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they sensed a turning of the corner, many industry leaders argued the premise, understandably, considering ongoing concerns about variants, vaccination rates, boosters and breakthroughs. Every weekend concert slate that passes, however, means colleagues who went to zero last March get a little further down the road. A finish line may not be in sight – or even realistic – but the overall tenor seems to be one of very cautious optimism.

····· Artists & Music ········· Airplay ·····



Randy Goodman
Sony/Nashville Chairman/CEO

I really don't know where we are, but I would ask, turn the corner to what? To where? With so many of our acts heading back out on the road, the complexity of everything seems to have hit yet another level. The impact of COVID on radio, touring, awards shows and TV in general – definitely consumption – will have lasting impact. I don't ever see it being what it was. The shifts we are experiencing will prove seismic.

Scott Borchetta Big Machine Label Group President/CEO

I don't feel we have turned an important corner yet. We all need to be back out on the road in force seeing fans, seeing radio, seeing all media and DSPs, and we just flat cannot do that yet at the level we need. Get vaccinated, wear a mask and let's get back to work.



When this virus is over, I still want some of you to stay away from me

As much as we want to have turned a corner, I'm not sure we have. I've been to a couple of big shows with 15,000 unmasked people, and I have not felt very comfortable. My guess is there are no corners. We just keep going and, as we go, we will learn to be more accepting of the casualties.

Mike Dungan



Kristen Williams
Warner Music Nashville
SVP/Radio & Streaming

Without question, the return of live events and shows has made even the most gradual "return to normal" feel a bit more normal. The heart and soul of our industry are live performances and gathering friends, partners and colleagues to celebrate them. I felt this strongly at the very first show I attended in June: Cody Johnson headlining two nights at the Ryman. The energy of the crowd was palpable – on their feet the entire night, singing every word to every song. We gathered, we celebrated

and we enjoyed what makes this wonderful industry so special – our artists, their music and the relationship with their fans we have all missed for so long.

Rod Phillips iHeartMedia EVP/Country Programming Strategy

Williams, Cody Johnson

and Cris Lacy (r).

My favorite pastime continually reminded me of our normal life. Being outside and with friends is always the best recipe. I was fortunate to take some golf trips, including a West Coast stop this spring with my buddy Nate. This was before the recent surge in cases but was a great reminder of how fortunate we still are in many ways.

Royce Risser UMG/Nashville EVP/Promotion

Pictured (I-r) Steve Hodges, Phillips, Judy Dixon, Mitchell Tenpenny and Nate Deaton.

Tim Roberts Audacy Country Format Captain Audacy/Detroit VP/Music Programming, WYCD PD

I sensed the format's turning from the pandemic in a few different ways. One was Nielsen statistics showing people returning to more normal work and commute patterns, particularly in morning drive. But the biggest sign was the joyous return of live music. That was exemplified first with a Michael Ray club show at Coyote Joe's, but the real beacon of normalcy came with the *38th Annual WYCD Hoedown*: Lady A, Carly Pearce, Tenille Arts, Niko Moon, Elvie Shane, Nate Barnes



John Esposito Warner Music Nashville Chairman/CEO

With COVID dragging on and the Delta variant introducing continued challenges, I don't see where we are as turning a corner so much as rounding a long curve in the road. Though a return to office date is still a moving target, we do have our artists and musicians back on the road as safely as possible. I don't know who is more excited, the fans, the artists or me! The return to live music certainly signals great progress, and the shared experience of music cannot be duplicated. Blake Shelton's sold-out show at Bridgestone Arena was a three-and-half hour music lovefest between the audience and the artists. Dan + Shay's tour was sidelined for more than a year, but their sold-out, headlining show at Madison Square Garden and their sold-out show in Dan's hometown of Pittsburgh were soul-filling experiences. We've been able to release a lot of new recorded music, but the opportunity for the artists to finally perform these new songs live for the fans is joyous and next level.



Cindy Mabe
UMG/Nashville President

The country music I know and love has always been about truth, a mirror to the life that's happening around me. The pandemic has brought such a heaviness to what we're all living through, and in attempt to offer an



outlet of escapism and moments of levity, the pandemic brought country music that also felt like it didn't reflect the emotions everyone has been experiencing. It didn't give us an outlet to reflect and breathe and feel connected to the world around us. So, the turning point for me was an unexpected discovery I didn't realize how badly I needed in my life. I stumbled upon a young artist as I was going down an internet funnel one night when I couldn't sleep. His name was Sam Williams. He looked strikingly like his iconic grandfather Hank Williams, Sr., and what I felt

hearing him perform was completely overwhelming. There is raw pain in his voice, and even before you can hear his words, you can feel them. His songs put truth and vulnerability on full display, and he has an uncanny ability to share his life's trauma in a way to give it back as a gift to remind us that music is the great healer, and we are hear to feel it. This summer we signed Sam Williams, and we just released his debut album that he has been working on for the past two years called *Glasshouse Children*. I believe he's here at this time and place for a reason.

Jon Loba BMG/Nashville President

We had a brilliant plan to introduce Frank Ray at the CRB Board dinner atop the Westin hotel this past June. Being pandemically responsible, we would have the event outside with Frank playing on a stage constructed over the pool. What could go wrong? My staff asked the legitimate question of what we would do if it was cold or raining. I told them not to worry. It was June, and

board and agenda committee are a hardy bunch. Slightly cooler temperatures and a few sprinkles wouldn't ruin what we expected to be a wonderful night. Of course, a monsoon fit for Southeast Asia rolled in. I was melting down inside, though trying to keep an



outward calm. What would everyone say about moving inside? Would they show up? Would they be uncomfortable and view it as irresponsible?

Quite the opposite! Most in attendance were vaccinated or recently tested, and nobody had a bit of hesitation. Instead, it was like a big family reunion. The smiles and laughter revealed the joy in all our hearts to once again be together and resuming some degree of normalcy. We felt a deeper level of appreciation for each other and thankfulness for working in an industry that is writing history and impacting lives in a profound way.

Cris Lacy Warner Music Nashville EVP/A&R

I sensed a turning when I could reunite my mom, Andy, with her friend Nancy. Prior to the pandemic, Andy attended the Abe's Garden Memory Support community group in person. When everything shut down, those bi-weekly connections moved to Zoom, which is even more challenging for folks with dementia and Alzheimer's Disease. After 15 months seeing each other only on a



screen, there were many happy tears when Andy and Nancy were able to be in person. What I hadn't expected is how the caregivers, spouses and children of these beautiful folks in the community group formed our own Zoom support group. I never imagined I would grow to love, depend on and count my blessings for these five people – proof that some of the biggest gifts are born out of the greatest challenges.

the Rob Stone Band and DTE Ampitheater at Pine Knob packed with exuberant fans. The positive vibe was a godsend to our staff, the fans and, of course the artists, musicians and Live Nation crew. Truly inspirational and gave us all the feeling that life could be normal and great again in our world.



Charlie Cook
Cumulus VP/Country

Cumulus VP/Country Cumulus/Nashville OM, WSM-FM/Nashville PD

Nashville was a little different; we semi-closed down. We knew early here that Americans wanted to get back to their favorite things. The good news for Nashville is those things are country music and alcohol. We have plenty of both.

Steve Hodges
Sony/Nashville
EVP/Promotion

EVP/Promotion & Artist Development

I snapped this while watching the July 4 celebration. Downtown Nashville was packed with more than 300,000 fans for the Brad Paisley concert. When I saw people gathering in such a large setting with no fear, I immediately had a feeling of normalcy for a moment. It definitely gave me hope that our lives could/would soon return to normal.





Johnny Chiang Cox Country Format Leader Cox/Houston Dir./Ops, KKBQ PD

Things started to turn for us back in March, when requests for artists to perform in our *Up Close & Personal* acoustic listener event series were met with "yes" responses rather than "maybe when things clear up." We went from having zero events for nearly an entire year to executing one per week for almost 10 weeks in-a-row.

Carson James
BBR Music Group
SVP/Promotion

Kurt Johnson
Townsquare SVP/Programming

Our Tyler, TX stations' successful annual *Red Dirt BBQ* in May of 2021 with Parker McCollum headlining was the turn for me. A special night that was literally music to our ears after many months of promoting Zoom music performances. Live music events will still have challenges to navigate for some time, as we all knew they would, but the industry has responded, innovated and presented a lot of safe events. It's a start after a very tough year for many.

Stacy Blythe
Big Loud SVP/Promotion
In February, WIL/St Louis had Larry Fleet and Lily Rose play
for listeners following proper social distancing guidelines. It was our reentry



to radio events/visits, so a bunch of our team got our COVID tests, hopped in a van and made the trip. This was something we had not done for a year at that point, and it felt like we may just be figuring out how to bring live music to the fans in a safe fashion. During the show, no one in the crowd was fearful or anxious - just dancing at their tables and having the best time. I recall looking around and thinking, "We are back!"

Bobby Bones The Bobby Bones Show Host Premiere Networks iHeartCountry VP/Creative Dir.

The first shows from home kind of sucked, to be honest, with internet latency and those types of issues. Being allowed back in the studio was the first glimmer of things be-

ing a bit more normal. But it was the *Opry*, where I produce a TV show and host, that was the moment. All during the pandemic we had empty rooms, so the first time we were back and it was full was weird and exciting. It's still one of those one step forward, half-step back kind of things, but I think we're for sure moving ahead now.

SONY MUSIC NASHVILLE

CONGRATS TO THE 2021 COUNTRY RADIO HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES AND POWER 31 PLAYERS









Kerri Edwards

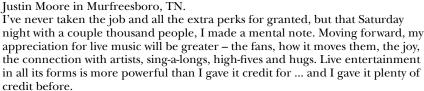
KP Entertainment Owner/President

I first felt a turning of the corner when I was able to see club-level live shows, then branching into the other tiers of shows. I have to admit, hitting send

on the computer confirming we were going live with ticket sales was pretty scary. We launched the Luke Bryan with Dylan Scott amphitheater tour first, and my nerves were a mess. I still hold my breath and say a prayer for my clients every Wednesday before the buses roll that we get another weekend played and the fans feel safe.



George Briner
Valory President
The first show I saw was



Shane McAnally
SmackSongs CEO
Monument Records
Co-President

Realizing things were going to get back on track was when I got to see Old Dominion perform in Tahoe with my family. After 18 months without concerts, the excitement from both the band and the crowd was unlike anything I'd ever experienced. No one was taking that night for granted. It felt like a sigh of relief to be able to finally gather together again.



Ben Vaughn
Warner/Chappell
President/CEO

First-time chart success and recording new music! A new artist during a difficult time having their first No. 1 – Parker McCollum. And then being in the studio with a new artist starting to make their first record – Ben Burgess.

Scott Hendricks
Warner Music Nashville
EVP A&R/Creative Advisor
Thankfully we've come back from the

Thankfully, we've come back from the peak of the pandemic when writers and musicians couldn't even be in the same room together to write or record songs. But even then, creativity found a way. Songs were written

on Zoom, and musicians converted their garages or bedrooms into studios to record remotely. It certainly slowed the process, but we were gradually able to get back together and feel that in-person connection. We appreciate each other and value our time together more now because of what we have been through. Warner Music Nashville has continued to release music and, specifically for me, it's been very busy with recently released Dan + Shay and Blake Shelton albums. And there's more coming!



Dann Huff
Producer

With McCollum.

Studios shut down for a couple of weeks, but we found a protocol. We weren't as affected, other than the intrusion of having to get tested an extreme amount and wearing a mask. We made a lot of music while everyone was shut down, and there was a sense of joy from artists in being able to at least do that. What I really experienced is the humanity, the interdependence we have with one another. We may live in our own little shells in the business, but all of it works together. We all saw that and felt it. My son is a road musician! The shared vulnerability is my biggest takeaway. There's a beauty in that and I hope we don't forget it.

Mike Curb
Curb Word Entertainment
Owner/Chairman

There have been lots of challenges, but we're up for it. I've never been busier or worked harder, but I'm thankful to still be doing it after 58 years. We didn't lose a single employee. We have a really good structure, and I can't do it by myself. When COVID happened, we knew we had to take our mainstream artists to No. 1, and we did with Lee Brice and Dylan Scott. We've had stuff exploding in the Christian space and some crossover success. I really believe we're coming out of this stronger, I just wish we could stop fighting and be less polarized.

With the Grammy he received for co-producing the Fisk Jubilee Singers' 150th anniversary album.



Watershed, August 2021. Seeing live music for the first time in 17 months was exhilarating – 22,000 fans dancing, singing and celebrating country music gave my soul renewed energy and a sense that we can conquer anything. Granted, more than 230 people ended up with COVID, however that is barely more than 1% of attendees. To me, that was encouraging. To quote Ian Malcolm (Jurassic Park): If there's one thing the history of evolution has taught us, it's that life will not be contained. Life breaks free, it expands to new territories, and crashes through barriers painfully, maybe even dangerously. But, uh, well, there it is. Life will find a way.



Shane Allen
Columbia SVP/Promotion

Luke Combs' first show back at the *Carolina Music Fest* in Myrtle Beach June 13 was big, but I felt much more optimistic for the rest of the year then than I do now.

Gregg Swedberg
iHeartCountry Brand Coord.
Minneapolis SVP/Programming,
KEEY/Minneapolis PD

Our St. Jude radiothon was the second week of December. Given COVID and reduced totals for other stations, we were very worried we couldn't match what we have typically done for St. Jude – more than \$1 million. We still had one of the jocks at home and no phone bank in the room for motivation. But we were able to put more than three people in a room and being face-to-face with more staff gave everybody extra energy. When we saw the total of \$1,007,637 – once again the top single station radiothon – we figured everything was going to work out. Even with difficult circumstances and fewer staff, we could do what we do again.



Tom Martens VP/Radio & Streaming Warner Music Nashville

During the toughest days of the pandemic, I heard many comments and speculation that large gatherings might not ever happen again or, if they did, they'd have a much different feel. But in June and July we hosted events with developing artists Ian Munsick and Robyn Ottolini, who both joined Warner Music Nashville during the pandemic. We had never seen either of them perform in-person, so that first event felt very special. We got to see amazing live music and share the experience with friends and colleagues, which made it all the more special... and, thankfully, normal.



John Foxx

Audacy WNSH/New York PD

Early in 2021, I began feeling a new excitement and energy about

the possibility of being back together soon. I still couldn't believe how quiet the train stations and subways were after so much time away. In May, we finally had the entire on-air team back in studio, and it was like we never left. The love and respect we have for each other is amazing and has never been stronger.



kelsea ballerini

2021 CMT Artist of the Year

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CMA awards nominations for musical event of the year music video of the year

on tour with the jonas brothers

"she's the only singer in nashville versatile enough to deliver a moody ballad with halsey on one song and a heartwarming acoustic anthem with kenny chesney on the next."

RollingStone



BLACK RIVER





POWER 31

Craig Wiseman
Big Loud Owner/Managing Partner

My moment was Morgan Wallen's show at Marathon, which was a benefit for our terribly flooded neighbors to the west of Nashville. He raised more than \$750,000, and it was good see a live show focused on helping people through hard times. That's music doing one of the things it does best – being concerned for others instead of ourselves.

Clarence Spalding
Maverick Management President
I really felt the difference in July when I realized my shows were actually going to play. Up until that point, I wasn't too optimistic. In the darkest days, I didn't think we would be back in 2021 – maybe the summer of 2022.



Rusty Gaston
Sony/ATV Music Publishing CEO

I was in Durant, OK, standing front-of-house watching the warmup to Eric Church coming onstage at Choctaw Casino, and it brought me to tears. The excitement of people in the venue – all of us overwhelmed to see live music – the lights, the music. My whole body got chills. You could feel how much the people in the room needed that experience in their lives.

Ken Robold Sony/Nashville EVP/COO Two things strike me, but more in the sense of things changing, not necessarily re-emerging. First, we're seeing significant streaming numbers of

not necessarily re-emerging. First, we're seeing significant streaming numbers on songs that have not been, or are just getting started at, radio. Two, the Academy of Country Music awards show being the first to move exclusively to streaming.

Jimmy Harnen

Everybody's spirits were incredibly high in early June before the Delta variant impacted the U.S. At the *Gulf Coast Jam* in Panama City, I got to see an incredible Riley Green concert and play golf with Brett Young and FGL – a reminder of days gone by. In late July, we were ready to hit the road for Laci Kaye Booth's first radio tour, and at the last minute decided to do it virtually to keep everyone safe. While we certainly missed the personal interaction with radio, the promo tour went over exceptionally well. Lady A's Aug. 27 show in Nashville was another great moment being in the company of so many friends and fans of country music. We're hoping for the best, staying incredibly positive and look toward getting as close to normal as we can, safely and quickly.



Brian Wright
UMG/Nashville EVP/A&R
I sensed a turning when I saw 18,000 fans at a Parker McCollum show.



Gator Harrison
iHeartCountry Brand. Coord.
iHeartMedia/Nashville SVP/Programming

March 7, 2020 was Dan + Shay's unforgettable first headlining show at Bridgestone Arena. Equally unforgettable, it was my last live show before the shutdown. We've

all had that moment where we realized just how much we both missed and *need* live music in our lives. Fittingly, the reemergent moment was August 13, 2021, gathered *in person* with Dan + Shay in the newly renovated and restored Centennial Park, The Parthenon as our backdrop. The landmark signifying the Athens of the South, where education and awareness collide with the arts and the hearts. The pandemic has taught us a lot, but we are ready to be back. Fully renovated and restored. Better than ever.



1 Katie Dean

MCA SVP/Promotion

The first turning point was the success of Parker McCollum's "Pretty Heart." Launching a new artist is difficult enough, but doing it in a pandemic is a whole other challenge. He was the only new artist to release a single, go for adds and hit No. 1 in both charts in the 2020 calendar year. It gave me hope that even in an uncertain radio climate, if this was to be the new normal, it was possible to break a new artist. Plus, a great way to celebrate the end of a very trying year from a morale standpoint. An even bigger moment was the release of Jordan Davis' "Buy Dirt." Add day felt like pre-pandemic times – so much joy and excitement from the team you could physically feel it, even though we were all working remotely. Now being able to see the reaction of a live audience singing every word back to him is such a testament to the powerful connection between radio and country fans.



Marci Braun
Audacy Country Regional Brand Manager/Central
WUSN/Chicago PD

The moment in Chicago was *Windy City Smokeout* in July – our first show back. Everyone had to show proof of vaccination upon entry, so the bubble was as safe as possible. Everyone, and I mean everyone, was beyond nice and happy to be there. No one minded the food or beer lines. Dierks Bentley played Saturday night and told me he'd never forget that show and how fun it was.



Bobby Young
Capitol VP/Promotion

Our artists led the way when it came to getting re-engaged with their audience. They are all back on the big stages, and it's been incredible to see the country fans buying tickets and attending shows. It's only been recently that we've been allowed to start traveling, having face-to-face meetings or attending shows. Everyone was Zoomed out and ready for that. Just as it felt better, our return to the office was pushed back. I'm not sure any of us thought we would still be dealing with this pandemic more than a year-and-a-half later. But we've learned so much – about ourselves, our companies' operations and the music consumer. The pandemic has expedited the evolution of both the radio and recording industries, bringing many good changes that will remain after the pandemic is over.



Kris Lamb
Big Machine SVP/Promotion & Digital
The loss of touring and the lack of in-person

The loss of touring and the lack of in-person meetings between our artists and clients signified some of the darkest days for our industry. All of this, of course, pales in comparison to the loss of life and the struggle endured by so many. The vaccine rollout and more accessible testing symbolized the turning of the corner as we began to see our artists gather at awards shows, our partners open their doors for face-to-face music presentations, and our fans return to live event spaces. Watching Midland play socially distanced baseball stadiums and Carly and Lady A offer full nationwide tours – and having the opportunity to introduce Callista Clark in-person to radio tastemakers across the country – truly shined a light on the fact that our darkest days are now behind us.

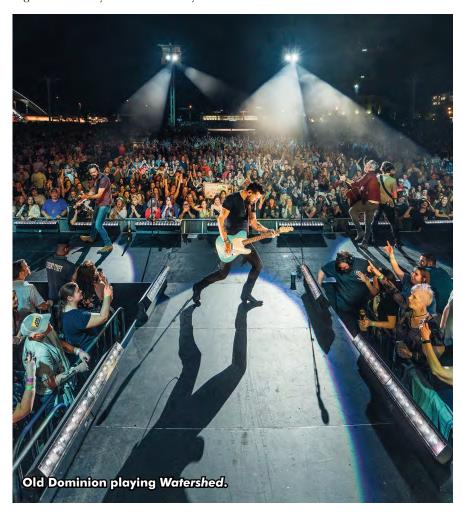


Brian O'Connell Live Nation President/Country

When I got back on the bus July 6 for the first time since March of 2020, it got real. We had done a few socially distanced shows and drive-in deals, but this was the real thing. We had zero idea what to expect. Words we wouldn't have used 18 months prior now rolled off our tongues with ease: Protocols, mandates, abundance of caution. The next morning was like a giant family reunion. Greeting people you hadn't seen in more than a year - except maybe on a damn Zoom call - felt great. The rust was real, but the smiles were universally giant. There's usually some extra excitement on opening night, but this was almost giddy. When the house lights went down right before the headliner took the stage, it was as loud a noise as I had heard. That moment with the audience going nuts and the artist in place for the reveal will forever be burned in my brain. The rest was a blur. A really wonderful blur.

Clint Higham Morris Higham President

I don't know if we've turned a corner yet; however, most of us are learning to live with it. Vaccinations continue to rise daily, which is hopeful, and we are following protocol to the best of our ability. As an industry we have all come together in a very collaborative way.



Brittany Schaffer Spotify Head/Nashville Artist & Label Services

Inspired by a track on her new album, Star-Crossed, Spotify created the '90s-themed Simple Times Machine event for Kacey Musgraves' top fans in Nashville, which was one moment I sensed us turning a corner. Fans were transported to an immersive experience curated by Kacey herself, with thoughtful gifts along the way. Although we're still not free from the risks of COVID (despite all our best hopes), we found a way to celebrate an album launch with an in-person event, while keeping everyone safe. We were learning how to navigate through the uncertainty.



Mike Preston Cumulus KPLX & KSCS/ ■ Dallas PD

The moment I sensed things turning the corner was when Miranda Lambert "reopened" Billy Bob's Texas in Fort Worth with five sold-out shows. Not only was the crowd emotional, but Miranda was, too. That was the beginning of the music scene taking off here again. Soon after, Cody Johnson played for 11,000 at Panther Island Pavilion and the energy was palpable. Until you experience that kind thing, you don't really know how much people need live music!

Rachel Whitney Spotify/Nashville Head/ Editorial

The moment I realized we would get through this as a stronger community

is when everyone came together to support those in need through charitable efforts. Spotify was proud to work with organizations whose goals align with our own - MusiCares, Music Health Alliance, ACM Lifting Lives COVID Relief Fund and Spotify's own COVID-19 Music Relief Project. These efforts not only supported healthcare, but also emergency housing and food needs. We are not out of the woods yet, but we have a tightknit community who are committed to sticking together.

Ashley Sidoti

Valory VP/Promotion & Digital
The first moment was kicking off the Connor Smith radio tour. There was a readjustment to that kind of schedule, but I've never been so thankful for being so tired. And we still had to be creative as the first stop had just locked their building back down and we had to shift to a public park in which to do the visit. The other big moment was my first Thomas Rhett show since the fall of 2019 and hearing three No. 1 songs I'd never heard him do live. That and seeing people so energized had me in tears.



Leslie Fram CMT SVP/Music Strategy & Talent

We filmed *CMT Giants: Charley Pride* outdoors at Ascend Amphitheater in April, and it was the first time the larger CMT team was back together. We were surrounded by

living legends including Garth Brooks, Wynonna Judd, George Strait and Gladys Knight, all celebrating their friend Charley alongside his son Dion and the next generation of superstars including Mickey Guyton, Luke Combs and Jimmie Allen. It was such a beautiful, necessary tribute, and a shining example of the way productions can return safely when taking all necessary precautions. Even in what remain uncertain times, that feeling of Shanna Strassberg! hope, unity and community from that

taping remains with me. Not only for live music's return to Nashville, but as a testament to how all voices have a place in our genre.

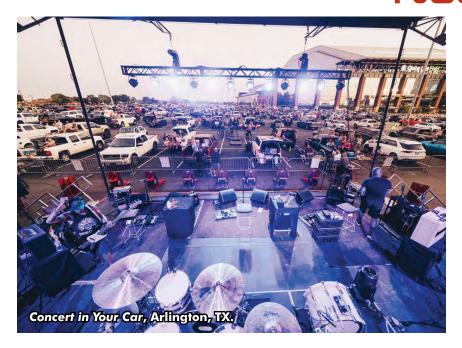
Nate Deaton Empire KRTY/San Jose GM

We have been doing a songwriter series at Clos La Chance for nine years. One of the very last things I did before the shutdown was to not put 2020 season tickets on sale March 16. We did a couple smaller shows earlier this year,





POINER 31



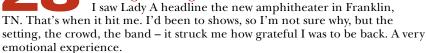
George Couri
Triple 8 Management Founder

As with all things, including the pandemic, I felt there's always something you can do. Whatever the circumstance, you can react well to what's happening. Thus, we were able to put on the first pandemic shows of any genre in the U.S., selling out 3,200 tickets to the first drive-in concerts in early June of 2020. And it was *safe*. Country music was leading the way. After that, the real turning of the corner was the creation of the vaccine, which is when our artists went from a handful of shows on the books to, collectively, more than 200 for 2021.

Jason Owen
Sandbox Entertainment President/CEO
Monument Records Co-President

Jay Liepis
Apple Head/Artist & Label Relations

Tom Lord
Red Light Management
I saw Lady A headline the ne





Becky Gardenhire
WME/Nashville Co-Head
At Jake Owen's sold-out Ryman benefit for the CMA
Foundation in July, I was ecstatic to be in a room with so many country music fans singing every word. Then, I went to the start of the Brothers Osborne tour with Tenille Townes and Travis Denning in Philadelphia and felt so rejuvenated that live music was back! The fans and energy at each reminded me music brings us all together to celebrate whatever needs celebrating. After the quarantine and the challenging times the live music industry has faced, we've been reminded

Troy Tomlinson
Universal Music Publishing/Nashville Chairman/CEO
"Wow, that felt so normal and so good." I said those words early

how that joy in gathering is of utmost importance to humanity.

in the spring after going to meet with Amanda Shires. It was the first time I'd been in a studio in a year, and just being in the room with an artist, a producer and a manager to listen and talk about music – only music – was like going back to a childhood home. Familiar and moving. Honestly, I'd worried that getting back to normalcy would be stressful or awkward. Leave it to great music to provide an escape from darkness and a path into the light.

Norbert Nix
Triple Tigers
President/Partner
During this pandemic, I realized

During this pandemic, I realized that music doesn't stop for anything. Unfortunately, we lost legends. And, when touring ceased, artists and the touring business were hit hard financially, but the music did not stop. Artists were dreaming, writing and recording the next incarnation of their art. I realized this as a new paradigm was shifting for the music business and the world. The creative force became stronger in the midst of adversity.



but June 9, 2021 was our first full attendance show at the venue. The crowd that night was electric unlike anything else I had seen previously, or least it seemed that way. From wondering if and when we might ever be able to gather again to seeing folks having such a great time, I knew we had turned the corner. With that said, the corner keeps turning around and around, and the audience reaction has been better than ever each time.

Shelley Hargis Gaines
Broken Bow VP/Promotion

My first big show was Chicago's Windy City Smokeout. Lainey Wilson and her first single were pandemic babies; her promo tour launched just before COVID hit. We shipped "Things A Man Oughta Know" at the end of August 2020, so she had not been able to do any shows or perform the song for anyone. As I stood side-stage in Chicago watching the entire crowd sing every word of this song back to her, I cried. I knew I'd be excited for things to be back up, and watching this happen for artists never gets old, but I didn't realize just how emotional I would be! Fast forward a couple months, and it is so thrilling to be out for the Jason Aldean Back In The Saddle Tour and seeing packed houses and super excited fans. Fearful or not, people are proving that they have truly missed live music. Things are different now, having to take tests before going backstage, but I'll take a COVID test every day if means we get to keep having shows!



Michael Bryan
Apple Music
Head/Country



Example 1 Example 1 Example 2 Example 2 Example 2 Example 2 Example 2 Example 3 Example 2 Example 2 Example 3 Example 2 Example 3 Example 2 Example 3 Example 4 Example 2 Example 3 Example 4 Example 3 Example 4 Example 5 Example 6 Example 6 Example 6 Example 7 Examp

I'm not sure if we've turned a corner or are going in circles. Our travel is still very limited, and we are not yet back to the office, but it does feel good to see a light at the end of the tunnel – hopefully not a variant train. Finally getting out to a live sporting event last August was such a breath of fresh air, and seeing friends at radio made it even better.



Josh Easler

Arista VP/Promotion

The emergence from what's been a challenging time was fascinating and felt like it happened quickly after a very long period of uncertainty. When Brad Paisley announced a full capacity tour, I made a point to get to a show as soon as possible. It felt like someone flipped a switch, and the fans were back. Glorious. The big difference was a very controlled backstage – no meet-and-greet.

Annie Ortmeier
UMG/Nashville VP/
Marketing-Digital Accounts

The turning of the corner I've witnessed is the full embrace of digital and streaming services by country consumers. Country consumption has out-performed industry consumption throughout 2020 and 2021. Now that the corner has been turned, there isn't any going back. This opens new opportunities for all artists and for country music to reach new audiences.





With humility, love, and respect, Compass Media Networks wishes to acknowledge the hard work, talent, and passion of Silverfish Media.

Our friends took a courageous leap eight years ago to launch their own entrepreneurial endeavor to create unique, live, and compelling country content.

We salute Silverfish Media and their growing roster of award-winning content...

Big D & Bubba, Country with Carsen, Y'all Access with Kelly Sutton, and Honky Tonkin' with Tracy Lawrence.

As their syndication partner from inception, Compass Media Networks has had the pleasure of watching these radio stars up-close and witnessing their love of country music, as well as their care for their affiliates, listeners, and sponsors.

Thank you for being our friends and partners! You have enriched our lives and helped take country music to new heights.

Peter Kosann

CEO/Founder Compass Media Networks











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RJ CURTIS
2021 COUNTRY RADIO

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

BEVERLEE BRANNIGAN

2021 PRESIDENT'S AWARD WINNER

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LOVE,

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RU CUCTIS Coming Full Circle

If he were going into the National Baseball Hall of Fame, **RJ Curtis** says he'd don a KZLA/Los Angeles cap. But in addition to three successful runs there and time with KNIX/Phoenix and KCYY/San Antonio, he has completed the music industry hattrick, working in record promotion and at trade publications before joining the CRB as Exec. Dir. Nearly 40 years after deciding to "marry" Country radio, Curtis is staying true to his vows.

The induction ceremony is my favorite event of the year, because it's a warm, fuzzy celebration. I haven't missed one since the CRB took over, and from 2008 through 2018, I served as Exec. Prod. I've chaired the selection committee, and I've called inductees to let them know they were selected, so I know how this thing works. It's not lost on me what an honor this is, and it's hard to mentally put myself in the same category as Larry Daniels, Michael Owens, W. Steven Martin, Jerry King, Lon Helton ... those are hall of famers! And those are all guys I worked with.

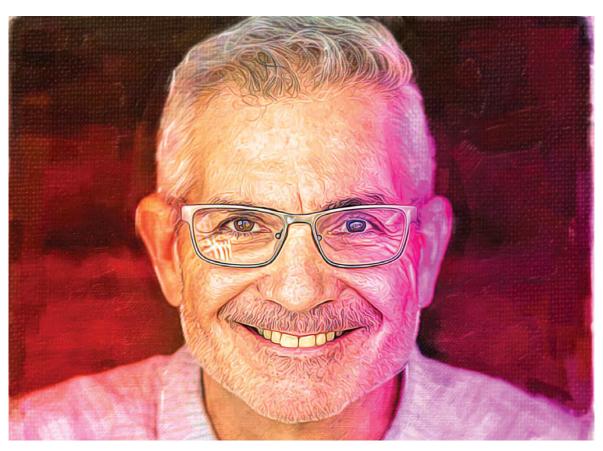
When I was told I had been nominated, I took a few days to think about whether I wanted to pursue the nomination or not. I was worried about a perceived conflict of interest since I'm the CRB Exec. Dir., even though I haven't been involved in the selection process in a few years. I eventually decided to give it the old college try, but I didn't expect to be selected. [Country Radio Hall of Famer and CRB Board member] Beverlee Brannigan surprised me with the news during what I thought was a routine Zoom business meeting on May 26. I was stunned! And then I got a bit emotional.

My best friend's dad, Ken Vineyard, was at KABC/Los Angeles and the market's No. 1 morning personality for a long time. Once I met him, I really became interested and pointed myself in that direction without knowing much about radio. In junior college, I became involved in the campus radio station and got a job at Beautiful Music KBIG/Los Angeles. My job was to field calls from listeners and answer questions about what song we had played. It paid better than minimum wage. They gave us a certificate for a free turkey on Thanksgiving and a free ham on Easter. What more could I ask for?

My first on-air gig was part-time at KDUO/San Bernardino, a religious station that flipped to Beautiful Music. Three or four months in, I was given a full-time shift from 1-9am. I was just awful, but I started to get my footing and was moved to the 6pm-1am shift. I was 19 and told my parents I wanted to quit school to pursue radio. We cut a deal with a handshake that if radio didn't work out, I'd go back to school. Less than six months after joining KDUO as a weekender, I became acting PD. Our programmer was a consultant who was never onsite, and one day he stopped coming to work completely. People were looking for him, but he called and told me he wasn't coming back in. I needed to handle the station. So, that's how I got into programming at the ripe old age of 20. It wasn't too long before I got the job at KZLA/ Los Angeles; I've not had to go back to school yet.

The goal was always L.A. radio. When the KZLA opportunity came up, I took it – even though I didn't know anything about country music. I had an audition tape, a poorly typed résumé in-hand and walked in with no appointment. I asked to see the PD, but the secretary wasn't having any of it. Just down the hallway listening in was PD Tom Casey, who invited me in. He listened to my tape and he hired me.

George Strait's "Unwound" was a turning point. I was fighting against liking the music, but that one hit me. I had pictured the singer as some 50-year-old guy with a beer gut, but when I saw the cover of the album laying on my PD's desk, I thought maybe this music wasn't all for old guys after all. I listened to that album front-to-back, and I was hooked. Strait Country remains my favorite of his. After Strait, it was Merle Haggard. I had been to all these big rock shows – Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath and Queen – so I didn't think I'd be impressed by these country shows. But my PD invited



me to a Haggard show at Universal Amphitheater, and my mind was blown. That's when I officially bought in. In fact, I tell people I got married twice in 1983 – once to Lori Gregg, and once to Country radio.

My first CRS was 1985. I fell in love with the event, and I went on to serve on the Agenda Committee, the Board and the Executive Committee. I've been lucky



Welcome Back, Mr. Cart-er: Curtis at KZLA in 1980.



Good Ol' Boys: Curtis (I) with Waylon Jennings at KNIX in 1990.



Memories Of Us: Keith Urban and Curtis (r) at KZLA in 2000 (top) and CRS in 2019 (bottom).

enough to witness some game-changing moments. In 1989, Garth Brooks was just a guy walking around the halls handing out buttons, but the next year, we witnessed history when he debuted "Friends In Low Places" during a luncheon. I went back to KNIX and said on-air to my traffic guy, "I just got back from *CRS*, and I saw the biggest star in the format. Garth Brooks is going to be a superstar." Years later I had the opportunity to introduce Garth onstage at Bridgestone Arena during *CRS* as Exec. Dir.

I was lucky enough to be at KZLA three times – in the '80s, '90s and '00s – and to work at legendary stations KNIX/Phoenix and KCYY/San Antonio. At KZLA, I went through multiple ownership changes ... at least one change of hands every time I was there. The first time I was ever fired was at KZLA, during my first stint there, and it happened amid an ownership change on December 7. A day that will live in infamy. But the last time was the hardest. When KZLA flipped formats on Aug. 17, 2006, I knew there would be no going back again. Management told me that morning it was going to happen, but I couldn't tell any of my staff, all of whom I was very close with - Tonya Campos, Vicki Pepper, Shawn Parr and Blair Garner were all in the office at the time. I had to walk into the control room during Shawn's midday shift and tell him it was going to flip after the song that was playing at that moment. I gave him the responsibility of selecting the song that would end KZLA, and we cried together. Shawn picked Keith Urban's "Tonight I Wanna Cry" - so appropriate for so many reasons, not the least of which is my personal affinity for Keith.

After KZLA flipped, I didn't go back to radio. I was given the chance to work at $R \mathcal{E}R$, which would later lead to opportunities at Country Aircheck and All Access but not before I tried something a little different. When $R \mathcal{E} R$ ceased publication, I was courted by Skip Bishop to join the Sony team. I moved to Nashville in 2009 and ended up handling Dir./Midwest Regional Promotion for Arista for nearly two years. In the end, the record promo game wasn't for me, but I had an incredible time on the road with that roster of artists - Carrie Underwood, Brad Paisley, Jerrod Niemann and Brooks & Dunn, who were on their farewell tour. Having that experience makes me feel like I can better relate to reps now, and it has given me a well-rounded outlook on all sides of the industry. It changed my perspective, and when I went back to working for a trade publication at Country Aircheck, I felt better informed about how that part of the business works.

Being named CRB Exec. Dir. was such a blessing, and it came at the perfect time. [Former Exec. Dir.] Bill Mayne has been a longtime friend, mentor and former boss, and I've not made a career move since 1983 without consulting him. Stepping in for him as he retired just felt like a natural fit for me, and while it isn't an easy job, it's incredibly gratifying to be serving the industry that I've been married to for nearly 40 years now. It all feels very serendipitous and fortuitous.

BII HAU Always Listening

After joining Bristol Broadcasting in 1965, Bill Hagy was named WXBQ PD in 1984 and led the station to 104 consecutive No.1 books. Along the way, Hagy helped launch the careers of Brad Paisley and Kenny Chesney and turned 'XBQ into a heritage brand. He officially retired after 50 years with the company but remains a vital part of the programming team, nonetheless. Not too shabby for a self-proclaimed "old rock-n-roller."

My mother was a copywriter at a local radio station. After school, I'd sometimes hang out there, and I was impressed. At 14, I got my FCC license and started to do part-time work. From that point on, I was all-in. I couldn't imagine a more fun, exciting, interesting and intricate business. That first shift was on WOPI-AM/Bristol, TN, and the amount of nervousness I had was just incredible. Oddly enough, they also operated an FM, which coincidentally is now WXBQ.

In 1965, I had a chance to go across the street to a Rock-n-Roll station and work for Bristol Broadcasting. It was April 1 when I started – no foolin' – and they were like me ... young, hungry and growing. At that point, there was only one other station, and it was in Bluefield, WV. A few years later came Charleston, WV, and I was involved on the ground level as they continued to build out their group. Me, a rock-n-roller, was out there helping this company add stations. I was just a kid still!

Bristol bought WFHG-FM in the late '70s and, for six-to-eight months, it was a simulcast of the Rock-n-Roll station. In 1972, the company had dipped its toes into Country in Paducah, KY with WKYQ, so we had a little background in and familiarity with the format. We decided to launch a Country station in the Tri-Cities. We found the call letters WXBQ and aired a syndicated service called Country Love out of California.

WXBQ was running a big automation system with reel-to-reels and everything mechanical, including spots, but we wanted to be a community radio station and decided to staff it up. One of our first hires was Reggie Neel, who only recently retired after spending his entire radio career with us. We also added another old rock-n-roller like me, Bill Kramer, who was also from the area, and he became WXBQ's first-ever PD.

The next step was to find a marketing angle to sell the community on how wonderful Country radio was. A company out of Knoxville came up with the rabbit mascot. We just kept moving through the plan step-by-step, working to make the station undeniable. Early on, we went ahead and gave away a Volkswagen Rabbit since our mascot was a rabbit. If you want folks to remember you, just give away a car!

Jeff Whitehead was the PD for a brief period in the early '80s before I became the third PD. I had been handling programming on a corporate level for all the Bristol properties since 1972, and they just said, "Okay, you're the programming guru." That's it. That's the big, official way I became PD of WXBQ.

WXBQ was a destination for new artists for a time in the late '80s and '90s. We had a nice conference room with good acoustics, and we aren't all that far from Nashville. Brad Paisley came by before he had a record deal. He played "Me Neither" and a couple other silly things. We laughed, had fun and talked shop. I've always enjoyed that aspect of the business – listening to music and finding something great to share with my listeners.

The station hit No. 1, I believe, in the Fall book of 1992, and it's stayed there since. We also had No. 1 books in the late '80s and early '90s, but it would be a seesaw battle between us and the Top 40 station. Once we started putting more thought and energy into finding the right music and understanding the listeners, we got to the top and never took our foot off the gas. Technology has changed, consolidation swept through the industry and a lot of companies responded by replacing people with machines to save



money. But there's more cost than the investment in the technology. The bond with the community matters. And I'm not saying it works for everyone, but it sure has for us.

Kenny Chesney grew up in a little town between here and Knoxville and went to East Tennessee State University. I remember him playing some shows around the area to about 25 people total. He obviously knew about the radio station and knew of me, but it wasn't until I was in Nashville that we met. I was having lunch with friends, Kenny was at the same



Trick-or-Tritt: Warner Bros.' Travis Tritt makes an early career stop in Bristol, TN to visit the WXBQ team. Pictured (I-r) are the label's Rick Moxley, the station's Reggie Neel, Tritt and Hagy.



Suit Life: Hagy (I) with WFGH team members Mike Casey, George Dixon and Ted Gibbs (I-r) in 1968.



Boys Of Y'all: Hagy (I) with Kenny Chesney in 2013.

restaurant and recognized me. He introduced himself, and we struck up a good friendship. We considered him a hometown guy at WXBQ and were there to support him from the beginning.

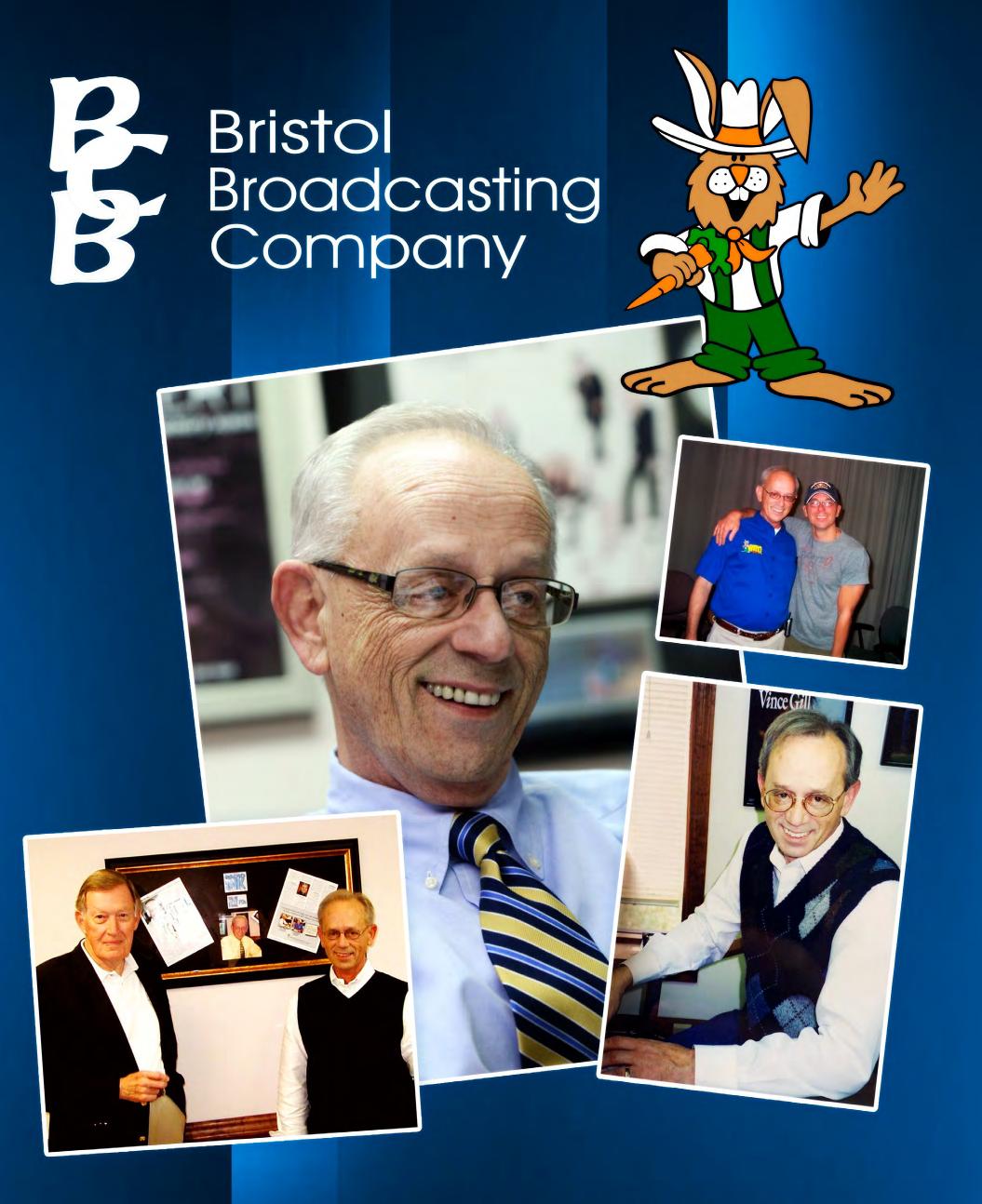
Our programming philosophy is a little different. You second-guess yourself at some point, but the station's longevity and success speaks for itself. We learned a long time ago that if you ask the listeners – the real fans of the station - what they think, they don't mind telling you. We continue to do that, and we listen to what they tell us. There was a recent No. 1 we never played because it didn't fit our listening community. I've told record reps many times over the years that Wednesday night prayer meeting won't stand for some things here, and we listen when they tell us that. We know how our audience uses the station, and we know they don't want profanity coming out of the speakers for the kids to sing along with. The honky-tonks are wonderful and fun, but 11:45am on the way to lunch, that's not what our crowd wants to hear.

Throughout the years, I had opportunities to move, but Tri-Cities is home. I had a wonderful partnership with the founder and former president of the company, and they gave me the opportunity to learn and grow in the business. As the company grew, I was given more responsibilities and more freedom to program in other markets. It just seemed like the thing to do, and the opportunities I was presented with in other areas never seemed like enough to get me to pack up and move.

Part of our community engagement came via a partnership with sorority groups at ETSU. The students were the first to introduce us to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and, at the time, we were just a media partner for the sororities raising money. It made it easy for us to wade into the waters with St. Jude, because the girls in the sorority did all the work manning the phones. Over the years, that has really morphed, and St. Jude is part of the station's mission now.

I feel honored by this recognition and induction. I'm not big on the spotlight and ready to get that part out of the way, but I think the event will actually be great fun. I'm looking forward to seeing a lot of people I haven't seen in a long time. It's just overwhelming to think about the magnitude and meaning of being inducted into this hall of fame.

I officially retired April 1, 2015, exactly 50 years after I joined Bristol Broadcasting. But it took a minute to find the right person to replace me – Nikki Thomas became just the fourth PD in the station's history – and I've stayed involved with the station. I also still have my hand in the stations in West Virginia and Kentucky. The level of interaction I have now keeps me busy and keeps me connected, plus I still get to talk to a few record people and see new artists here and there. I just don't know what I'd do if I didn't have that camaraderie anymore. I guess I'd ride my motorcycle more.



Congratulations Bill Hagy
From Your Bristol
Broadcasting Family



Angle Uard Purposed For Radio

From an accidental start in radio to an accidental stint as Blake Shelton's backup singer, Angie Ward's role as a country music ambassador to 70 markets (and counting) is no accident. She champions artists, charitable causes, listeners and their communities with her infectious positivity and willingness to go the extra mile both on the air and off.

My parents are horse trainers, and every year of my childhood we went to the Kentucky State Fair in Louisville for the World Championship Horse Show. They always had big country concerts in Freedom Hall the night before it began, and the artists would park their buses beside our barn. I met the Oak Ridge Boys and Dolly Parton! I would also spend a lot of time mesmerized by Coyote Calhoun broadcasting live on WAMZ from the Exhibit Hall. He was always kind and smiled and waved at me; years later, I told him this story.

I never thought about being on the radio ... but I sure loved listening to it! While at Auburn University getting my degree in Public Relations, I volunteered to work for the promotions team on the school station, WEGL. I was at the station one day working on some posters, and someone didn't show up for a sportscast. The sports director at that time just handed me a script and shoved me in a little room (that I now know was a studio) and said, "When I point to you, talk." I still remember that adrenaline. When I finished, I said, "That is the coolest thing! Can I do that again?"

My PD at WTQR/Greensboro, Big Paul Franklin, was killed in a motorcycle accident in 2001. He and Aunt Eloise had been the top morning show in town for many years. It was like Elvis had died, and the entire market was in mourning. Toby Young played the part of Aunt Eloise on the show and had never shown his face in public. People at that time really thought there was a little old woman in the studio. So, when Paul died, a media spokesperson was needed, and it fell on my shoulders as APD. This was especially difficult because Paul was more than a boss – he was one of my and [my husband] Tim's best friends.

While my heart was the most broken it has ever been, I ended up learning so much; it brought our programming team closer than I've ever experienced. Dallas Reese had already been set to fill the morning show while Paul was on vacation, but our night talent Marc Steele and I came in with him. We stayed on the air all day and took calls from listeners who wanted to share their Big Paul story. NAS-CAR drivers called in and even put an "In Memory of Big Paul" decal on every car that ran at Charlotte Motor Speedway that weekend. Hearing how he had touched so many people gave me a whole n purpose for being on the radio. I realized people are what radio is all about! From that point on, I wanted every listener I met to feel special and to know that it was my honor to meet them.

I love George Strait so much! I always listened to his cassettes on the tractor on our horse farm. While standing in line to meet him, my coworker Dean St. Clair (Deano) asked if I was okay, because it looked like I was going to cry. And boy did I! Tears welled up, and in that southern drawl, George said, "Are vou okay?" I blurted out, "No! Do you have a flaw? Because I think you are perfect, and if I knew you had a flaw, maybe I wouldn't be as obsessed with you as I am!" He smiled and said, "Well, I do have a lot of 'em. Just talk to Norma." Fast forward to what I thought was his farewell tour, and here come the tears. As I got next to him, he asked why I was crying. "Because I don't want to say good goodbye! It's your farewell tour. You're retiring!" He snapped his head up. "Not retiring! And no need to cry!" During the show, he came to my side of the stage - of course, I was on the front row (thanks, Uncle Louie!) - looked straight at me and said to the crowd, "Some people think I'm retiring, and this is goodbye. This is not goodbye." I was like, "That's me! I'm the someone!'



In late 2019, I took a hard hit on the head and ended up with a moderate concussion. Being the radio trooper so many of us are, I continued to work not knowing how severe it was. I had awful headaches – the computer screens hurt my eyes – and I couldn't



Know Doubt: Ward (I) finally gets her Gwen Stefani moment.

Read It And Weep: Ward definitely does not cry meeting George Strait.



remember the easiest things like my station slogans. At one point I caught myself unable to get song titles correct no matter how hard I tried. I kept calling Dierks Bentley's "Drunk On A Plane," "Drunk On A Beach." Two weeks in, it took my co-workers intervening before I went to get a scan and found out how bad it was. I reinjured it last year while working from home - yes, I should wear a helmet - and hid it from everyone. I had to type out every single break word-for-word for months so I could remember what to say. Social media was an even bigger struggle. It would take me an hour to record one 30-second video, because I would say something wrong. The happiest day in 2021, other finding out about the Hall of Fame, was the day I remembered the phone number for a contest in Greensboro off the top of my head without reading it. I cried.

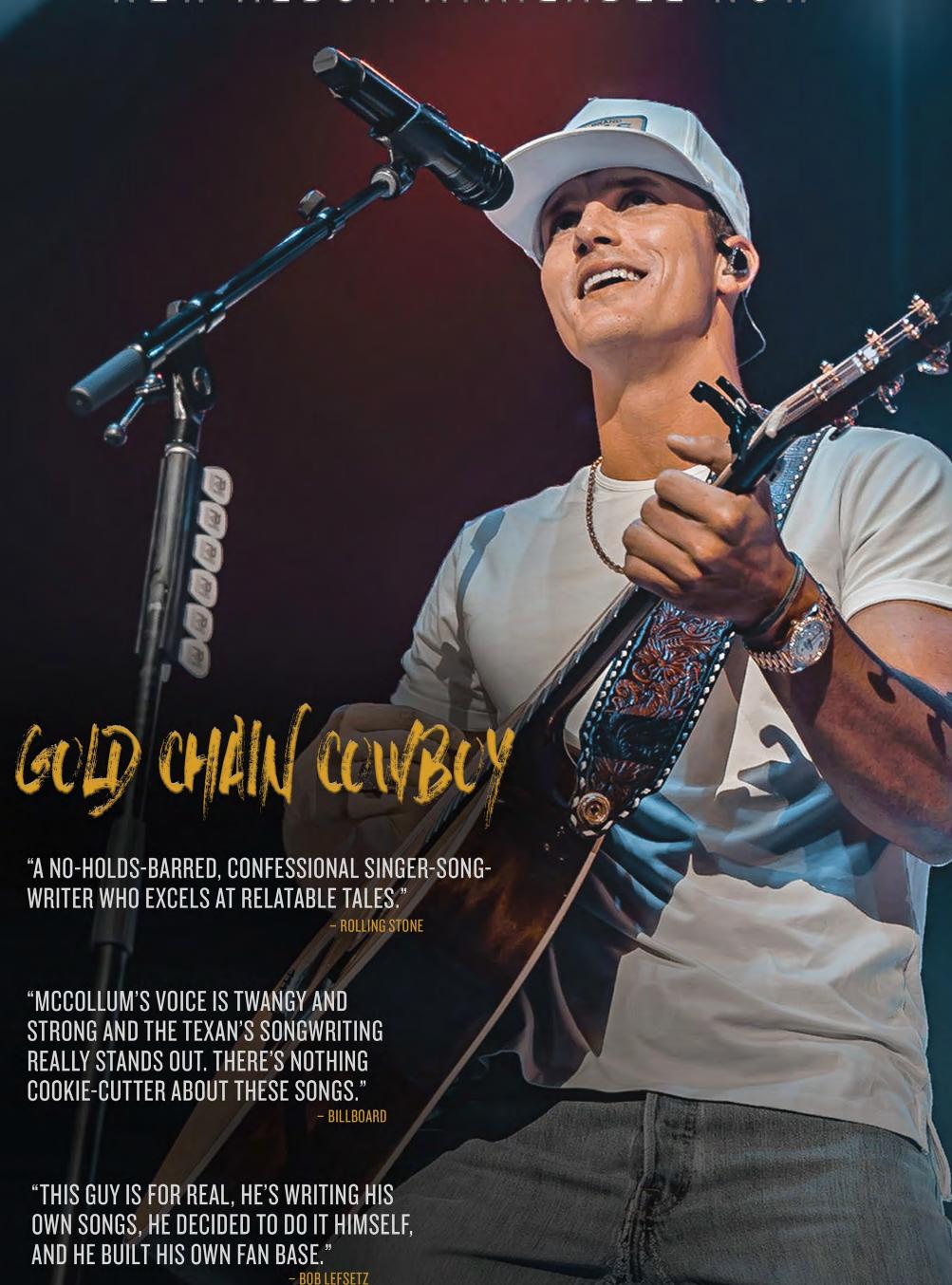
A few years ago, I hung out with Blake Shelton

backstage in Atlanta. Seeing him was great, but I told him I really wanted to meet Gwen. He said she'd be at the sound board, but I didn't want to just rush out there, so I missed her. Two days later, I made the trip to Greensboro to help WTQR with the next show. Backstage, Blake asked if I got to meet Gwen in Atlanta, and I explained I hadn't. That night, the label's Lou Ramirez let me stand side-stage with him, and Blake kept coming over and making an odd motion with his head. We couldn't figure out what he was trying to tell us until I looked across and saw Gwen on the other side of the stage. I waved, and she waved back.

I assumed that was what he wanted to accomplish, but prior to the encore, the stage manager said Blake wanted me onstage. Someone handed me a microphone. "What am I supposed to do with this?" "Boys Round Here" started playing, and the stage manager replied, "Just sing the 'ooh that's right' part." And he put me with the backup singers. I yelled to the sound board, "Do not turn this mic on!" The music is playing, the ladies are singing, I'm swaying and holding the mic when Blake turns around, sees me and shrugs like, "What the heck?" After the song, the stage manager led me down the stairs and under the stage where Blake and Gwen were. Blake gave me a hug and said, "I was trying to get you to go to the other side to meet Gwen! How did you end up onstage?" I didn't really care at that point, because I got to meet Gwen Stefani!

PARKER MCCOLLUM

NEW ALBUM AVAILABLE NOW



MCA NASHVILLE

Buzz Jackson

Better Than It Was Found

He's read dozens of books to hundreds of kids, played do-it-yourself Scrabble with Eli Young Band in the Bahamas, had a sandwich named after him, endured nine Gs in an Air Force F-16 and promised to eat a shoe if Chris Young's "Tomorrow" didn't reach No. 1. (Thankfully, it did.) But more than the wild experiences radio has brought into his life, what KIIM/Tucson PD Buzz Jackson treasures most is ... people.

All I ever wanted to do was be on the radio. I grew up on Long Island listening to some of the best stations in America - WABC, WNBC, WHTZ, WPLJ. I'm sure my mom could tell stories of me listening to the radio late at night when I was supposed to be sleeping. After college, I started my career doing Top 40 in West Palm Beach, Tallahassee and Daytona Beach. The station in Daytona changed formats, and I was out of work for three months. The first good opportunity that came along was doing overnights at New City WCFB/ Orlando, which had just flipped to "Young Country B-94.5." All of us on the staff were new to country music and basically had no idea what we were doing. I thought Sawyer Brown was a guy, not a band, until I was corrected by PD "Big" Steve Kelly one morning. We made mistakes together and learned from each other. After a few months, I was promoted to evenings and also produced the station's imaging.

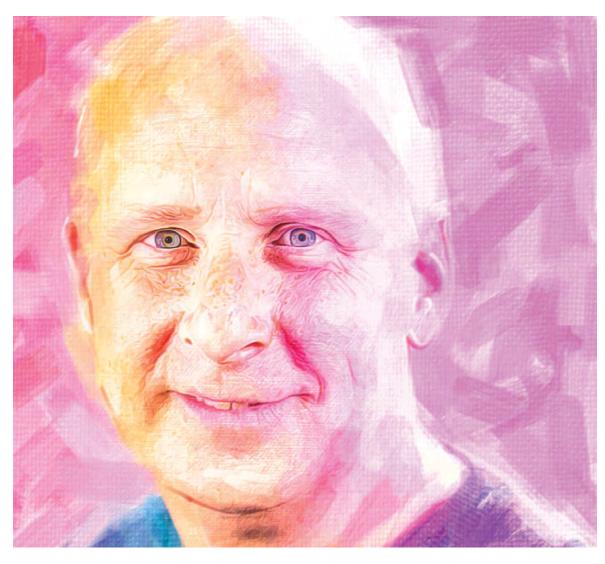
New City gave us enough rope and trusted us to not hang ourselves. It was the early '90s, so Garth was coming up, Brooks & Dunn and Reba were there, and *Pure Country* had just come out. Country was everywhere. After about two years in Orlando, I spent six months at AC WRMF/West Palm Beach, which is where I decided getting out of Country radio was a mistake. Thankfully, I was able to land afternoons at WROO "Rooster Country 107"/Jacksonville, where I went from afternoons to MD to PD. I also met my wife in Jacksonville.

We were dating, and I invited her to the conference room to hear Michael Peterson. It was probably the first time I invited my girlfriend to something like that. We fell in love with the music, so when I decided this was the woman I was going to marry, I set the moment up at *Suwannee River Jam*. We worked out an arrangement where right before from "Here To Eternity," Michael would call me out, then I would call her out and propose onstage. The whole front row is people gasping, "Oh my God!" We didn't have social media at that time, but I could only imagine how that would have blown up if we had done it in the era of Facebook and Instagram.

Bob Glasco didn't say where it was at first. He reached out about an opportunity in June 2001 and promised it was warm. I didn't want to end up in North Dakota or someplace like that. My wife and I decided we'd do Tucson for a year and see where it led. We drove across America in a U-Haul with two cats. Didn't know anyone. Before we knew it, we were pregnant with our daughter. Twenty years later, I'm still here. Tucson's been very, very good to us. It's a great country music town. You've seen the saguaro cacti and the amazing imagery. We've got a rodeo that's almost a hundred years old. It's the country lifestyle on steroids – actual ranchers and actual cowboys.

Craig Morgan and I bonded, and he went on a cruise with our morning show. My first conference room visit was Blake Shelton right at the time "Austin" was out, so it was mullets and all that. The station isn't on a main road. We've got a long driveway, a tower for the AM stations and a big overgrown field. Coyotes and all kinds of critters are back there. Craig and Blake both wanted to look for snakes and whatever else they could find, which was pretty funny.

Over the years, I've seen young people we met at concerts with their parents in the early 2000s grow up



to have families of their own. We had an outdoor show after things began opening up, and I was like, "I hope I get to see some of those faces." And sure enough, they were there. What we do is important, and it comes down to people. People are what makes our business turn, whether it's advertisers or listeners or those relationships. Seeing them reaffirms your belief that everything's going to be okay.

On the first anniversary of 9/11, one of our sister stations had a blood drive and, having a little extra time, I donated. It takes maybe an hour to give a pint of blood, which can save up to three lives. And they give you snacks. The more I thought about it,



Knee Cap(tion): Jackson proposes to wife Dena.

Worst Pace Scenario: Jackson starts at the back for the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure.



the more I was like, this is something I can really get behind. Before I knew it, I was donating blood every time I was eligible. And now we're at 93 pints. Even if you can't donate money or time to a charity, if you're healthy, you can donate blood.

We did Last Man Running for Susan G. Komen *Race for the Cure*. I would start at the very end of at least 8,000 people, and sponsors would donate a dollar for each person I passed. I had a pink station t-shirt and pink sombrero I would wear, and I carried a megaphone so I could yell. People would root for me to pass them. Over the years we raised about \$10,000.

We're live from mornings to afternoons. We even have a live midday person, which is becoming rare. And I've always felt our first duty is to give back. I've been so privileged and fortunate to do what I enjoy doing that it's part of my obligation to make the place I live better. The airwaves of KIIM proved that weight and power, and I don't take that lightly. It was a great, powerful station when I got here. I just hope if and when I leave, it's in as good shape as I found it. The old camping rule...

When the pandemic hit, I transitioned reading to school kids to YouTube and Facebook. At the beginning of COVID, I did probably 30-40 posting one book per day. At that time, a lot of kids were being homeschooled or hopping online to learn. It was very haphazard, and no one knew how long they were going to be in the situation. I wanted kids to feel like there was some normalcy in all the crazy.

Hearing Rusty Walker's voice on a conference call when we launched B94.5 in Orlando is something I'll never forget. I owe him and Bob Glasco so much. I've been lucky to work with folks like Chris Matthews and Lois Lewis. My market manager once said I did a nice job of mentoring people, which is one of the biggest compliments you can get. I've done the CRS mentoring session twice, and getting to meet people who are as excited about the future of radio as I am is a thrill. I'm not going to be here forever, so it's an obligation I feel to make there are people able to build upon what I've learned in taking the industry or their particular station to the next level. There are fewer openings, so radio has to be at the top of its game. We all need to work together to make our product as compelling as possible. If I can help get committed, determined and talented people into whatever's next for them, then that's part of the job.

SHOW DGG NASHVILLE 2021

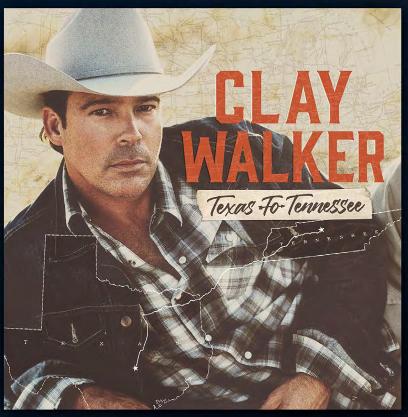
STILL KEEPING IT COUNTRY STRUME



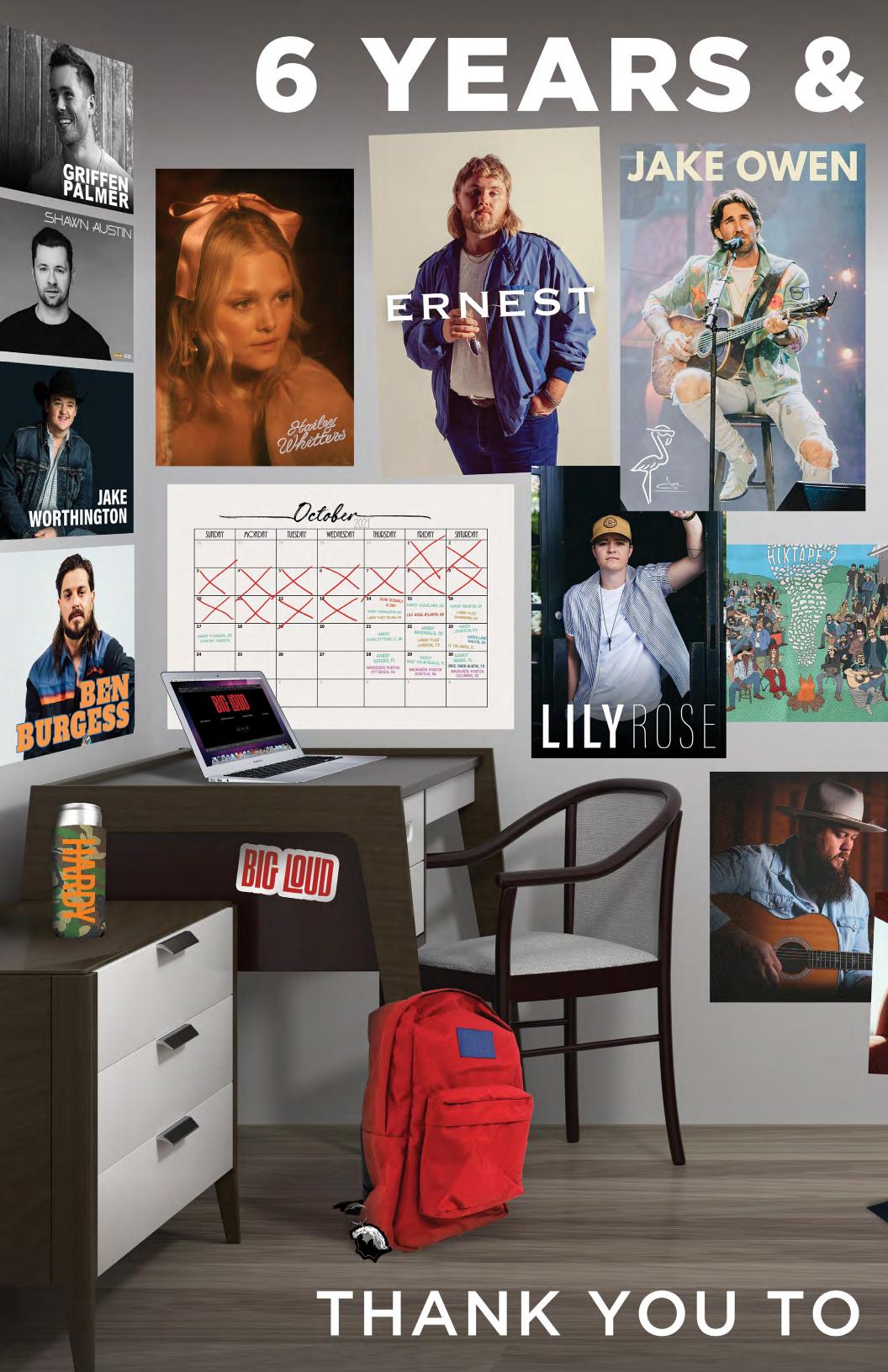
NEW ALBUM PESO IN MY POCKET 10.15.21

CLAY WALKER

NEW SINGLE ANNOUNCED SOON











Bob Pickett Home With The Armadillo

"My mind keeps roamin', my heart keeps longin', to be home in a Texas bar." The lyrics to "London Homesick Blues," written by Gary P. Nunn and performed by Jerry Jeff Walker, helped draw a young college student to the center of the progressive country universe: Austin. Bob Pickett spent the ensuing 40 years there and, in the process, became an institution in the city he loves and the industry he holds dear.

I bombed the audition to be the emcee of my eighthgrade banquet. Afterward, the teacher told me, "Bobby, you're just not meant to get up in front of a crowd with a microphone. Entertaining people is not in the plan for you." I went home discouraged, but I was determined to break out of my shyness. Radio was one way to do it without getting in front of people. If that had never happened, I don't know where I'd be.

I grew up listening to Top 40 stations KOMA/Oklahoma City and KRBC/Abilene. When I was in high school, some friends were working at KXOX in my hometown of Sweetwater, TX. They worked night shift and, after the boss was asleep, they'd occasionally let me do some breaks on the air while they were doing, um, other stuff. I was legally hired on a year later and worked there until I left for college. I'm proud to say that station is still owned by the same family that hired me.

My first week at Texas Tech in Lubbock, I went to the campus station to get a job. I brought my reel-to-reel, but the guy said they didn't have any openings and wouldn't even listen to it. A friend told me of a Country station a few blocks from campus – KEND-AM. I went, the guy listened to my tape and said, "When do you want to start?" He hired me for middays, so I re-arranged my schedule to have early morning classes, go to work, and then have classes afterward. My boss was Lew Dee, who is in the Texas Radio Hall of Fame. I got a great education there. I later worked at Rock KLBK and hated it. Soon after, I decided I wanted to go to Austin and transferred to the University of Texas.

My favorite album, ¡Viva Terlingua! by Jerry Jeff Walker, inspired the move. I just had to get to Austin, and it wasn't necessarily because of the school. UT was okay, but I wanted the chance to see people like Jerry Jeff, Willie Nelson and Asleep at The Wheel – to be in the heart of that music scene. The first weekend I was in Austin, I landed a job at KOKE-AM. I took a break from college and went home to Sweetwater for a bit but then returned to Austin and got hired at KVET-AM. The first event I did there was at a boot company with Roy Clark and Mel Tillis. How cool is that? I worked at KVET-AM until I switched over to KASE in 1986, staying there until I moved to KVET-FM in 2013.

"How many PDs have you had?" People kind of laugh when they ask. I've been blessed to work with a lot of talented programmers and managers: Mac Daniels, Ron Rogers, Bob Cole – they're all in the Hall of Fame. I missed getting to work with Bill Mayne at KASE by just a few months, but we've been friends since I've been here. Mike Carta should be in the Hall of Fame; he's the one who took a chance and hired me. It's interesting having had that many PDs. You learn something from each of them – different recipes, what works. I was actually PD of KASE for a short time in the early '90s, and I hated it. I was much more comfortable as APD because I wanted to learn, but what I really love is being a Music Director.

One of the coolest things was seeing the Highwaymen perform at *Willie's Fourth of July Picnic* in 1985. It was the first time all four of them were together onstage – one of those "oh wow" moments. I was used to seeing Willie three or four times a year, as well as all the celebrities who would be at his concerts. One time I was onstage looking down at the floor and noticed expensive alligator shoes on the guy standing next to me. I thought, "Man, those are



really cool." I looked up and realized it was the actor Harry Dean Stanton. Buck Owens used to come to the station every summer to visit Ron Rogers. It was so cool seeing someone I grew up watching on *Hee Haw*; he was the nicest guy in the world. One time he gave me a red, white and blue guitar tie pin, which I still have.

Brad Hansen and I smuggled Freddy Fender into one of our station Christmas parties to sing carols. We had a luggage cart with a sheet over it and rolled it on to the middle of the dance floor. We took the sheet off, and all of a sudden there's Freddy signing "Feliz Navidad." You can't do things like that anywhere but Austin. I've had offers to go elsewhere, but why leave? This is heaven. Why leave when you're making an impact and when you love your job? Everybody's trying to get to Austin, you think I want to leave? I'm here. I'm not leaving.



Brand New Men: Flanked by then-new duo Brooks & Dunn.



Shotgun Willie: With wife Sara and Willie Nelson.

My goal now is to keep "old Austin" alive. I want to preserve the history of what drove people like me to come here in the first place, and it wasn't just the barbecue. It was music. Being a part of the environment here has really opened up doors to some pretty cool stuff with my Tales From The Broken Spoke podcast. I recently interviewed Ray Benson about his 50-year career. The Broken Spoke's been here for many years, along with many other old dancehalls that have shut down, but we're hanging on to the Spoke as long as possible.

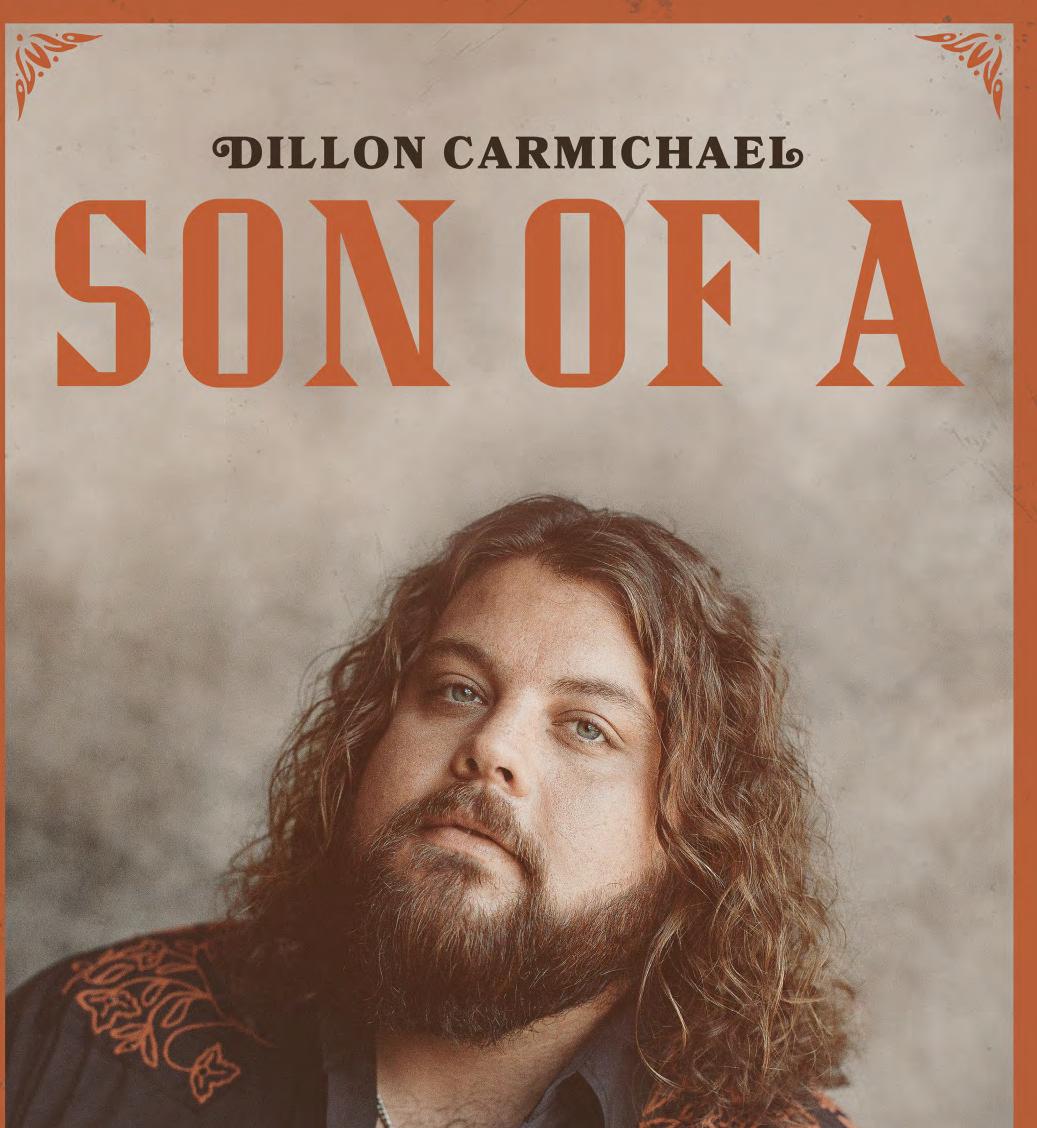
One thing about the industry now, it keeps you young. You have to reinvent yourself every few years. I've been blessed and look forward to seeing what the next phase is. I want to make it to at least 50 years in this industry and I'm not there yet. Just because you're in the Hall of Fame doesn't mean it's the end. Hell, it's just the start for me.



Family Ties: Showing off his KVET gear to parents (l-r) Bob Pickett, Sr., the late Carol Pickett and grandparents the late Beulah and Albert Fisk.



This Kris: Kris Kristofferson (c) with former KASE staffers Cathy Rogers, Sharlyn Kidd, Pickett and Dave Kelly (I-r).





Bob Call

Rocky Mountain Way

In 1980, **Bob Call** joined KYGO/ Denver and helped flip it to Country as its first PD. Four decades later, his role has changed, and his responsibilities have grown, but he still oversees the station he helped create. And KYGO's success has become the stuff of legends: six CMA awards, seven Marconi awards (more than any other Country station) and 82 No. 1 books... so far.

I grew up in Delaware. My father was a ham radio operator, so I guess I had some notion of what a microphone and headphones were, but that wasn't my impetus for radio. In third grade, our Cub Scout den mother took us on a tour of Adult Standards WDOV-AM/Dover, DE. Looking through the windows, I watched the personality running the turntables and doing live commercials. I was captivated. Something clicked and at that early age I thought, "This is the neatest thing; I want to do this."

When I got my learner's permit, I started pestering the GM at the other radio station in Dover, WKEN-AM. I would have done anything: mow the grass, clean the bathrooms, you name it. I didn't really expect to land one of the most coveted jobs for a 15-year-old running Sunday morning programs. After about a year, I jumped across the street to WDOV for afternoon drive. I thought it was pretty cool making two dollars an hour. By the time I graduated college, I was working at AC WILM-AM/Wilmington, DE. I sold advertising for a while but just couldn't get the passion for being on the air out of my system. Eventually, I ended up doing afternoon drive at Top 40 WGNT/Huntington, WV. Having sent out some tapes, I got a call from WSOC/ Charlotte PD Don Bell, who asked if I'd be interested in doing morning drive. I gave that about a half-second of thought and said, "You bet, Don. I'm there!"

That was an incredible experience. WSOC was owned by Cox, and there was great radio throughout the market. We kept investing in the station, building it and one day we woke up with WSOC as the No. 1 station in Charlotte. At one point, Don asked what I saw in my future, and I told him I was really fascinated with the behind-the-scenes operations. He started coaching me in that area and eventually gave me the opportunity to be PD.

That opened the door for Jefferson Pilot, which owned WBT/Charlotte as well as KIMN-AM & KYGO/Denver. They were trying to figure out what to do with KYGO, which was kind of an adult Top 40 at the time; they decided to go Country. GM Steve Keeney asked if I'd come to Denver as PD, and that was another half-second decision. My wife Lisa and I made the two-anda-half-day journey and, amazingly, have never left.

We put KYGO on the air in July 1980. Jefferson Pilot gave the staff from the old format the opportunity to stay, and while that was nice of the company, I didn't have the most motivated group of folks. One by one, they found other opportunities. The first opening occurred in morning drive, and that's when I called Rick Jackson, who was across the street at then-Country KLAK-AM, and we've been best friends ever since. KYGO grew, I moved up to OM and Rick became KYGO's second PD.

Jefferson Pilot President Jim Babb visited the market and asked if I'd ever thought about being a GM. The short answer I probably could have given him was no. I didn't think someone from programming could make that leap. But I'd started a family, Denver had become home and not too long after that, an opportunity to become GM occurred. They didn't ask me; I had to apply for it, but I was very grateful to get that opportunity.

I'm a radio guy; I have a deep belief in what we do. There's no question it's changed. When I got into radio, AM was king, and there weren't as many stations, but the connection to today is pretty simple. It has less to do with the platform and more with personalities making connections with the listener. Even though we're in a business that's always been linear, the magic is the ability to have a listener tune in



and believe you are talking to them in their hometown about things they care about and find important. That's our secret sauce, and it always has been.

As long as we keep focused on our marketplace, there is a future ... regardless of platform. More than ever, endorsements are king because people believe in the air talent, and nothing beats that personal connection. That got results for advertisers 50 years ago, and it's the same today. I can't guess what platform will become dominant or when people will stream more versus listen over the air, but I'm still bullish on radio. Our lifeblood is our ability to create solutions for our clients. We'll find our future by being solutions-based while making a difference in our communities with our talent.

Radio is still a business of paying dues and experience gained. Every couple of months, I see a college radio station being shut down or sold, but it's incumbent upon us in the industry to reach out to find that next generation. I don't think we can just wait for



On Call: In the WSOC/Charlotte studio, 1977.



When You're A Celebrity: With Brad Paisley (r).

someone to come through on a Cub Scout tour and get hooked. It makes sense to shake hands and kiss babies where we can and talk about our business and the excitement of it.

We had a meeting with board operators from our Sports station a couple of weeks ago. I asked about their aspirations and what brought them into the business. All of them wanted to be on the air at some point. We talked about the challenges - that a lot of smaller market stations are gone, or they're automated, or they're in a hub-and-spoke situation where a major operator is programming out of another city. Having been a board member of the Colorado Broadcasters Association for a long time, we still have some great small market operators who are hiring talent, but it's not as easy to find those opportunities. What I told this group is it's not as quick, and you're going to have to work harder at it. Gain the experience you can. It's not any easier, but it's still there. You're going to wear a lot of hats, but there's nothing wrong with that. CAC

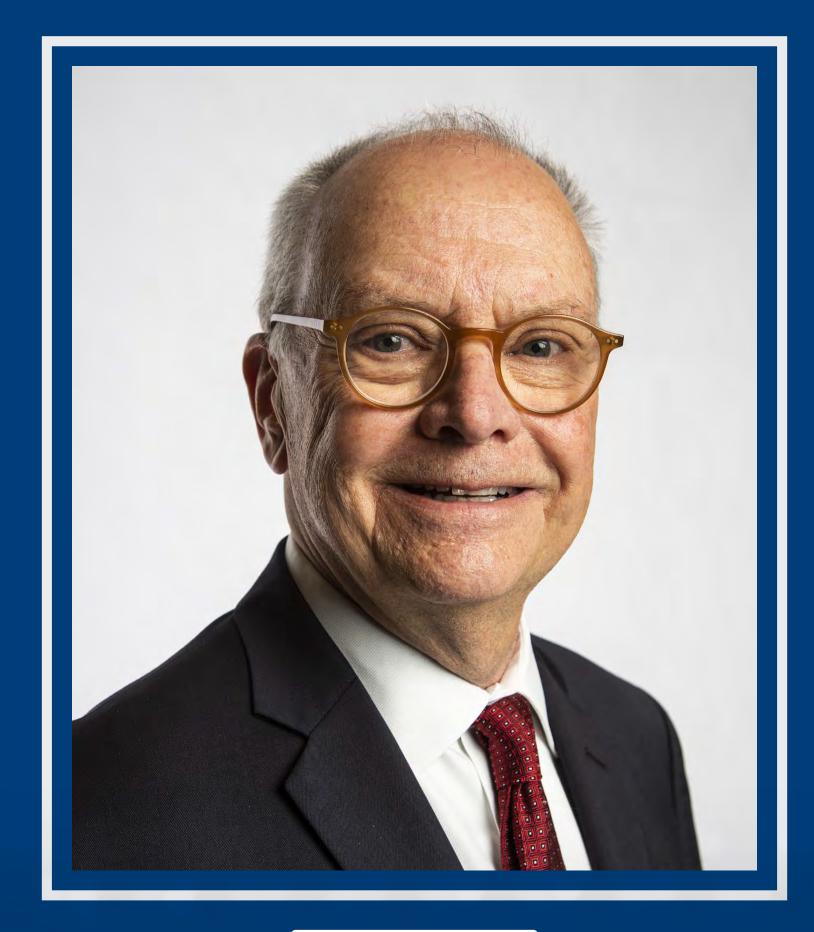


The Race Is On: At WSOC/Charlotte in 1979, ready to drive one of the slower cars at Charlotte Motor Speedway.



7 Up: With KYGO PD Brian Michel (I) claiming the station's seventh Marconi Award.





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Scotty McCreery DAMN STRAIT IMPACTING OCTOBER 18

RUSSELL DICKERSON

4 STRAIGHT #1 SINGLES
6 BILLION AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS
1.3 BILLION STREAMS
#5 COUNTRY AIRPLAY ARTIST OF 2021





Heather Froglear

Fast Friend

A childhood in constant motion set up KFRG/Riverside APD/MD and Audacy West Coast afternoon talent **Heather Froglear** for a career deeply rooted in country music, Country radio and her community.

My dad was career Air Force, and my mom gave up a fullride vocal scholarship to marry him. My brothers both sang and played guitar, and I studied classical piano. We moved all over the U.S., and music was always important. My dad's degree was in mass communications, and he was commander over TV and photography for the Air Force. I wanted to follow in his footsteps and thought about television but got bit by the radio bug.

KSSB at Cal State/San Bernardino was a one-watt campus station, and I was the first person on the air. We played the Rolling Stones' "Start Me Up," and I had the shakes so bad. I cracked the mic, said "106.3 KSSB" and thought I was in heaven. Pretty soon, I had my own show.

I was a headbanger, so it was called *The Mistress of Metal*, I still have the big hair. There was such a rush in getting to play my favorite songs and talk to people about how much those songs rock. Because I was a military kid and moved every year, I'd had to learn to make friends fast. I was chatty on air – a good communicator from the get-go. I attribute a lot of my success to that.

AOR KCAL/Riverside hired me as a promotions intern, but PD Rick Shaw knew I wanted to be on-air. Everyone there was a lifer, though, and I was going to college. Somebody got sick on a weekend overnight shift, and Rick told me to suit up. "On Monday, I want to hear an aircheck." I played it for him and got to keep the Saturday overnight shift. I did that for three years while going to school and working at the campus station.

As soon as I graduated, the PD at KFRG/Riverside told Rick he was looking for a female voice with a promotions background. I got the referral, walked right into K-Frog and never left. The station had a 12 share; it was the big dog in Southern California Country. The folks at KCAL kind of giggled, because here's this blackwearing, big hair, chained, heavy metal loving chick going country. But not one of them said don't do it. They said, "This is the opportunity of a lifetime." They didn't have to do that. They could have been selfish and kept me there doing promotions and one night a week. But K-Frog was a heritage station, family friendly, big market and, within 30 days of working there, I was hooked on country.

Brooks & Dunn came in during my midday show and took over the radio station for an hour. I walked in one time, and Loretta Lynn was talking to our afternoon drive announcer. She wanted a candy bar, so I got one out of the vending machine and handed Miss Loretta Lynn a Snickers. Meeting Randy Travis and having him on-air with me – he was probably one of the first big stars I met. "This guy is legendary! What am I doing here?"

Everybody said Chris LeDoux is a tough, tough interview. Very quiet. I was such a huge fan. Three years before he passed, he came in ahead of a show in the area. My husband at the time had ridden bareback in the rodeo business and had his old rigging in our garage. Chris was the bareback rodeo champion of the world in 1974. He used to sell cassettes of his music out of the back of his truck at rodeos. So, I brought in this dusty, beat-to-hell rigging and set it on the console while I did my show. Chris walked in, looked at me, looked down at the rigging, then looked back up at me with a giant grin on his face. He says, "You mind if I dip?" I said, "No sir, not at all." He put one in, and that was the best interview I've ever done.

So many big moments happened while I was on the air, like when the press release came in that Chris passed. That was one of the hardest times I had to crack the mic. I was on the air when the Oklahoma City bombing happened, when the OJ Simpson verdict was read and on 9/11, of course. Most recently was the 2015 San Bernardino terrorist attack, which was two miles from the station. We were right in the middle of our annual radiothon for Loma Linda University Children's Hospital. We were just panicked and almost couldn't get through the show after all those people died.



What I talk about on the air is not what matters to me. Every day I prep for my show or an interview, I think about what matters to the listener. When you put what's meaningful to the audience at the forefront, it makes you better. It goes back to making friends fast as a military brat. You have to do that every day on the radio.



Headbangers All: The mistress of metal (r).



Ropin' The Win: With Chris LeDoux.



All Heart: With daughter Peyton.

Tim Roberts sent me a Zoom meeting request. Kevin Callahan was on it as well, and I thought to myself, "Oh shit, I'm getting fired." Tim goes, "Heather, I just wanted to check in and see how you're doing. I want to thank you for taking on these additional tasks and our new regional afternoon drive for the West Coast." Then he says, "Sometimes change is good, and sometimes changes need to be made ..." I was like, oh, God, here it goes. And he says, "We're going to have to change your title now to 2021 inductee into the Country Radio Hall of Fame." Kevin turns beet red every time something exciting happens, and I started crying. Tim was laughing his ass off. I just said, "I wish my dad was here."

Radio has given me a lot. Who I am off-air is who I am on the air, and when you're in a place this long, your listeners are family. They have been gracious enough to keep me employed and to let me share my life with them. One of the great things about radio is you think you're giving your audience all these gifts of entertainment and blah, blah, blah. But really, I got the gifts from my listeners.

A listener tagged me in a picture I didn't recognize at first. She said, "Heather, thinking of you." I wrote her back asking where she was, and she replied, "Driving through your hometown of Bozeman, MT on my way to Yellowstone. I just blew a kiss to your dad." I looked again and on the left side of the picture was the cemetery. There's only one or two in town. That she would know that – amazing.

Listeners walked with me through my infertility journey, the adoption of my daughter, the death of my brother, the death of my father, the death of my best friend and my divorce. They helped me find my mother's real parents. I get emotional, but it's okay to let people know you're human. Listeners want that. They want to be acknowledged. And when you can tell people you're hurting, inevitably, somebody in your audience is going, "Me too. Me too." That's the power.

When my husband and I adopted our daughter, she was born missing half her heart. We knew she might need a heart transplant. She's 14 now, and I've made it my life's mission to raise money for Loma Linda Children's Hospital. To this day, someone will reach out and say, "I remember the story of your daughter. My niece was born yesterday in Texas, and she has a congenital heart defect. Can you tell us what a parent should look for?" When people do that, it just means the world. That is my mission. As a Christian, as a woman of faith, I know what my path is now. I may not have known it 10 years ago, but I'm right where I am supposed to be.

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IS PROUD TO INTRODUCE



"Ben Gallaher stands out as one to watch with his authentic artistry, capturing the essence of 'Every Small Town' in his Quartz Hill debut EP. Ben reinforces the true spirit of country music." Leslie Fram, Senior Vice President, Music Strategy and Talent, CMT

"We were lucky enough to have an early show with Ben in July. He made 450 new fans that night including me. 'Every Small Town' is fresh sounding and he is the real deal!

I committed to the single back in July." Nate Deaton, General Manager, KRTY

"Ben Gallaher is the real deal, his music is so relatable definitely stands out and is a great sound for the format." John Reynolds V.P. of Music and Entertainment Beasley Media Group

"Ben is full of
energy and tempo!
The combo of his
songwriting, vocals
& guitar playing
makes him one of
the new raw talent
stars to look out
for." Nick Russo,
Music Director,
KILT



"I thought I would show my FB friends what REAL talent looks like"
Charlie Monk,
SIRIUS XM Host and
Un-official Mayor of Music Row

















Norm Schrutt

City Attitude, Country Heart

From an account executive in Buffalo, Norm Schrutt became one of radio's top power brokers. At Capital Cities, he brought FM Country radio to the L.A. market and went on to oversee stations including WKHX-AM/FM & WYAY/Atlanta and KSCS/Dallas. After retiring from radio in 1996, he became a radio talent agent. He passed in 2020 at the age of 87. Remembering him are Top 40 WKQI/Detroit morning host Mojo – who is inducting Schrutt – former CRB Exec. Dir. Bill Mayne, fellow Country Radio Hall of Famers Victor Sansone and Gregg Lindahl, and daughter Susan Schrutt Goldberg.

Mojo: A Buffalo, NY guy who signed on a Country station in Los Angeles – KZLA – and eventually moved to the south and called Atlanta home. I had to laugh. He had a country music quality to him with that big city attitude. Imagine Al Pacino running a Country station. He was a huge Johnny Cash fan – used to dress like him in all black. I never knew how much he appreciated country until I talked to him about the stations he oversaw. The Atlanta station, especially, was his baby. Even at the end, he'd take it personally if WKHX wasn't doing well. He'd give you the, "Well, when I was there, we did it this way." If he walked into that station today, he'd tell them how to fix it.

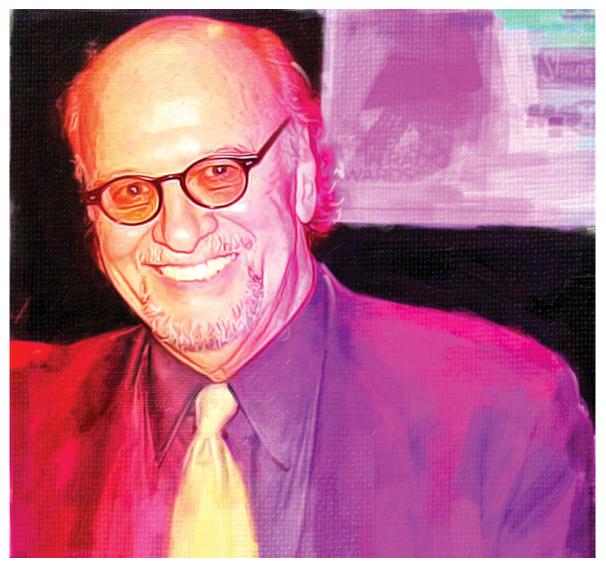
Bill Mayne: Norman was over the top, larger than life. He was a character and came off very brusque, but the difference was underneath that exterior he was the cuddliest teddy bear on the planet. For all that braggadocio, he really cared about people and had a heart of gold.

All the Cap Cities programmers were gathered in Atlanta for meetings run by the radio group head Jimmy Arcara. Norman was a big believer in a well-produced sound for a radio station and, while they were playing airchecks of stations, mine from KZLA/Los Angeles came up. Norman just went nuts. He loved it, and thank God, because I'd been on the other end of that a time or two. Later on, when I broke it to him that I was going to Warner Bros., he went into teddy bear mode and tried to keep me. He was a true broadcaster.

Susan Schrutt Goldberg: Every now and then Dad would bring me to the office in Buffalo to work. On one such day, I walked in, and Dad's long time administrative assistant said, "Oh, good. Susan's here. Norm won't swear all day." To which I laughed and said, "I will not stop that." Seconds later, he came out of his office, said, "Here is the file you wanted," and proceeded to fling the file across the office with papers raining all over.

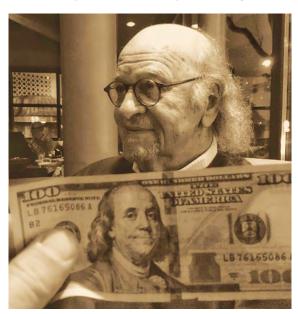
Victor Sansone: Norm hired me in 1977 to go to Buffalo and sell. That began my Cap Cities life. I came from Syracuse making very little money, so I was easy to hire. He moved me to Atlanta in 1983 and, always the frugal manager, paid me well ... but after some great success, not quite what I thought I deserved. So, in a budget meeting where the success of the operating budget was obvious, I said, "You know, Norm. This barely fits my lifestyle." Without looking up he said, "Change your lifestyle." I never mentioned it again, and I took that with me my whole career. He did take good care of me over the years, and he truly appreciated accomplishment. But with Norm, it was always on his terms.

Mojo: One of my favorite stories was Dolly Parton visiting the station. She found him endearing, and of course, she's endearing. Norm could be a charmer





What A Way To Make A Living: With Dolly Parton.



All About The Benjamin: "There's nothing funny about money."



Celebrate Good Times: With daughter Susan Schrutt Goldberg at a Cap Cities Christmas party.

and a flirt. He had that way with women. She spent so much time in his office that day while he held court, the morning show was complaining: "We're supposed to be doing an interview, and you're taking all her time."

Gregg Lindahl: I was negotiating with Tim & Willy to bring them to Chicago. We needed something like \$50,000 more to get a three-year deal done for two guys. I couldn't get Norm to budge from the ceiling he'd let me set for the deal, no matter how many points I made about why we should go ahead. In frustration I handed the phone to Ted Stecker, who simply said, "Norm, this is really important to me." Ted handed the phone back and, Norm said, "Okay, go ahead."

Economic and research arguments were just fodder for Norm to engage in his favorite activity – negotiating. But, hit him with a personal plea, and he revealed his heart. He wanted the best for the people that worked for him.

Mojo: Norm became an agent later in his life and held such an appreciation for talent – on-air and music talent. He believed talent needed to be paid what they were worth. The line I remember was, "There's nothing funny about money." Where some people would laugh or joke about deals, "Hey, I'm just having fun." He took it very seriously. "We're talking about your worth and supporting your family. This isn't schtick." And he meant it.

SSG: Dad was not an easy guy to work for, and when he managed WKHX, he would have me come and visit when one of the girls in the office went on vacation. He had me do everything from switchboard to letters to making calls as needed. I learned a lot about the station and always came home with more money than I arrived with since he paid me like a temp.

Mojo: A Korean War vet, Norm took tremendous pride in serving his country. I called him one time from the Korean War Memorial in Washington, DC. While we were talking, he got emotional. I'll never forget that. And, God, he really loved his daughters and grandsons.

Norm was real to the day he died. Even in the last full, coherent conversation I had with him, he was talking to me about my contract and how he wanted to approach the next one with management. That was so Norm, because he didn't think he was going to die.

He loved radio so much, and that's one of the reasons he loved Country like he did. The respect the artists in country have for radio – it bothered him that artists in other formats didn't have that same respect for the medium.



RECORDS NASHVILLE



HAPPY 1 YEAR ANNIVERSARY TO US! HERE'S TO MANY MORE!



THE VIRAL HIT THAT IS AN HONEST TO GOD COUNTRY SONG

"From years of hard work and vast influence,"
Birge drives these songs to pioneer new sonic
territory within that soundscape, allowing for
his music to serve as a gateway to country for
listeners outside of the genre."

- AMERICAN SONGWRITER

The Top 10 Country Album

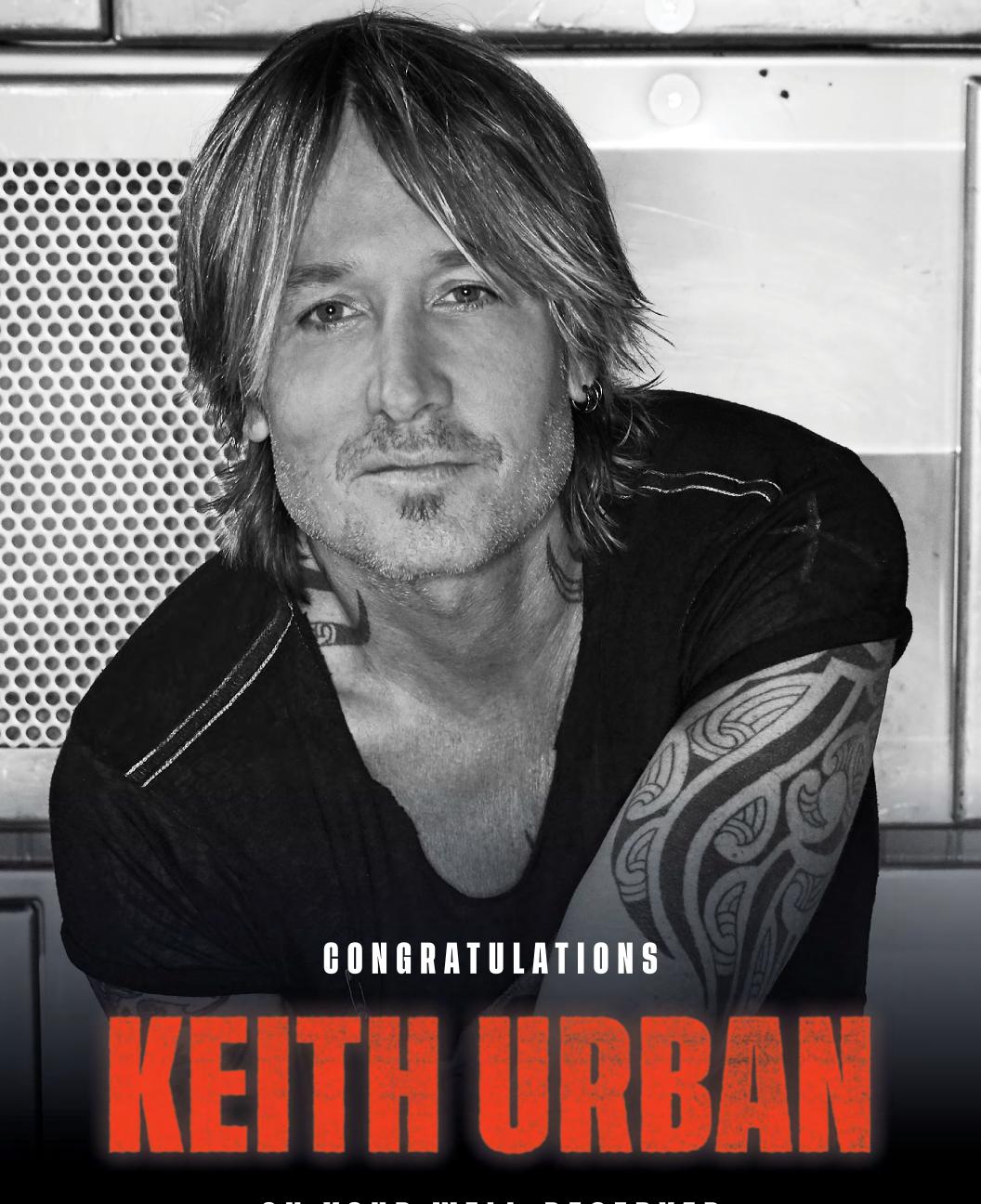
that no one saw coming...

ISEDAL TO



featuring Florida Georgia Line, Kane Brown, Breland, Blanco Brown, Darius Rucker, Tyler Hubbard, George Birge and Chris Bandi





ON YOUR WELL-DESERVED ARTIST CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD





Heith Uchan

Artist Career Achievement

Capitol's **Keith Urban** can boast 24 No. 1s and 43 top 10 singles, four Grammy Awards, 13 CMAs, 15 ACMs, three AMAs and two People's Choice Awards in addition to sitting alongside Radney Foster as one of the select to have played the CRS New Faces Show twice. Ever-focused on learning and growing, Urban prefers to reflect on his career to date in terms of relationships, which he attributes to a commitment to being present in addition to his passion for music and a deep love of radio.

I'm one of the lucky ones who grew up on radio. I was fortunate to have a music-loving family – my dad plays drums – and we always had the radio on at home and in the car. I was spoon-fed radio songs and wasn't ever as familiar with album cuts. I was brought up with an appreciation for and understanding of radio hits. I love a great chorus, a great beat, a great melody and a great lyric. And I really love a great hook! Those are the things that are deepest in my DNA.

When I was in high school, there was a program that allowed us to get work experience. We could choose where we wanted to spend our time. I chose to work at a Country station in Brisbane. I received some of my first real-world working experience there and genuinely thought about becoming a disc jockey. I even talked my high school into letting me set up a small radio station that fed through the PA system. There's YouTube footage of me doing a show called New Faces in Australia when I was in my mid-teens, and the host asked if I'd like to work in radio. I said it was something I'd very much like to do, so I had this deep love of radio from the very beginning.

Before I even got to Nashville, I had spent years playing in clubs. Some people there couldn't give a crap; they weren't interested that I was onstage trying to get their attention and make a connection, so by the time I got my deal, I had all my dues paid. I was able to be in any environment and make it work. But, for the first part of my career, people really getting to know me was the most important thing. I obviously didn't look like other artists, and I didn't sound like other artists – particularly when I talked. I didn't make music that necessarily sounded like other artists at that time, so there were all these barriers to overcome.

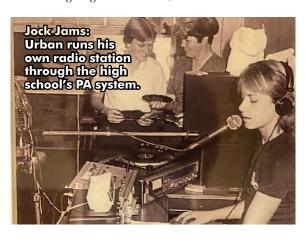
Radio tour was about trying to introduce who we are to people who didn't know us. They might know the music, but not who we are as people and what we're like. Those early radio visits were crucial to developing relationships I still have to this day. But it was also grueling at times, I'm not going to lie. That's why they call it breaking new artists! There's an element to the earliest radio tour visits that are almost like, "Are you cut out for this? And can you go the distance? Because, if you can, we'll get behind you." I always welcome a good challenge and a good opportunity, and I saw that time period as both. I had tremendous people with me. I did the American airline flights at weird hours, stayed in the worst hotels and got up at 6am to get in a rental car and go to as many stations as we could cram in to the day. Then, maybe we'd do an in-store then a gig that night. I recently found footage from one of those radio tours I had recorded myself with a camcorder. At one point, I pointed the camera down towards a fax sheet that had been slid under my hotel room door that night; it was the schedule for the next day, and it started really early and finished really late.



There was a lot of fun in the early days, too. It was chaotic, and we were always racing to get things done. Shows ran the gamut from people who are interested in seeing you to people who are absolutely not interested and make you feel like you're an imposition to them. I experienced my share of those visits with programmers and radio staffs, and I was just the new artist. But, hey ... free pizza!

I remember there being a lot of uncertainty about whether I was a product of the studio. Could I really play and sing? Did I really write songs? Was I really producing? I've been a producer on all of my records from the beginning, but I was asked more than once, "I see you down here as a producer, but do you really produce anything?" I was shocked, honestly. I would never put my name down unless I was intricately involved in the production of these records. I was surprised to learn there were artists who slapped their name down with a title of producer but weren't actually doing any production work.

Want to know the crazy part? I don't feel any differently than when I first came to town. When I write a song or go in to record, I still feel as much



Blue Is Their Color: Urban visits with Paul Allen, Lon Helton and Jason Pullman (I-r) during a CRS Agenda Committee and Board meeting in 1999.



exhilaration and curiosity as I did back then. The only thing that feels differently is I've gotten some more experience and better know how to get to the place I'm trying to get to when I'm writing or in the studio making records. That is still my number one passion. I don't really have any hobbies other than music. I don't play any sport, and I don't hunt or fish. I do love driving cars, but what I sincerely love is creating and making music.

I played the CRS New Faces Show twice, and for me, it was a constant mix of emotions trying to imagine it as just a gig. I tried to think of it as any one of the thousands of gigs I had done where I had to entertain and connect with everybody there, but then I also wanted to remember who the audience was. I was playing to a room full of Country radio – in Nashville! It's not like Country radio in London or Sydney; it's Nashville, and it's the real deal. I've always loved the opportunity to participate in CRS in any capacity.

Over the years, I've become great friends with a lot of radio folks, from on-air personalities to PDs and people behind the scenes. I'm still close with lots of the men and women who have been doing this since the beginning of my career. We weren't out there building my career alone – we've been fortunate to do this for a long time with the help and support from friends at Country radio.

It breaks my heart to see the way the ability to apply gut and passion to radio has been taken away from so many of them, because that's not the industry they grew up in, and that's not what pulled them into radio. Many of my friends are now in a position of having to figure out where their passion level is. They used to be able to hear a song, believe in it, go with their gut and play it. The listeners would respond because they had a relationship. They'd tell me, "Me and my listeners have a relationship, and they trust me. I think I know what they're going to like, and I get to play this song, and they call in and say they love it." That's been taken away from a lot of them.

For me, it's all about being present and connecting. To me, that's what radio is still doing – trying to connect with listeners and continue to figure out better ways to do that and give them what they want to hear while also exciting them with new music they wouldn't have otherwise heard. In my heart, I'm still a believer in the power and importance of that relationship.

Being given the CRB Artist Career Achievement Award is ... humbling. And genuinely a bit surreal. It doesn't feel like that long ago I was on my first trip to Music Row, showing up with my demo tape and trying to get meetings with labels. I was just trying to get a deal and hopefully end up with a song on the radio one day. To have accomplished what I have and still be this passionate about the craft and the business is something I don't take for granted. I am sincerely thankful for all that has been and all that is to come.



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Beverlee Brannigan

One of the most successful programmers in Country radio history, Beverlee Brannigan's commitment to the format has included decades of service to Country Radio Broadcasters and CRS. She has been a tireless champion of the event as a longtenured board member, board officer, frequent panel moderator and deeply engaged participant. CRB Board President Kurt Johnson has chosen to recognize those many contributions with this year's President's Award.

My first CRS was 1979, the year I graduated from Northwestern University along with my friend and classmate Joel Raab. He and I had worked together at the college's WNUR/Evanston, IL. He was a year ahead of me, had gone to CRS a few times and encouraged me to attend. He talked me into it, and I went. On one hand, it was totally intimidating, but on the other, it was very encouraging and exciting, because it was a business I desperately wanted to be a part of. At CRS, people spent a few days just talking about radio, and I knew in my heart that's all I wanted to do. I've only missed two seminars since 1979.

Joel was very kind and introduced me to a bunch of important people. One was Erica Farber – one of the few women at *CRS* who was a radio professional; there were more women in the record industry. I remember seeing Erica on one of the panels, and she'd already been a GM. I looked at her on that stage and thought, "Wow, that woman has it going on. She's been a GM, and she's really successful. I want to do that."

Of course, memories of the performances come flooding back. I remember Alabama playing the *New Faces Show* – all in matching red shirts. I also remember George Strait's microphone going out while he was playing *New Faces*.

For many years, I was the only woman PD on the reporting panel. There weren't a lot of women I was connected to – or even knew – in the industry other than Val Maki, Jaye Albright and Pam Green. Stations might have a woman working the night show, but as the years went by, you'd see women as MDs. Many more went by before there were women PDs.

I began to find myself on panels about women in radio. Those rooms and their attendance were small, but it's where the conversation began. I'm proud to have been a part of that early on. On one of those panels, we were discussing the challenges of being a woman in radio and, when it was over, a male executive I'll not name came up onstage, grabbed the mic and said, "Don't go away mad, ladies." That was sort of the atmosphere. We were a novelty. I grew up with an older brother, so there wasn't much that surprised me, but it was definitely a boys' club. The argument can be made that that atmosphere exists today, but, little by little, we're trying to change it.

I was encouraged to join the agenda committee and became agenda chair in 1985. What impresses me is the evolution of *CRS*. The educational programs, panels and speakers – all the content has improved by quantum leaps. Early on, it was, "Let's get some people, put them on a stage and ask them some questions." Then it was, "I think we can do better than this." I would put the quality of today's panels up against any other industry's functions.

To CRB's credit, there's now a real diversity of people and opinions and willingness to tackle hard topics ... for instance, the Maren Morris and Luke Combs interview last year around race and country music. I don't think most people know how much goes into that agenda with the CRB team and the agenda committee. Everyone associated with Country radio and country music should be super proud that we have an event like *CRS*. It's come a long, long way.



Other formats are insanely jealous. I've had Rock guys tell me they wished they had something like *CRS* in their format. Contemporary music is split into 10 different things, Rock is split into four – everything is segmented. Then there's Country – a big family reunion where it's easier for everyone to gather and talk about our format.

Simple reminders stand out. A few years ago, research was presented comparing what programmers think versus what listeners think. There was a question about using artists' voices in imaging pieces. For



Streets of Bake-Hers-field: Brannigan and Dwight Yoakam share in the glare of his gold record.



The Legend And The Man: Brannigan with Conway Twitty

programmers, those liners are fairly run-of-the mill radio, but listeners perceived it as their favorite artists endorsing the radio station. They really thought it was cool. For programmers, it's a reminder of how easily we can be too cool for the room and focus on complicated messaging when simplicity is the more effective path.

CRS is serious about the process of putting together the panels and thinking it through, so it's helpful to a very large number of people. I was very, very fortunate that my employers through the years supported my attendance, as well as my participation on the board. I'm grateful to each and every one of them, but if they had not, I would have paid my own way. It's just that important.





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Beverlee Bleisch

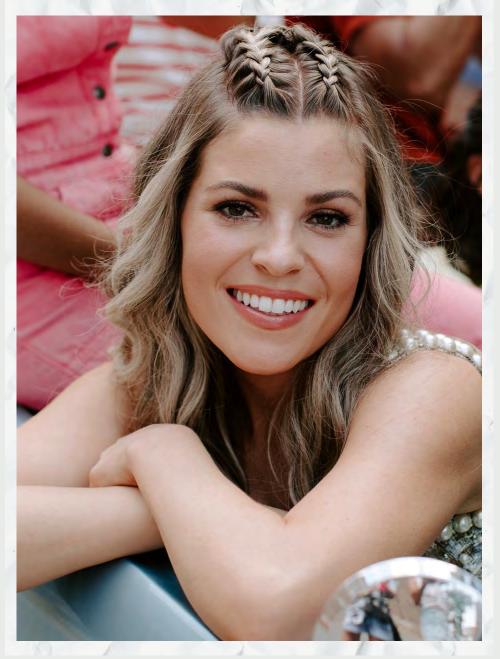
Beverlee Bleisch Agenda Chairperson

Sweet Sixteen: Brannigan's welcome letter to CRS 16 attendees.

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NEW ALBUM, 'GIRL TO GIRL,' OUT OCTOBER 22



Charlie Look

Captain Of Collaboration

rom Wheeling, WV where he was an unexpected PD, Charlie Cook made the leap to WHN-AM/ New York as APD, launching a long run at radio's highest reaches. Among his stops were programming two different Los Angeles Country stations, a Pop station in Miami, VP/Programming at Westwood and the powerhouse consultancy McVay Media. Now Cumulus VP/Country, Nashville market OM and PD for WSM-FM, Cook has reached the point where if there's an aspect of radio he hasn't seen or experienced, it's likely no one else has, either.

CA: How has your career prepared you for wearing all these hats?

CC: I started out as a hillbilly disc jockey. I was 21 or 22, the PD left and ... maybe I was the last one to take a step back, but I got the job programming an AM day-timer in Ypsilanti, MI. Then I did something I should never have done - I entered the Billboard disc jockey of the year contest. There were five finalists: a couple of guys from Houston, one from Indianapolis, Bob Kingsley in Burbank and me.

That got me a job in Denver – where I met Lon Helton, as a matter of fact. That station had some problems with the union, and all of us pretty much fell off at that point. I went to do mornings in Wheeling, WV, where the PD left and again, I became the program director. I got nominated again in Wheeling ... and won. I went to New Orleans for the Billboard convention, saw WHN/New York PD Ed Salamon, stuck my hand out and said, "My name's Charlie Cook, and I live in Wheeling. I know you're from Pittsburgh. If you let me hang around with you this weekend, I'll probably learn something." He said okay, and I never let him

Six months later, he called and asked if I was interested in an opening at WHN. I said, "No, that's too much. I can't handle that." An hour later I called back and said, "If that's still open, I'm interested." So, I went from Wheeling to New York. That's when your eyes are opened. Radio is a completely different business. You go from t-shirts to collared shirts.

I'd met Mike McVay in Wheeling, and both of us became Ed's protégés ... Mike in Los Angeles, and me in New York. Then Mike and I got together at McVay Media. So, you ask how do I handle 60 stations as Cumulus format captain, OM in Nashville and WSM PD? You can do it if you've consulted. McVay Media had more than 100 radio stations around the world. When I left Mike for Westwood One, we had a thousand affiliates. Did I talk to them all every month or even every year? No. But I spent a decade dealing with owners, managers and PDs all over the country every day. You learn to get organized, prioritize and triage.

So, you eat the elephant one bite at a time?

You ease into it. I went from New York to Miami to Los Angeles, and there's no drop-off there. You don't take a breath, goof around or play golf twice a week. I work 6:30am to 6:30pm every day

What in your past prepared you for operating in a pandemic?

Cumulus has 490 stations from Eugene, OR to Melbourne, FL. There's a weather problem somewhere every day. Brian Philips deals with that, not me so much, but when you wake up every day knowing that, somewhere, one of your kids is crying, you accept that your day is as good as it's going to get. You prepare with that attitude. That's life for adults today. If you signed up for a 40-hour week, you signed in pencil. It's not even a 60hour week. Radio is 24-7, 365. You don't close the door and take inventory. You don't turn off the transmitter to fill the pop machine. Something is coming out of the speakers always. If you're responsible for any part of that, those are your hours. You can shut your eyes, get some sleep and hope nothing happens, but the silent alarms on your phone will ring on a fairly regular basis. But in all my years, no matter what problems I've had - personal or professional - I've never had a day where the sun didn't come up.

only working half a day.

Pandemic is just another day's weather, then?

At the beginning - when we had to deploy laptops all over America so people could voice track - that was unusual. We still have people doing that, though our target date for people to be back in the office is Oct. 11. We did have almost everyone for a moment - DJs were walking the hallways, and you could sit down and talk to people. I much prefer that than having phone conversations about what someone was thinking on a particular break.

What is your day-to-day like?

There are little things that have to be done, like checking yesterday's log. I schedule WSM's music, and that's a couple of hours a day. Because we have so many Country stations, I'm listening to them on smart speakers. I'm writing notes to individual PDs. I'm looking at music research, because I do a list for all of our Country stations – a recommended list. Nobody's going to lose their job if they don't follow that list. Our philosophy is, "Your bat, your ball, your butt." If they get too far off, it's just about justifying it. An act is coming to town. Played a song and phones exploded. Research came back strong. That works for us. I went to dinner with the record company doesn't work so well.

No question, it's a full day. A friend called at 9:15am this morning while I was on a conference call. I texted to say I'd call him back, and I did ... at 3:36pm. He said, "Lucky I wasn't waiting on that call." But that was literally the first minute I wasn't on a call, in a meeting or out of the building at a meeting. That's what the days are like, but it's not terrible. I'm not lifting things. I'm not sweating. And I'm certainly not bitching.



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Not specific to you, but is it too much? Do we ask too much of radio people in general? Particularly in the sense of expecting creativity out of people who are buried under a task list?

Yes and no. And I'm not being a smart-ass. We are asking too much if people expect to work a 40-hour week. If you're here at 7:59am and we hear your door close at 4:59pm, we're asking too much of you. By the way, I come in at 6:30am mainly to beat traffic. I have a cup of coffee, check emails, etc.

On the creativity side, you're probably right. I don't know that radio is as creative today as it was 10 years ago. If you're a PD, OM and do a four-hour airshift that's not tracked, do you have time to conceptualize the image of the station? No,

THE INTERVIEW

you don't. Because that isn't the kind of thing you can book 30 minutes for, sit down and knock out. And, yes, the

business has suffered for that; however, Cumulus is a very collaborative company. I can certainly attest to that on the Country side.

We're doing a \$25,000 giveaway, and I can send a note to our PDs asking each to send in two or three liners. Then we share them. Another example: We have a keyword at the top of the hour. Because we call WSM-FM a superstar station – we play superstars – we have Thomas Rhett, Reba McEntire, Keith Urban and others doing our keywords. Pretty cool. Well, everybody uses the same keywords, so I sent them to all the other stations. They all wrote back what a great idea that is, and they're using it. So, we all chip in. I get ideas sent in all day, and that probably offsets some of that issue around creativity.

You touched on it, but what's your overall programming philosophy?

Back to my consulting years and working for West Virginia Radio for three years – we had 33 stations. Essentially, I came to Cumulus and doubled the number of stations. Not a huge stretch. The Cumulus format captains serve as a resource for the stations, answering questions and getting things done. A PD will call from a smaller market because they need help with tickets to a concert or can't get an artist liner they really want. I can generally get that done.

The format captains also have

an overview of the formats and can sometimes see things a month or more out. "Here's what's coming down the road," or "There's a record coming out that you should be aware of," or "I just saw a promising artist and the label may be willing to provide in-market shows." A bunch of keeping-your-finger-on-the-pulse. Also, I can see everyone's scheduling, how their rules are set up and offer ideas or tips. All the stations are your children, and you're watching out for all of them.

What is it about radio that still has power in today's media landscape?

The reach, without question. A couple hundred million people listen to radio

every single week. No other media has that. Some of these streaming companies we're so excited about have five million subscribers. Radio has scores of markets where if that were the whole base, PDs would be jumping off their buildings.

And broadcast radio still does things others just can't. I won't knock SiriusXM; I have it and listen to Detroit Tigers and Lions games on it. But we have a Sports station in our cluster that not only carries the Tennessee Titans, but recently had the Titans game crew – Mike Keith and Coach Mac – call a local high school game. Radio addresses local communities like no one else, and it has incredible reach.

Where is radio challenged? What is it getting wrong?

This is where the programmer in me parts with the sales and revenue side: Radio has too many commercials. This didn't just happen, but the landscape has changed from 60-second commercials to :30s, :15s and 10s. A seven-minute stop could have 20 units in it, easy. That just can't be healthy. I also understand the need for revenue, and that Nielsen changed the game years ago when they went to cume being more rewarded than average-quarter-hour. The concept changed, media buyers were able to take advantage of that and, subsequently, lower the spot rate. That's been a challenge. I wish we could all play eight minutes of commercials an hour, and I'd like to see radio go back to maxing units instead of maxing minutes, but that's never going to happen. So, you work around it.

Does the displacement of people from radio stations and companies hurt Country more than other formats since we've been such a community-oriented format?

I don't know if it hurts us more, but I don't like that there aren't as many people in

the building to do the kinds of things that we used to do. If local morning shows have been replaced by national shows, some companies are doing a national midday show and national afternoons – and most of them have a national evening show – is it just board ops and promotions people around the building? Radio used to be staffed 24-hours a day. CKLW/ Detroit had eight disc jockeys doing three-hour shifts every day when I was growing up. There are clusters now that don't have eight disc jockeys total.

What did we learn about Country radio when touring shut down?

That we need that connection with the audience. I'm not sure who it hurt more – listeners or artists. We still

got new music on the radio, but artists weren't able to touch their fans and build a brand. A lot of new artists weren't able to establish a brand or make any money at all. Listeners made money through all of it, either working or getting paid by the government, but artists struggled. To their credit, some of the bigger artists kept their staffs on payroll. That's amazing.

As for Cumulus, when the pandemic started, we had 125 people working in this building. Today, we have 125 people. We let one person go, and we hired them back. A lot of companies did cuts, and we did three-week furloughs over the course of 14 weeks. But that's where I see collaboration. The 3,000 Cumulus employees chipped in to make sure the guy or gal in the next office didn't lose their job. That

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THE INTERVIEW

speaks to the character of Mary Berner and this company more than anything else.

How's the relationship between labels and radio today?

I don't think it's as good as it was a year ago, which wasn't as good as it was the year before that, if that gives you any indication. The scale is sliding. The aims are diverging more obviously. Labels make their money by streaming, and the streamers apparently just roll over. In their mind, maybe there's an advantage to their customers opening a new present every Friday. We know that's not true with radio listeners, who generally want recurrents. I see the research; that's what they want. So, yes, we're a lot slower.

Streamers want new music, record companies are happy to feed that and they don't understand why it's a different crowd on this side. We have slowed down their process. I'm not sure BMI, ASCAP and SESAC hate us, because longer records mean they're doing quite well. So, I'm not sure labels and publishers are even in concert. The PROs are more in line with us, I'd think.

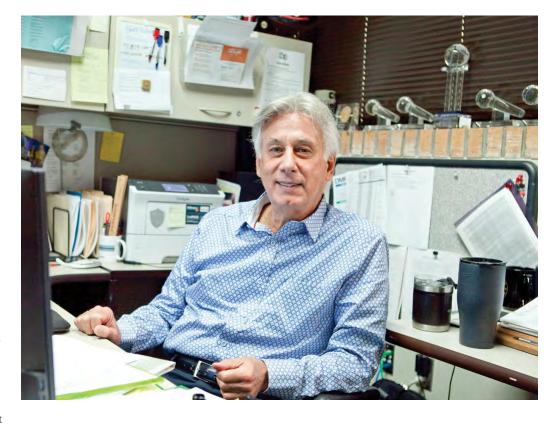
How is Country radio doing on issues of inclusiveness?

We're working our way along. Certainly, there are a lot more artists outside of what once might have been considered the mainstream in terms of race and gender. There are now openly LGBTQIA+ artists in the format, and there weren't five years ago. I haven't seen pushback on any front. Maybe some of them would even say it doesn't have anything to do with race, gender or orientation as much as it has to do with music. I hope they would. And if not, that

we get to that point as soon as possible. The number one filter has to be, is it a great song? If it's a great song, then nobody's caring who performs it. A lot of folks outside of radio don't believe people in radio feel that way. But I'm telling you, that's absolutely the filter. Nobody picks up a record and says, "That artist is gay. I won't even listen to it." They really don't do that. They listen and, if it's a great record, the audience deserves to hear it. This may be the one section of this I get excoriated over, because what does an old white man know about any of this? But I've been doing this a long time, and the music is the filter.

Don't we have to acknowledge – even in business terms, even in more trivial aspects like physical attractiveness – the extent to which a good-looking white guy in a cowboy hat was a preferred decision, not out of racism or sexism, but by defaulting to some notion of audience acceptance?

There are a lot of handsome cowboys who never got on the radio. I once had a



than is currently on Country radio. Of course, we're playing familiar music you can sing along to, so that really helps.

Some of the bigger hits aren't around long enough to make a statement, to really burn themselves in. And some are 60 weeks long. You ask how the relationship is? Some labels won't give up on a song if it's 40 spins down. They've got another station coming on next week, etc. Well, it's No. 47 right now, and neither of us are going to be in the business long enough for it to get to No. 1.

You just alluded to it, but what's the secret sauce behind WSM and its success?

I don't want to give it away, but it's very simple. We play songs you know. Songs that, no matter how many times you hear them, you are comfortable with and sing along to. There's nothing you have to Shazam when your playlist is George Strait, Kenny Chesney, Tim McGraw, Carrie Underwood, Trisha Yearwood, Patty Loveless, Jo Dee Messina ... And I don't have to play all of their songs, just their hits. That's really

There's nothing you have to Shazam when your playlist is George Strait, Kenny Chesney, Tim McGraw, Carrie Underwood, Trisha Yearwood, Patty Loveless and Jo Dee Messina.

label president say to me, "This girl is good, and she's beautiful." My reply was, "She better be great, and I don't care if she's beautiful." We're playing more female records than a year ago, and I put it on the music being much better. Is there a problem in the format? Yes, and we need to do a better job. But I maintain and will continue to maintain we must choose music for the radio based on the merits of the song. Because that's all people hear.

To that point, how is the music today overall?

I wish there was more stuff that wasn't click track, that sounded a little different. Somebody sent me a demo yesterday, and I told them I liked the song, but it sounds like everything else. "Well, that's good, right?" If that's what you're going for, then okay. You can listen to Country radio stations for a long period of time and think that it's one beat and the same topics. My contention why WSM-FM does so well is because we have a wider range of topics and a lot more females to play

the key. I have a great air staff who complement the music and talk about Nashville and the artists. It's not a very difficult radio station to program, and it's definitely not a difficult radio station to listen to.

What motivates you? What gets you excited to get up and come in every morning?

I absolutely adore my market manager, Allison Warren. She is as good a partner as I've had in all these years. She understands my role and how she can help me get my job done every day. That's the best part of the job. And I really do like this company. My comments earlier about all of us pulling together so that we didn't lose colleagues, I don't think that happened in every company. I really appreciate the comradery, Mary's concern for her employees – even to the extent of making sure everyone was vaccinated. I get along great with Brian Philips – great intellect – I respect the CEO and my market manager. You ask what gets me excited to come to work: The fact I don't have anything that makes me hate coming to work.

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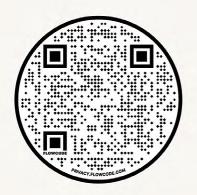
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for your cma consideration: Jordan Davis



MUSICAL EVENT OF THE YEAR BUY DIRT

FEAT. LUKE BRYAN

50M streams and 50k tracks sold in just 16 weeks
UMG's #1 consumption single and #1 active engagement
Jordan's fastest moving single to date – top 25 in 10 weeks
All previous singles certified PLATINUM or better

QUOTES

- "In our business we use the word 'hit' far too loosely but 'Buy Dirt' feels like a legit hit, a career song, for Jordan." **Johnny Chiang, PD/KKBQ**
- "Lyrically and musically one of the songs of the year! Single #5 after three #1 singles and a top 5 already makes Jordan Davis the one to watch going into 2022!" **Phathead, PD/WJVC**

OTHER NOTABLE FACTS

- 1. Tags/Saves Sharks
- 2. Huge fan of LSU Tigers & New Orleans Saints
- 3. Beard Always On Point
- 4. Loves Puppies & Kittens
- 5. Okay Golfer

MCA.