are so savvy that they know about artists they like long before they get on radio. My grandsons have iPods full of people I've never heard, and they're buying them. They're out looking for their concerts. In country, we're still holding on to the same old model.

It sounds like it takes more of a team than ever before to keep your fingers on everything.

It does. That's what Clint and Marc do – the technology and all that – because man, I don't even have email. But I do stay in touch with everybody I want to. All of them are my partners. Clint, Marc and Irving. Louis Messina, also. He does all of our dates on Kenny Chesney, and he's our partner. And we still do a lot of stuff with Sony/Nashville Chairman Joe Galante. My relationship with Joe, I think, is as good or better than it's ever been. It's just that we're having to do business a little different. It's different for him and for me.

Has selling your management business to Front Line changed your business at all?

No. The only thing it did is that I got to make a little money (laughs), but we just have more muscle. And Irving does not interfere. That's what I figured would happen because you get mandates to do this or that. But we never hear that.

Business is tougher than ever and more expensive. You've been at this awhile. What still drives you to want to do this?

I'd rather do this than not do it. Everybody needs a reason, and everybody needs something to look forward to every day when they get up. And this is what I do. And I still love it.

WE'RE BACK IN THE SINGLES BUSINESS, WHETHER WE WANT TO ADMIT IT OR NOT. AND LABELS CAN'T AFFORD TO DO WHAT THEY DO IN A SINGLES BUSINESS.

