

TWENTY
BIG
YEARS

CONTENT CREATORS
POWER


AMAZON MUSIC'S
MTK
&
ECB
THE INTERVIEW



COUNTRY AIRCHECK

SEPT
2025

BIG MACHINE
20
EST. 2005



OVER 100,000 FANS celebrate Big Machine's 20TH Anniversary on Broadway!

STARRING: RASCAL FLATTS, SHERYL CROW, RILEY GREEN, CARLY PEARCE, BRETT YOUNG, THE BAND PERRY, JACK INGRAM, RAELENN, DANIELLE BRADBURY, AARON LEWIS, DANIELLE PECK, PRESTON COOPER, AND THE JACK WHARFF BAND.

ALEXANDRA KAY SECOND WIND

ALBUM OUT 10/24

FEATURING
"STRAIGHT FOR THE HEART"

IMPACTING COUNTRY RADIO 11/10



The proliferation of media platforms has given rise to buzzwordy titles like “influencer” and “content creator,” which may just be newer iterations of “personality,” “host” or, simply, “storyteller.” This year’s Power 31 asked readers to nominate and rank

POWER 31 CONTENT CREATORS



the most impactful fan-facing content creators in country music, and Country Aircheck compiled representative bits from each. For those reading this in the print edition, links to the audio or social media clips cited can be found in the digital version, accessible in the archives at countryaircheck.com.

1 Bobby Bones, *The Bobby Bones Show*
Known to his followers (1.2 million on Instagram alone) for a “Couple of TV shows. Couple of podcasts. Couple of *NY Times* bestsellers. A big ol’ radio show and one working eye,” Bones and the prodigious team at his Premiere-syndicated show blanket multiple platforms and draw millions of ears and eyes to country music. In one memorable recent bit, members of the show debate whether they’d leave their spouse for \$5 million, or even \$1 million in cash ... with mixed results. “That’s where it gets tough for me – the kids,” said Producer Eddie Garcia. “The million dollars for the wife ... I feel like that’s a no brainer.”



2 Kelly Sutton & Amber Anderson
The co-hosts of Amazon Music’s *Country Heat Weekly* wear many hats across streaming, radio and social media ... including both being WSM-AM/Nashville air personalities. On a recent show, guest Jon Pardi talks about his sobriety, including “jumping off the wagon, and back on it,” and how he feels not drinking makes him sing better, as well as look better. The show’s Exec. Producer, Joyce Rizer, also notes that the “show mantra is that we are building a bigger table for everyone who wants to do country music, and have had guests ranging from Chappell Roan to Sam Williams to BigXThaPlug. Also, super proud that we are hosted by two women (including a woman of color) in an industry dominated by white men!”



Kelly Sutton and Amber Anderson
48 2 7
heyitsambra Honkytonk Hollywood is HERE and so is @jonpardi on this week's #countryheatweekly! We talk all about the new album, his latest trip down under and inquiring minds wanna know...is he still on the wagon?! Listen and find out wherever you get your podcasts! @amazonmusic
April 18



3 Katie Neal, *Katie & Company*, Audacy
“We have an ongoing on-air bit that also has a social component, called Taxidermy Topper,” Neal says. “Artists bring in taxidermy to outfit our wall outside the studio. My pitch is always, ‘Bring me the ugliest, most unhinged taxidermy your wife won’t let you have in the house.’ It has quickly escalated.” Artists who have contributed include Lee Brice, Luke Bryan and Brantley Gilbert. Neal adds, “Brantley is the current leader for the most over the top taxidermy.”



4 Cody Alan
Alan is a CMT personality, author and host of SiriusXM’s *Highway Mornings*. “We used Parker McCollum’s song ‘What Kinda Man’ as a jumping-off point for a conversation with real listeners calling in live,” says *Highway Mornings* Producer Lauryn Snapp. “This is a core part of our show. We believe our listeners are the stars every morning. They’re our tribe, and Cody has always made it a priority to shine a spotlight on others. It keeps our mornings full of energy and authenticity. What’s even better, this particular chat took on a life of its own. We’re still getting calls from listeners who want to weigh in with updates and new perspectives. Proof that when you invite people into the conversation, they don’t just show up—they stay invested.”



Big D & Bubba

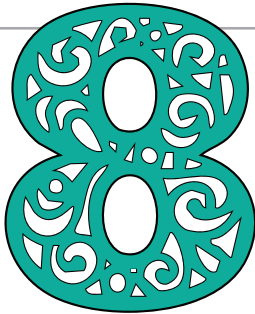
Compass Media/Silverfish Media

After Big D's father, Larry, asked if they'd ever had Taylor Swift on their show, and inquired why she was so famous, the pair pranks him with a phone call, using an AI voice to convince "Larebear" he was talking to the real Swift.



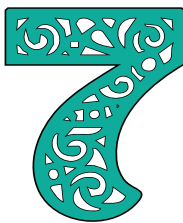
Bryan "B-Dub" Washington

The KUPL/Portland afternooner and namesake of his own *B-Dub Radio* subjects Cole Swindell, Jordan Davis, Cody Johnson, Matt Stell, George Birge, Dasha, Dylan Marlowe and an intense Warren Zeiders to a staring contest, and it's more about who laughs (rather than blinks) first, especially when Stell has a trick up his sleeve: "I got him with the South Side cross!"



Wayne "D" Danielson & Tay Hamilton
Wayne D Show and Country House Party, iHeartMedia

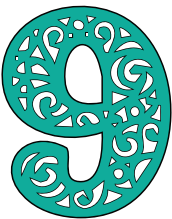
The pair take to the streets of Nashville trying to get largely clueless tourists to correctly identify photos of country stars, while standing outside that artist's bar.



Graham Bunn & Sarah Lee, WKKT/Charlotte

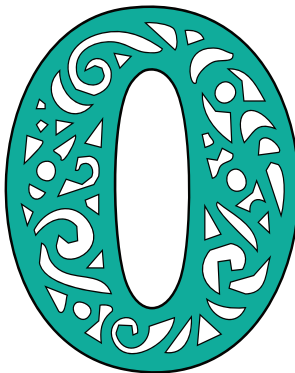
Bunn brought a background in TV, radio, podcasting and a burgeoning social media presence to WKKT/Charlotte mornings with Lee beginning in April. The duo chatted with Ella

Langley backstage at the ACM Awards about that time Bunn slid into her DMs ... and she replied. The pair says this clip represents "the changing landscape and relationship between the artist and the listener, the art and the consumer, the performer and the fan. We as country music fans get closer to our favorite artists and records by the day, and this was a video with one of the fastest emerging artists in the genre and two country music fans who represent all of us."



Kelleigh Bannen
Apple Music Country

A recording artist herself, Bannen sings "Hard Fought Hallelujah" with Jelly Roll and Brandon Lake as part of her "Back Hall Sessions," where she does an a cappella performance with artist guests in the back hallway of the Apple Music studios in Nashville.



Buzz Brainard
SiriusXM's The Highway

Post Malone makes his first appearance on Brainard's *Music Row Happy Hour*, and leads the live audience in a toast. Says Brainard, "This was so fun!"



Volume 20, Issue 3, September 2025

COUNTRYAIRCHECK

914 18th Avenue South
Nashville, TN 37212
615-320-1450

Publisher/CEO
Lon Helton
lon@countryaircheck.com

Coordinator/Design & Production
Addie Morton
addie@countryaircheck.com

VP/Sales & Marketing
April Johnson
april@countryaircheck.com

Exec. Managing Editor
Caitlin DeForest
caitlin@countryaircheck.com

Sr. Radio Analyst
Chris Huff
chris@countryaircheck.com

Manager/Graphics, IT & Administration
Kelley Hampton
kelley@countryaircheck.com

Exec. Radio Editor
Phyllis Stark
phyllis@countryaircheck.com

Art Direction
Jerry Holthouse
jerry@countryaircheck.com

President/COO
Chuck Aly
chuck@countryaircheck.com

“FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, EXPECT TO SEE DYLAN SCOTT HERE, THERE,
AND JUST ABOUT EVERYWHERE ELSE IN COUNTRY MUSIC.”
– AMERICAN SONGWRITER

DYLAN SCOTT

WHAT HE'LL NEVER HAVE

FASTEST-RISING SINGLE TO DATE • TOP 30



HEADLINING THE
EASY DOES IT TOUR

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2025

CURB
RECORDS

11

**Brent Michaels
KUZZ/Bakersfield**

Ahead of Jelly Roll's headlining *Stagecoach* set in Indio, CA, Michaels offers \$50 cash to the first person who could draw the artist's distinctive tattoos onto his face.



12

Scotty Kay

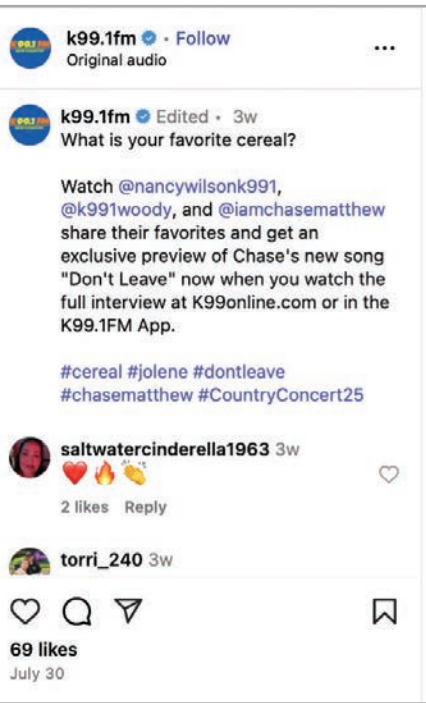
Now on the air at WUSN/Chicago, KMNB/Minneapolis and WDAF/Kansas City, Kay recently asked members of the Savannah Bananas to share their favorite country songs in a series of rapid-fire interviews.



13

**Nancy Wilson
WHKO/Dayton**

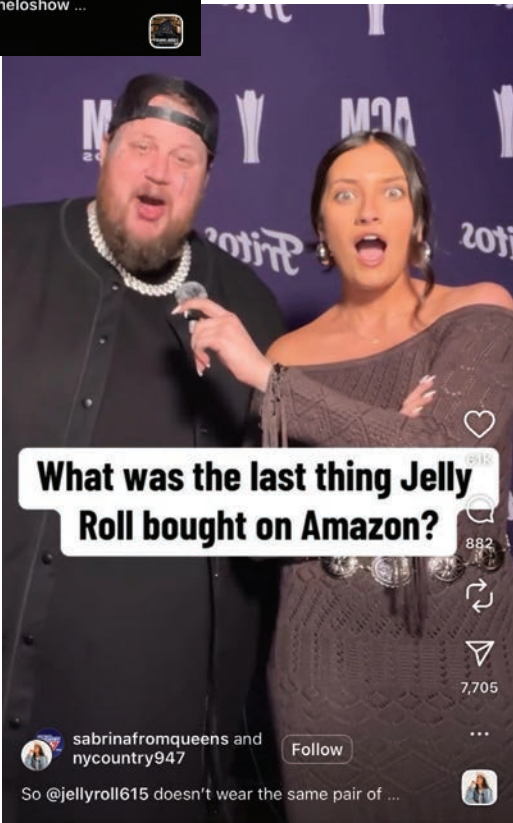
Wilson and morning cohost Aaron "Woody" Woods interview Chase Matthew on his bus, and get the scoop on his favorite cereals, including the one that's "the cheat code nobody knew about." Matthew replied to their post, "Shoot, now you got me wanting cereal again!" @nancywilsonk991



14

**Lauren "Lo" Sessions-Barker
KKBQ/Houston**

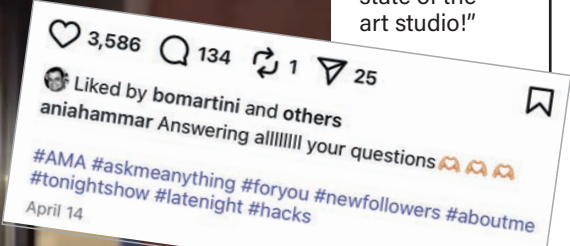
"I like to put my spin on what's trending on socials," Sessions-Barker says of her told-them-I-work-in-radio clip, which puts a glamorous spin on what she really does for a living, as compared to the stereotypes.



16

**Ania Hammar, SiriusXM's
The Highway**

"Inspired by *Vogue*'s '73 Questions' segment, I wanted to create a video that would allow new listeners and followers to get to know me in a bite-sized, entertaining way. An added bonus to filming it the way I did was giving viewers a little tour of SiriusXM/ Nashville's state of the art studio!"



15

**"Sabrina From
Queens" Sergio
WXBK-HD2/
New York**

Sergio says she got more than 3.5 million views on an interview segment where she asked Jelly Roll a question about his Amazon shopping history, and learned the surprising truth about his daily sock habit, which he terms "the most frivolous thing I've done with my success."

17

**Mark "Hawkeye"
Louis & Michelle
Rodriguez
KSCS/Dallas**

"We are always looking for new and different ways to connect with artists," says Hawkeye. "For instance, we discovered that Chris Young is a huge Dallas Cowboys fan. He has become a big part of the show and joins us after every Cowboy game. This is the fifth year he's been on the show."





THANK YOU
Country Radio
FOR AN INCREDIBLE
Summer



MORE HITS COMING THIS FALL FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT TRIPLE TIGERS





CELEBRATING
10 YEARS OF

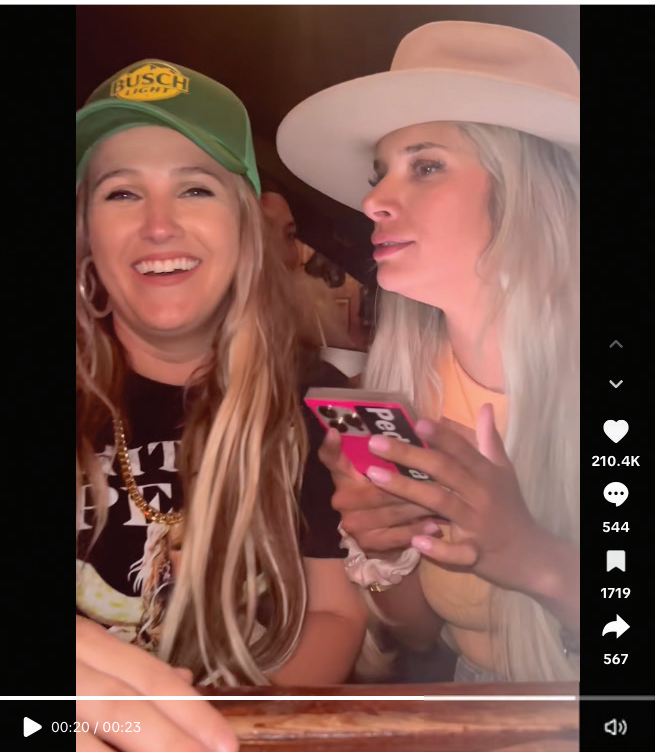
BIG LOUD

R E C O R D S

THANK YOU PARTNERS FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

18

Demps
An aspiring artist and TikTok personality with 1.8 million followers, Demps grabs Priscilla Block's phone from her hand to look for Morgan Wallen's cell number.



19

Elaina Smith
From *Backstage Country* to hosting red carpets, Smith is paying attention. "Ella Langley's viral 'wink' seen all over social media seemed to have confirmed some of that Riley Green/Ella lore, and obviously I had to get to the bottom of it. We're all nosey, accept it. She was *thrilled* to finally address the situation, and we got some good laughs out of it."



20

MoJoe Roberts iHeartMedia/Las Vegas
"I put together a video for the new 'Friends Experience' at MGM Grand, based on the beloved TV show, that performed well on Instagram and TikTok. I'm lucky to have access to so many unique experiences like this in Las Vegas that I'm able to share with my audience."



21

Ward Guenther Apple Music Country
Guenther shares a post where he points to a song that Lainey Wilson wrote, recorded and produced with her road band. "This one is exemplary of my style: informative, if not borderline nerdy, diving into details that might normally get overlooked. But I think it's important to shine a light on cool facts and notable achievements in an environment that can get caught up in clickbait and promotion."



Heather Froglear KFRG/Riverside
"I thought it would be fun to see how country stars do vocal warm-ups before a show at Stagecoach!"



22



23

Ryan Fox, American Country Countdown
"This is an interview bit we did called 'Blake or Fake.' Blake Shelton just has to tell me if the things I say about him are true or are clearly made up. We found out a lot about Blake in a very short amount of time! The interview also aired on our more than 300 ACC affiliates."

24

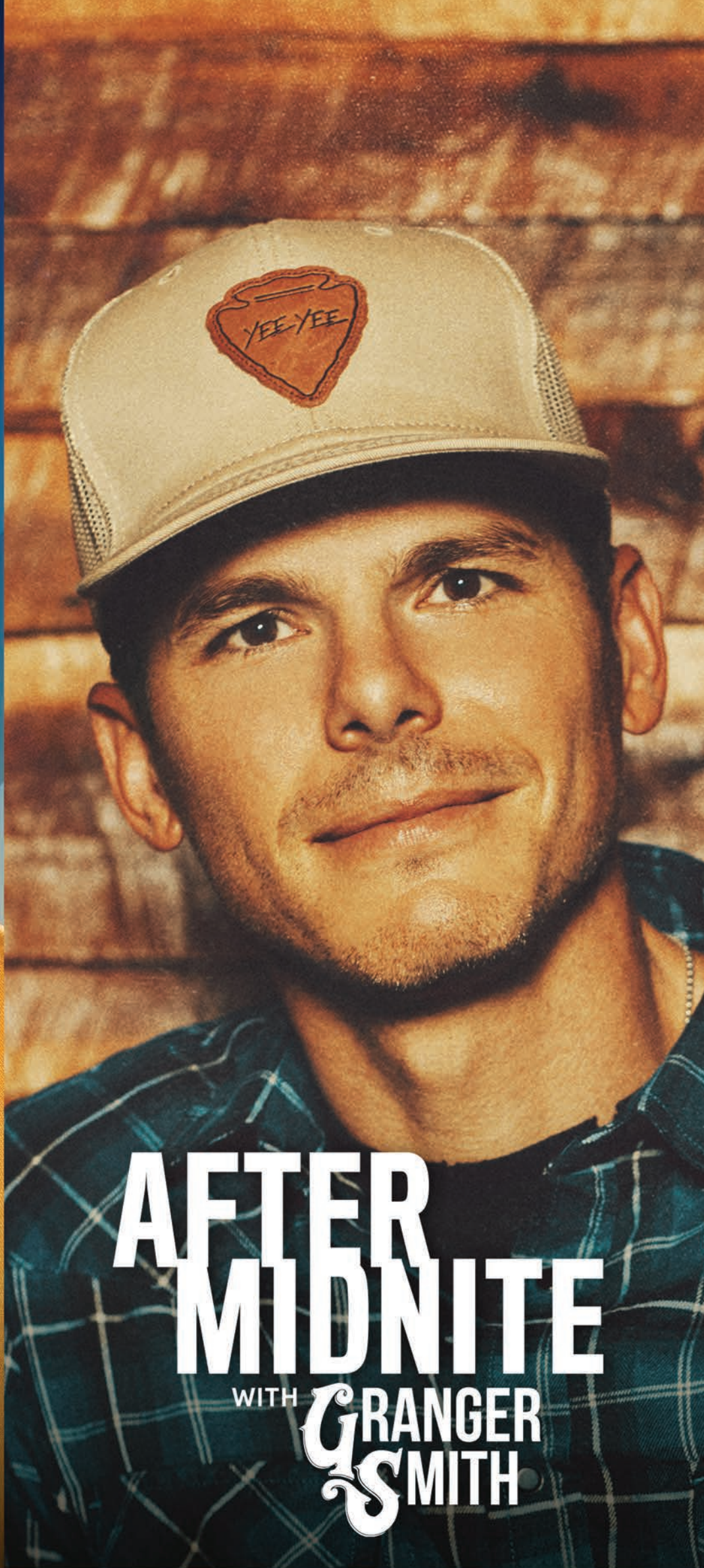


seattlewolf Can @morningwolfmatt join your dad band??? @olddominionmusic
July 29

Matt McAlister, Gabe Mercer & "Captain Ron" Koons, KKWF/Seattle
"We did some research before our *Secret Show* with Old Dominion, and discovered a video of them talking about good signs at their shows. We accepted the challenge to try and get their attention with a unique sign. Mission accomplished."



THE
**BOBBY
BONES**
SHOW



**AFTER
MIDNITE**
WITH GRANGER
SMITH

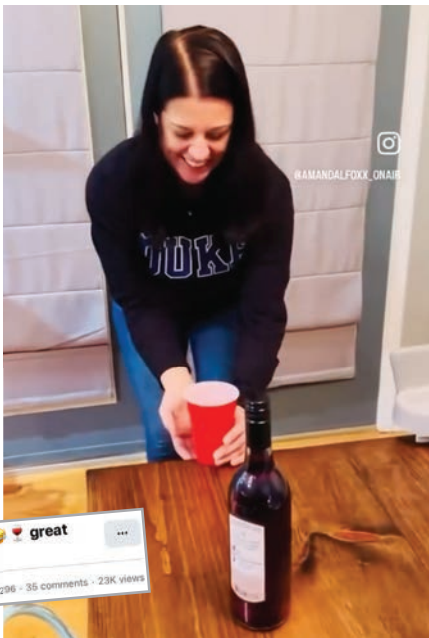
**START AND END YOUR DAY
WITH COUNTRY'S BEST**

premiere
NETWORKS

For more information, contact
Affiliates@PremiereNetworks.com

25

Eddie & Amanda Foxx
WKSF/Asheville, NC
"North Carolina native Scotty McCreery started the 'Cab In A Solo' flip cup challenge ... and *The Eddie Foxx Show* accepted. Amanda Foxx nailed it ... kinda. Scotty was so impressed with her skills that he gave it a share."



It's great seeing the Cab In A Solo flip cup challenge take off 🥰 great job Amanda! The Eddie Foxx Show
296 · 35 comments · 23K views



27

Joey Tack & Nancy Barger,
WIVK/Knoxville
Each week, Joey attempts to name as many '90s country songs as he can after hearing only a one-second clip of the song's intro. "On average, these posts attract hundreds of thousands of views and have significantly expanded our show's reach beyond Knoxville," says Tack.

TEN OUT OF TEN 🙌🙌🙌 How did you do?
#90scountry #countrymusic... See more



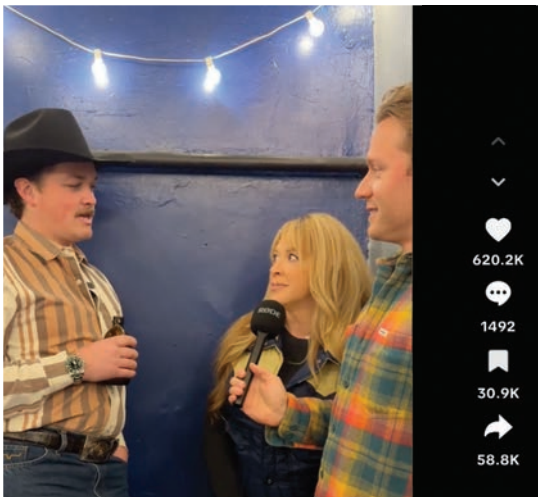
29

Caden McGuire
Another TikTok/artist, McGuire has 2.6 million followers, including Bailey Zimmerman.

Get a bestfriend that will tell you exactly how dumb you are for going back to your ex. Trust the homie everytime!

26

Rob Stone & Holly Hutton
The multi-station Audacy duo try to get to the bottom of the internet-driven conspiracy theory that, due to their striking resemblance and similar style, Zach Top is actually Alan Jackson's son.



28

Al Farb, KSCS/Dallas
"The limited series podcast *enGAGEd AF* is co-hosted with my now husband, Gage. During the early planning stages of our wedding, we noticed that there was not a lot of resources out there for planning a wedding like ours, so we thought it would be a fun idea to not only have an audio scrapbook of our wedding planning process, but also serve as a guide for others to use to help them on their journey. For a little, 50-episode podcast with no goals or objectives, and little marketing, I'm proud to say we hit over 5,000 downloads!"



30

Andie Summers Show:
Andie Summers, Jeff Kurkjian, Donnie Black, Shannon Boyle, Beasley

"We talked to this amazing young lady, Elena, after she hosted a lemonade stand to raise money for Taylor Swift tickets, and earned enough to go to see Taylor in London! When we told her we were hosting a *Toy Truck Parade* [at WXTU/Philadelphia,] she decided to use her extra money to buy toys for our event. Fast forward seven months and she caught Jelly Roll's attention at a festival in Atlantic City, and we had her back in to tell us all about it. This is what country music is all about, ordinary people doing extraordinary things. And we are lucky enough to share their stories."



ELENA MEETS JELLY ROLL BACKSTAGE

1,232 28 58
theandiesummersshow @jellyroll615 invited @elenarose_philly and her family backstage after seeing her sign in the crowd ❤️ Grab your tissues because this will make you cry 😭
#jellyroll @barefootcountrymusicfest
July 2



31

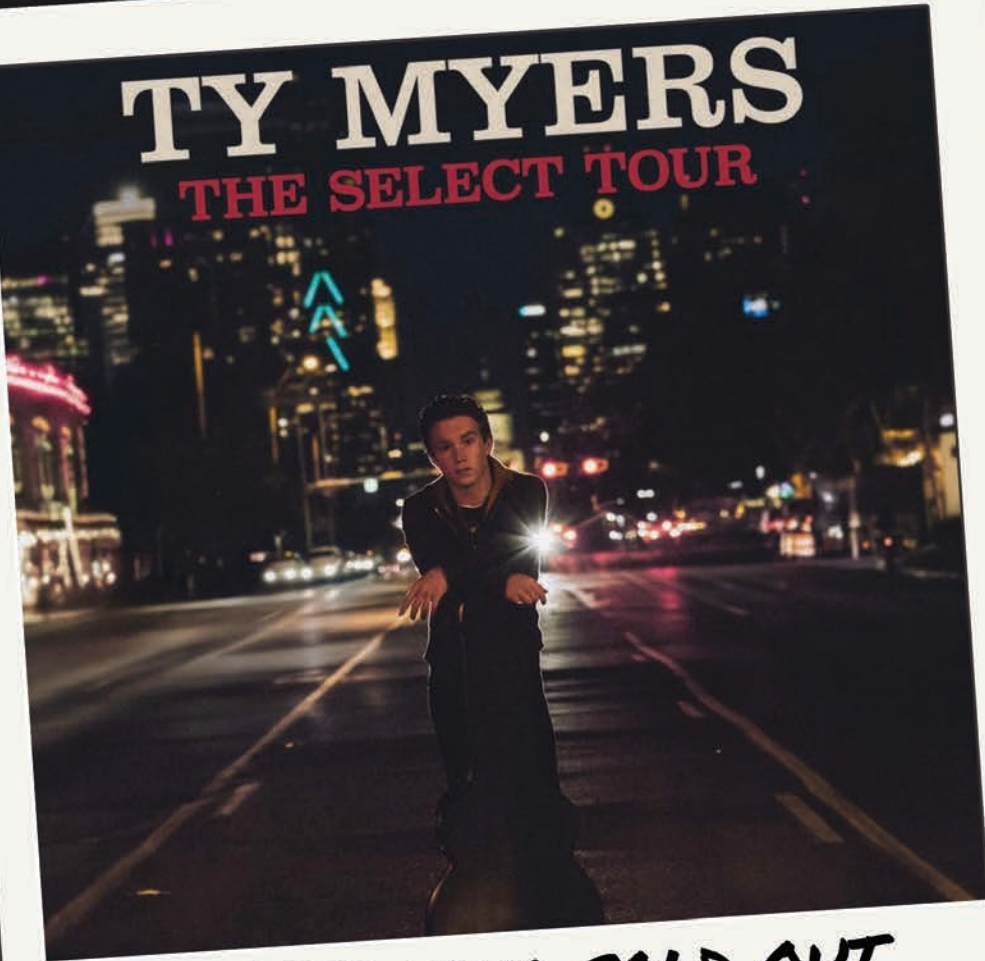
Melissa "Mo" Wagner, Greg "StyckMan" Owens, Audacy
"Our 'big game ad' had people talking. We teased it like a halftime TV spot, then revealed it was actually on social media. Listeners still ask us about it, proof that you don't need a million-dollar commercial to make a lasting impression."
CAC

Mo & StyckMan
As promised... the Mo & StyckMan Big Game Ad is HERE! 🙌 We went all out, spared no expense (well... kinda), and now it's YOUR turn to make sure the world sees it. Watch it, enjoy it, and—well, you know what to do. 😊 #BigGameAd #MoAndStyckMan
170 33 19



RECORDS NASHVILLE PRESENTS

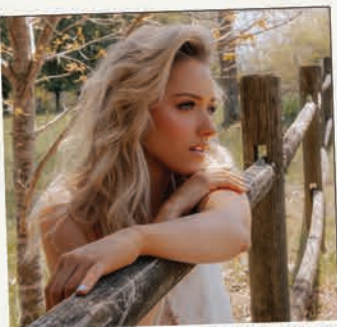
TY MYERS THE SELECT TOUR



2025 TOUR SOLD OUT
W/ ROOM UPGRADES + ADDED DATES
TO PLAY IN FRONT OF 150K TOTAL FANS



2025 ARTIST TO WATCH
750M STREAMS TD



EMILY ANN ROBERTS
NEW MUSIC '25



GEORGE BIRGE
"WON'T BE LONG" GROWING



BRENDAN WALTER
NEW MUSIC '25



DREW GREEN
NEW MUSIC '25



AUSTIN WILLIAMS
NEW MUSIC '25



Scott Borchetta

Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Big Machine Label Group

MIDDLE TENNESSEE

STATE UNIVERSITY®

celebrates the
naming of the



SCOTT BORCHETTA COLLEGE of MEDIA and ENTERTAINMENT

The only College of Media and Entertainment in the world
celebrates the legacy of a true visionary and innovative
entrepreneur who has changed popular music worldwide.

We are honored Scott Borchetta will help us prepare students for
careers in the recording industry, film, television, digital animation,
journalism, public relations, photography, and beyond.

media.mtsu.edu



TWENTY (MACHINE)

Twenty years ago, Scott Borchetta was a promotion executive known for his intensity and the “Domn8” vanity tag on his sports car; a street fighter who put winning ahead of all else. To many – and mostly from a distance – he is a singular figure of drive and ambition who has been almost as demanding of those around him as he is of himself. Now celebrating Big Machine Label Group’s 20th year as its Founder, Chairman & CEO, he has – on top of all of it – added being the namesake of the Scott Borchetta College of Media & Entertainment at Middle Tennessee State University.

From Country Aircheck’s front row seat, however, Borchetta has consistently proven himself to be more nuanced and complex than the pedal-down caricature. *[Ed. Note: One year after Big Machine’s founding, Borchetta*

grew tired of seeing the two-person staff of the days-old Country Aircheck working in a local coffee shop, and insisted they use an open office in his building.]

Over the years, Borchetta hasn’t been shy about sharing disappointments, mistakes and – at its outset – the near-failure of Big Machine. In March of this year, he added more context to that origin story while accepting the *Bob Kingsley Living Legend Award*. “I have an investor who has guaranteed up to \$10 million if we needed it to start Big Machine,” he told the Opry House crowd. “We had a handshake and were going through the contract. I’ve already hired John Zarling – paying out of my own pocket – and have already signed Jack Ingram. I get a call from this person saying, ‘Hey Scott, I just want to let you know that I’ve invested \$10 million into a urethane plant in Morocco. I’m like, ‘Congratulations. What does that mean for what we’re going to do?’ He said, ‘I am out.’ With the way my investment book was structured, if I wasn’t fully funded by Dec. 31, 2005, everything was null and void with my artist contracts, etc., and I would’ve had to start all over. Basically, we would’ve been dead on arrival.”

Discussing that moment in the Sept. 2015 issue of Country Aircheck, Borchetta was open about his personal struggles in the face of Big Machine’s possible demise: “I’m laying in bed thinking, ‘Get to warrior. Why aren’t you out of bed yet? How are you going to win this day?’ I had to fight to get out of bed.”

Pushing through that adversity is only part of the Scott Borchetta and Big Machine story, of course. The successes – numerous enough to fill much more than this issue – speak to Borchetta’s team building skills, the support and contributions of his wife, Sandi, and a vision he’s allowed those around him to share. Ongoing philanthropy, investments in Nashville and contributions to the music community contribute to a multi-faceted



Working For Big Machine: MCA alums Scott Borchetta and Trisha Yearwood on the 2007 occasion of her signing to the label.

view of what Borchetta has built ... and what he will someday leave behind.

Did the Moroccan urethane plant guy ever call you back and admit he’d made a mistake?

SB: Not only that, he came back several years into it and showed up without an appointment. I was super slammed and thought, “Wow, that’s brave.” I literally couldn’t get to him for like an hour. Then he came in, we talked for a bit and he said he had an artist he wanted me to work. Reluctantly, I played the CD. After the first chorus, I pulled it out and said, “There’s nothing I can do here.” He was surprised, but I was just like, “Thanks, but no thanks.”

In your first ever interview with Country Aircheck, you talked about having to call Universal Distribution head Jim Urie a lot. Until Toby Keith weighed in, distribution was a real roadblock for you, wasn’t it?

Yeah. One of the promises Toby made to me as I put the initial [Big Machine & Show Dog] radio team together was that he would make sure I had a very good distribution deal that would pretty much ride shotgun with his. I wouldn’t get everything, like an advance, but I would get very fair



Golden Girl: Big Machine, Taylor Swift and producer Nathan Chapman celebrate their first gold album in the company’s first trade pic in Country Aircheck (2007). Scott Borchetta, noting Swift’s gold dress, emphasized her ongoing potential for success by saying, “I am wearing a platinum tie.” Pictured (l-r) are Borchetta, Swift, Chapman and BMI’s Jody Williams.

Life Is A Broadway: Scott Borchetta (hat) leads the Big Machine 20 celebration last month on Nashville's Lower Broadway with Rascal Flatts' Jay DeMarcus, Carly Pearce, and Rascal Flatts' Gary LeVox and Joe Don Rooney.

BIG YEARS

terms. Universal didn't want to do it. The day of our announce, Aug. 31, 2005, Jim Urie called to say he was excited to continue working with me. I'd worked with Universal from the moment I started at MCA in 1991. DreamWorks was also distributed by Universal. Once we got it signed, sealed and delivered, they were wonderful. But they weren't going to give me that deal without Toby's muscle. They knew I was a super successful promotion guy, but they didn't know if I had the chops to run a record company.

What else from that time do you remember?

Toby said he would invest up to a million, but if Ray Pronto hadn't come through at the 11th hour – it was literally November and we already had a record out – I'd have had to start over. As I mentioned before, if we hadn't been fully funded by Dec. 31, 2005, I could have lost all the artists and it would have been the most embarrassing thing ever. I was going on what little I had and only taking out what I had to with Toby. I was keeping a brave face, but behind the scenes we were falling apart.

“Putting this together I did three projections – a disaster plan, a survival plan and an aggressive plan. Taylor [Swift] has hit the aggressive plan – touchdown. We absolutely planned for success. But did I write down that we'd be double-platinum? No.

“The difficult part was at retail and at distribution. We were just another label – and indie labels go under all the time. There wasn't a lot of belief that we would make it, and I could feel that.”

–The Interview, Dec. 2007

Why was funding a struggle?

The financial book I'd been sent into the market with was all wrong. The team I had put together told me repeatedly, “You build the model and the vision and we'll put the numbers together.” Well, the numbers didn't add up, and I didn't know it. I remember sitting with Mark Cuban's guys at Gilley's in Dallas and, let me tell you, I know when I have closed a deal. I closed that deal, left the book behind and flew to Houston to see the Rolling Stones with [then-CBS Radio exec] Jeff Garrison. I'm having the best day, knowing I just closed at least seven figures. On my way to the airport the next morning to fly back to Nashville, I get a call from Cuban's guys. “Hey, we've been going through your numbers and they don't add up. We're out.” What? Less than 24 hours prior we'd been having a Kumbaya moment. So, as soon as I landed, I went straight to the business manager's office, walked right past reception and told him, “I don't know what you sent me out in the market with, but to a person, everybody says it's wrong. So, you're fired.”

You sold BMLG in 2019 and the typical scenario in acquisitions is the founder is given a three or five year deal to maintain continuity, but both sides figure out they don't need the hassle and part long before that. Why has this been different?

Well, we're four-and-a-half years in. So ...

We were very transparent with them from the beginning, starting with Scooter [Braun, Ithaca Holdings] and then with the folks at Hybe. We operate this, are extremely successful and never lost money. The first two years with Scooter were hands-off. That was in the agreement. With Hybe it's been, “Hit your numbers.” Culturally, it's so different. They do things in terms of being the label, manager, agent, merchandiser and sponsor that we legally can't do. They have true 360 deals, and there was an expectation we would be able to do that, but of course we can't. So it's very different from how they operate, but we have such a robust catalog that we continue to build. Our goal now is really moving tracks to evergreen, while their business is all frontline loaded. It's been interesting to educate each other. Even though we're in the same business, we do it very differently.

Are there ways that you're able to work together?

There hasn't been much directly for the country division. They've had [SVP/A&R] Julian Raymond help with a few things. [BMLG Pres. Andrew Kautz] has had ongoing communication to help them understand the mechanisms of doing business with Universal Distribution. That's been robust. [Big Machine Music Pres.] Mike Molinar had a few writers help them out. More focused on some of the K-Pop things. You can't just put K-Pop and country together to see what's going to come out. Those things have to grow organically.

Was there a hint earlier about your deal being up? How long do you see yourself doing this?

It's a great question. Twenty years ... I've never had a job this long and I still love it. At the same time, we've won everything you can win. I've had at least one No. 1 record every year for 41 years straight. And there are so many things I enjoy doing that are outside of this. I've helped so many artists over the years through what I call the 10-year-turn. Reba McEntire, twice. Tim McGraw, twice. Thomas Rhett is doing it right now and just killing it. He's so smart and committed to his art. Now I'm at the 20-year-turn. How do we reimagine what this is and what I do?

We've re-imagined our marketing division to be completely digitally focused, which doesn't sound groundbreaking. But when you've been doing something for

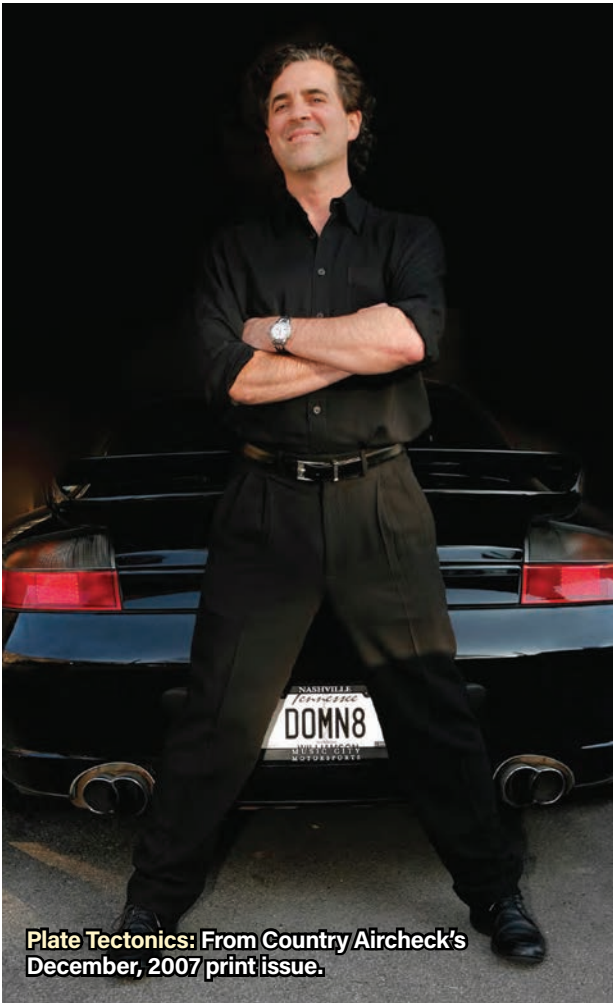


Plate Tectonics: From Country Aircheck's December, 2007 print issue.

HINDSIGHT IS 20: ANDREW KAUTZ

As Pres./Label Operations, Kautz has had a full view of the company's rise but says the day's work has taken precedence over reflection. “We've definitely had some wonderful celebrations of successes over the years, but the music business is about what you've done lately,” he says. “Our monthly revenue statement does give me a chance to look at what we've done. Some of our biggest catalog titles are nine years old and still earning, which is a testament to the work that was set in place to establish evergreen songs in our business.”



Andrew Kautz

Scott's race crash in 2023 was an inflection point. “I woke up on the morning of Monday, March 27, 2023 and was like, ‘Well, shit. I guess I'm going to have to run this thing.’ So, I called his assistant and said, ‘Keep all of his meetings. Put [COO] Mike Rittberg and I on the meetings and we'll keep rolling.’ That was a really interesting six months until he was able to lean back in. For a minute, he was slowed, and it forced him to think through what marketing looks like: Short form, the new radio, what really drives streaming ... all of it. He's one of the most respected record executives in the business, and being out of the game for a minute, he brought back a renewed fire and level of confidence to keep lifting the label up.”

The company acquisition by Ithaca Holdings and eventual move to Hybe brought more key learnings. “The sale and moving into an environment of corporate ownership was a very different kind of challenge,” Kautz says. “Scott is very much a street fighter. We've always said we need to keep one foot in the gutter; we were always ready for a fight.” Hybe have been very supportive of our mission, and it has been a pretty seamless changeover operationally outside of new backroom systems.”

Being 20 years old offers a base from which to operate and has shifted the company's horizon of success. “When we first started, there was no catalog,” Kautz says. “Now, it's not just about a current track or album, it's about moving the current music along with the entire artist catalog. A big percentage of the money we made back in the day came within the first 10 weeks of an album's release. Now, it's absolutely the longtail. As for breaking artists through, what used to take approximately three years for an artist to get real traction, it now can take as much as five-to-seven years to get through.”

BMLG's willingness to take the long view has helped in other ways, including at publishing arm Big Machine Music. “We are one of the very few labels that has an integrated relationship with our promotion teams and our publishing company,” Kautz says. “If we publish a song, we very much support it across all three imprints at radio ... even if it's on another label. That's an income driver.”

Kautz also sees ways Borchetta's influence has benefited the industry as a whole. “[Attorney] Malcolm Mimms and I jokingly call him Scott Borchetta, Esquire,” he laughs.

“He has no fear jumping in the deep end of the pool to protect our artists and find new opportunities for all of us, which allowed us to do a direct deal with iHeart around terrestrial performance rights. He led the charge for Apple to pay royalties to all artists and labels during their free trial period and negotiate better rates from Spotify. Those kinds of things took some bowing up to get done but benefited a lot of people beyond us. That's something people rarely talk about.”

Borchetta's ongoing philanthropy is reflective of Curb Records founder Mike Curb's work with the Mike Curb College of Music Business and Entertainment at Nashville's Belmont University. “They've been dear friends a long time,” Kautz says. “Part of it goes back to Scott being part of the Curb family because of his father Mike's work at Curb. He also has huge respect for Mike Curb's leadership and philanthropy. For Scott, whether it's the 50 million meals generated through General Mills' Outnumber Hunger program, the Vanderbilt Children's Hospital & Big Machine Neighborhood, or newly minted MTSU Scott Borchetta College of Media & Entertainment, he has done a great job about being very specific and intentional in supporting important causes.”

MIDDLE TENNESSEE SCOTT UNIVERSITY



Educ8: At the August, 2025 dedication: Carly Pearce, Scott and Sandi Borchetta, and MTSU's Sidney McPhee and Beverly Keel.

Renaming the College of Media and Entertainment at Middle Tennessee State University was more than a nod to the \$15 million investment made by Scott and Sandi Borchetta. College dean Beverly Keel said the partnership has been in the works for more than five years during the renaming event on the university's Murfreesboro, TN campus last month.

"The College of Media and Entertainment is the only one of its kind in the world," she said. "So we knew that to reach the next level, we would need a partner who is equally one of a kind. [Scott] embodies everything we want our students to learn and to be. He's an innovator, a disruptor, a visionary entrepreneur who pushes the industry forward while never losing sight of the human things at its heart – artists, employees and fans." Keel punctuated her remarks by saying, "Today we celebrate not just the naming of a college, but the beginning of a transformative era."

The event was attended by university faculty, staff, administrators, board trustees, BMLG executives and staff, many of the university's Recording Industry graduates now working in the business and other luminaries including Curb Records founder Mike Curb and Big Machine artist Carly Pearce. Most importantly, the Bragg Building's second floor balcony was lined with students, who were looking down and cheering the news.

The irony of the scene was not lost on the college dropout. "Here's why I quit," Borchetta said. "I quickly learned that college at that point couldn't teach me what I wanted to know. It couldn't teach me what I wanted to learn, because I wanted to learn about the record business ... it felt so far out of reach and there was no specific path of how to get there. [A] college of media and entertainment simply did not exist in the early 1980s, not even in southern California where I grew up. So like many execs of my generation, my first job was in the mailroom. And that 19-year-old me could not imagine getting to stand here today."

Obviously, Borchetta found his way into the business, and his investment now makes him "part of the path [to] help build those bridges for young minds, artists, creators, dreamers," he said. "That 19-year-old me had big dreams, but I didn't dream this big ... My mission is to inspire, to lift up and to give back. Nobody bet on me. Early on, I had to bet on myself. Now I get to bet on others. I get to bet on you."

Borchetta's remarks centered on two stories. "One of my early mantras at Big Machine was 'start at crazy and work backward,'" he said. Explaining that limited budgets in the company's early days pushed creativity forward, he recounted how his team was able to "cut through the noise" with not much more than belief. To wit, Garth Radio Seminar in 2007, which led to a No. 1 debut for Brooks' single "More Than A Memory," and launching Taylor Swift's *Speak Now* with a cross-country flight full of fans and media that contributed to a debut sales week in excess of 1 million albums. "And yes, JetBlue gave us the plane for free," he said.

"While I'm deeply honored, more than anything, I'm hopeful," he closed. "Hopeful for the ideas that will be born here. I'm hopeful for the lyrics that will be written. I'm hopeful for the music that will be made. Hopeful for the content that will be created and the stories that will be told. And most importantly, I'm hopeful for the future leaders who will rise from these classrooms and studios and who will shape the future of our business. So let us celebrate this moment, not as a culmination, but as a beginning. And may this college always be a place of innovation, imagination, and inspiration. So ... start at crazy."

16 or 17 years and realize it's not working the way it needs to ... now we're killing it. Same with [VP/Publicity] Jodi Dawes. I need all those young eyes, ears and ideas. I love that they nip at my heels all day long: "Did you hear about this? Do you know about that?" All of which continues to inspire me. The day you stop thinking you're a student of the game is probably the first day of not being in the game. There's so much to learn.

"We continue to be students of the game, and it's changing so fast," he says. "I still have an incredible desire for us to be successful. There's more to do."
-Print interview, Feb. 2021

Did you acquire Nashville Harbor from Hybe?
It's a different structure. Hybe is a partner, as are myself and [Nashville Harbor Pres.] Jimmy Harnen. We found a creative way to move overhead to its own entity with a very specific distribution agreement that removed a bunch of overhead from Hybe, but continued to deliver to the frontline. Back to their frontline mission. So it really worked out for everybody.

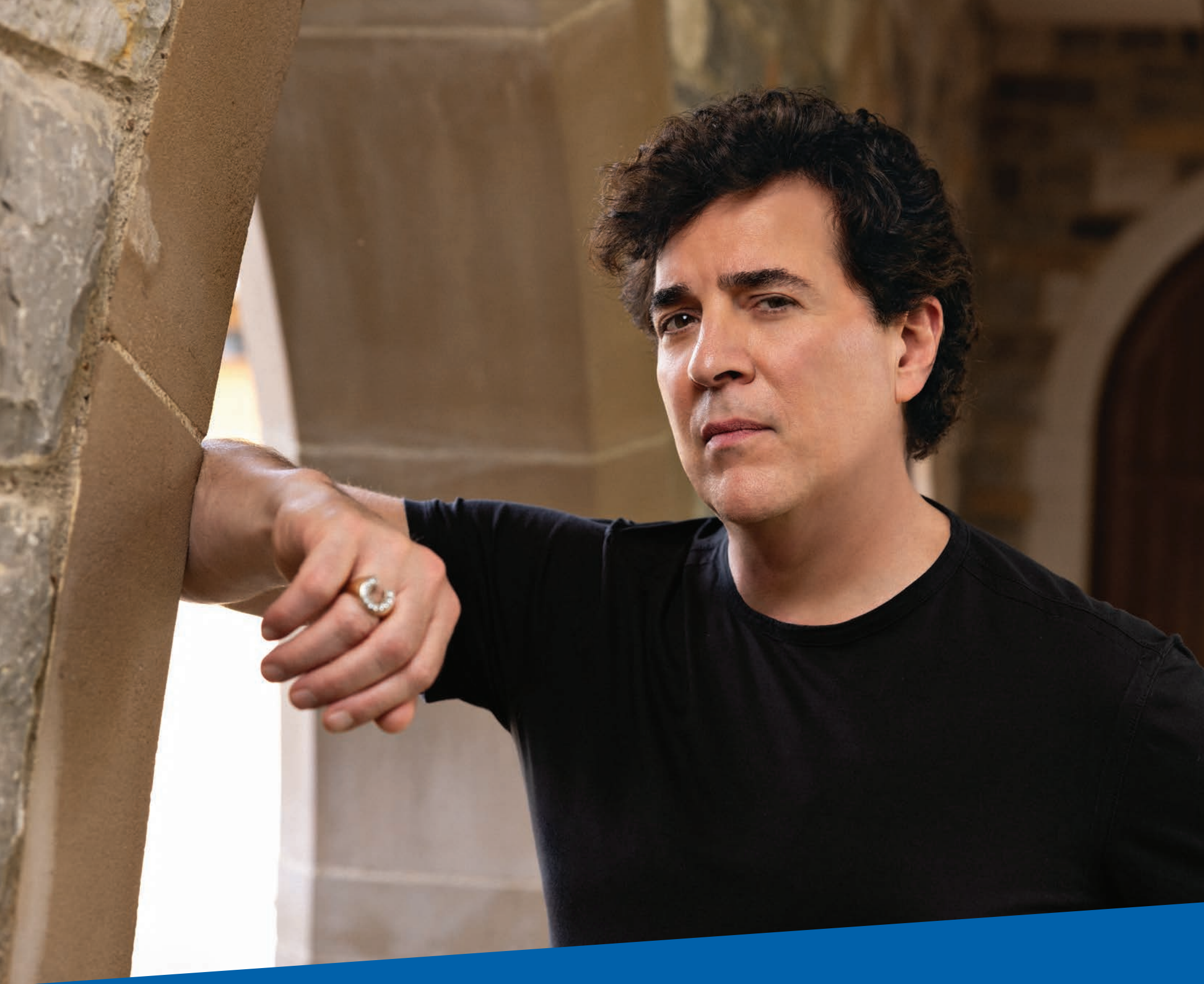
20 YEARS

BIG MACHINE

L A B E L G R O U P

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR PARTNERS & FRIENDS





Congratulations,
ScottyB
on the 20th anniversary of BMLG.
So proud of you!

Love, Diane Pearson (Lady Di) and all your
friends at City National®.

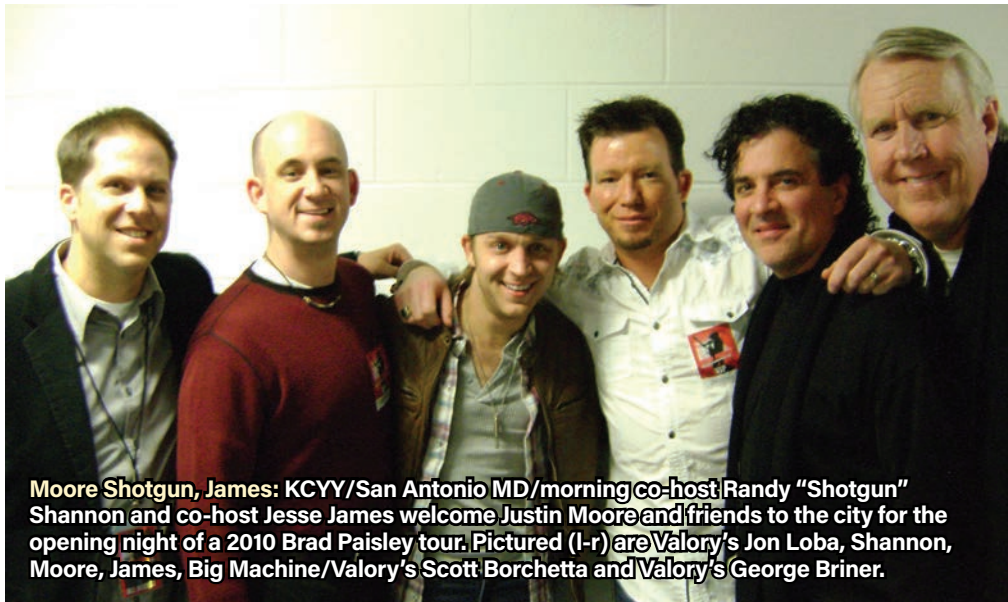


LOS ANGELES | NEW YORK | NASHVILLE | ATLANTA | MIAMI*

*City National Bank does business in the state of Florida as CN Bank.

City National Bank Member FDIC. City National Bank is a subsidiary of Royal Bank of Canada.
©2025 City National Bank. All Rights Reserved. cnb.com® is a registered trademark of City National Bank.

3407447-01



Moore Shotgun, James: KCYY/San Antonio MD/morning co-host Randy "Shotgun" Shannon and co-host Jesse James welcome Justin Moore and friends to the city for the opening night of a 2010 Brad Paisley tour. Pictured (l-r) are Valory's Jon Loba, Shannon, Moore, James, Big Machine/Valory's Scott Borchetta and Valory's George Briner.

Any regrets on the sale? Anything you'd do different?

Major events in life happen and you must be bold in your decision and move forward. It has been life-changing for me and for what I've been able to do for my family. That young kid from a divorced family in the [San Fernando] Valley had a dream to have a better life and steer his own ship. The whole thing has been a massive blessing.

Speaking of the crash, how did working back from that affect you and the company?

March 26th, 2023, my accident at Road Atlanta, where everybody knows I almost died. I didn't come back into the office until July. The first few months I was completely out of it, then I'd take some calls and start hovering as I integrated myself back in. We definitely lost momentum. Not that I don't have a great team, but you realize how much they're looking to you for certain decisions. I remember talking to Lecade when I was in the hospital and could barely talk, but I wanted to close that deal. So I took the call and sounded like Marlon Brando. But yeah, we absolutely lost a year. That's why this year is so significant. We did not have great growth in 2023, started pointing up more last year in going from 14.5 billion streams to almost 18 billion. This year we're going to break 20 billion.

One of the things about being on the sidelines is you can watch without having to be the quarterback. You see what plays don't work anymore. You have the opportunity to write new plays. I could see that we had fallen a little behind. Since then, we've made many key new signings. We had Dolly Parton's biggest first week in her history and busted Riley Green to the moon. So, it was a huge refocus coming back in and seeing the strengths and weaknesses of the label.

Between that recovery and making your 20-year turn, has it made you more reflective?

This part of the year gets me thinking that way about all

of it. Danielle Peck kicked off the Big Machine 20 show with "I Don't." Jack Ingram, who had our first No. 1 single with "Wherever You Are," came back and performed. Back then, and for the first several years, Taylor and I were together almost every day. She had such an extraordinary desire and aggression to make it, and it was so much fun. Then we went crazy. We signed Reba, Tim McGraw, Rascal Flatts, Martina McBride, Lady A, and had massive new artist breakthroughs with Florida Georgia Line, The Band Perry, Thomas Rhett, Brantley Gilbert, Justin Moore, Carly Pearce and Riley Green. The label group's success wasn't based around just one artist. I also think about our huge, award-winning moments as we've won every major award possible from the CMA, ACM, Grammys and more.

Coming out of DreamWorks, Toby Keith had become so powerful it kind of melted everything else around it. Lesson learned. So when Taylor exploded after *Fearless* in 2009, that's when I started the third imprint and brought Jimmy Harnen over. We knew we couldn't be defined by just one success. It took massive focus because more than half of my time was making sure we dotted every "i" and crossed every "t" on Taylor. And we won Super Bowls.

"When you're not afraid about who gets the credit and you encourage people to fly as high as they possibly can, it's amazing what happens."

—Print interview, Dec. 2010

You've been philanthropically minded going back a good way, but you've amped that up over the last several years, right? One hundred percent. I was driving to work

SPEEDING DOWN MEMORY LANE

Longtime Big Machine partners share their thoughts on the label and founder Scott Borchetta.

• Country Radio Hall of Famer **Gregg Swedberg**: "I remember vividly when Scott first launched the label. We were at Clear Channel programming meetings when he and Toby Keith came into a crowded room of programmers from all formats, and nobody had heard a thing about those two working together again. Toby made a beeline for Kerry Wolfe and I, because I don't think he recognized many of the other people in the room. The whole time I'm talking with Toby, I'm looking over at Scott, who has never had any trouble in any room, but I can't get over to him. Eventually I do, and I ask, 'So, you and Toby? That sounds dangerous.' He gave me the Borchetta smile and wink and said, 'Oh, it's so much bigger than that. We are going to change how business is done. Who are the best promotion guys you know?' He proceeded to hire the best promotion staff because he was a promotion guy. He was *the* promotion guy."

• WKHX/Atlanta PD **Mike Moore**: "I was there the day the company was announced at the Global Café in Nashville. My wife Stephanie and I were in the back of the room with our daughter Madison in a stroller. She was eight-and-a-half months old at the time.

"I was proud to be there as Scott's friend, having known him since the MCA days. Sincerely, Scott has not changed one iota despite his accomplishments and success. From bringing Taylor Swift and her mom to see me in Portland to visiting him in L.A. when he was on

American Idol, he's always been good to me and so gracious.

"Standing in that room as he launched in his new venture, there was no question in my mind it was going to be successful. And here we are, 20 years later."

• iHeartMedia CEO **Bob Pittman**: "Scott is a true

pioneer. His visionary approach to the music industry helped him build Big Machine into one of the most successful country music companies, launching careers of some of the biggest artists today including Thomas Rhett, Florida Georgia Line, Rascal Flatts, Lady A and Riley Green. When we came to Nashville to meet with country music leaders in 2012, Scott became our immediate friend and advocate, working closely with us in unique and creative ways to develop his artists and support his business as well as country music as a whole. His strategic and bold approach has reshaped the country music scene forever."



Gregg Swedberg



Mike Moore



Bob Pittman



Our Song: The Big Machine team joins Taylor Swift in anticipating the label's five-year anniversary in 2010. Or maybe they're just celebrating five weeks at No. 1 for "Our Song" in 2008.

*Scott, congratulations on
20 amazing years my friend.
Thank you for having my back.*

AARON LEWIS



GAVIN ADCOCK

"ADCOCK HAS QUICKLY BECOME
ONE OF COUNTRY MUSIC'S MOST
BUZZED-ABOUT ARTISTS..."

billboard

"HIS NAME IS
SEEMINGLY TURNING
UP EVERYWHERE."

RollingStone

OVER **1.5**
BILLION
GLOBAL
STREAMS



NEW ALBUM
**OWN WORST
ENEMY**

NO. **1** COUNTRY
DEBUT ALBUM
& ALL-GENRE
STREAMING DEBUT

"A CIGARETTE"

RIAA PLATINUM CERTIFIED

"RUN YOUR MOUTH"

"DEEP END"

"FOUR LEAF CLOVER"

RIAA GOLD CERTIFIED

**SOLD OUT
HEADLINE TOUR**

Hudson Westbrook

2025 BREAKOUT YEAR

"WESTBROOK'S QUICK – AND CONTINUED –
SUCCESS IS BUCKING THE OLD ADAGE THAT
NASHVILLE IS A 10-YEAR-TOWN."

People

"POISED TO CONTINUE HIS
ASCENDANT TRAJECTORY
IN 2025"

billboard

"WESTBROOK IS ON THE
CUSP OF BONA FIDE COUNTRY
MUSIC STARDOM."

RollingStone

"IN JUST A YEAR, HUDSON WESTBROOK HAS
CAPTIVATED THE COUNTRY MUSIC WORLD,
SEAMLESSLY BLENDING THE AUTHENTIC SOUNDS
OF TEXAS COUNTRY WITH A FRESH,
INNOVATIVE EDGE."

one to watch
ones to watch

DEBUT ALBUM *TEXAS FOREVER* AVAILABLE NOW

TOP 10 DEBUT ON BILLBOARD TOP COUNTRY ALBUMS CHART

FEATURING TOP 20 HIT RADIO SINGLE "HOUSE AGAIN"



HINDSIGHT IS 20 SANDI SPEAKS



EVP/Creative Sandi Spika Borchetta is one of Big Machine's core 13 original employees, though her involvement with the company's formation goes much deeper.

"We all wore a lot of hats," she says of those early days. "Of course I had done photo shoots and videos for years in Nashville, but I learned a lot about the label side of running a creative department. And because of my background and experience with clothing design, hair, makeup and all of that, I was doing those things for our artists to save money, too. I was a team of one, but I enjoyed doing it. Little by little, fortunately, we gained extra creative team members. Now our team is 10 people covering creative for all of the imprints' 38 acts."

Another team member wearing many hats in those days was Andrew Kautz. "For starters, Andrew is such a hard worker," she says. "In the first few months of setting up the building, he was there until the wee hours running cable through walls so we could get internet going. Plus, he's extremely smart. As the years have gone by, he's had so much more put on his plate." Spika Borchetta also notes that playing cards with Kautz is not advised. "He has one of the best poker faces I've ever seen in my life," she laughs. "Something would be completely on fire and he'd have the straightest face like everything's fine."

Among her highlights across 20 years is the video for Tim McGraw's "Highway Don't Care," featuring Taylor Swift and Keith Urban. "Watching that take off was one of the biggest joys," she says. "More recently, Riley Green stands out as a person and an artist - such an interesting guy with a real vision and sense of humor. We've had him in our realm for several years and it hasn't happened overnight, but he kept after it and watching it happen now is incredible."

And on the new artist front, she recalls seeing Preston Cooper onstage for the first time. "Scott told me he was interested in signing him, but I didn't know what to expect," she says. "When he opened his mouth and sang 'Weak,' my jaw dropped. It's been fun watching other people have that experience, too. He's truly talented, different and such a nice guy."

Spika Borchetta admits working with her husband isn't always easy. "The early years were interesting and tough at the same time, but I learned so much," she says. "Over the years, we've gotten into a groove of how to work well together, and we understand each other even better. We've had a lot of great times and if we had any hiccups along the way, we learned how to work through them. After 20 years of Big Machine, our personal relationship and our business relationship are stronger than ever."

She's also noticed subtle changes in the company's CEO. "He's relentless," she says. "When he has an idea and sees how it could work, he's nonstop trying to make it work."

He'll convince everybody around him that it's going to work. And he's still relentless, but in the last few years he's realized that sometimes you have to roll with it. If it's not working, there must be a reason walls are there. It's not that he gives up, but he listens to his heart a little bit better and understands his energy might be better put in another direction."

The creative realm also has some new dynamics. "One of the biggest challenges is the speed at which content has to be generated," she says. "There are times we'd love to have more time to develop and be creative, but keeping things fresh and moving fast doesn't always allow for that. My team wants to be the best - and they are - but we are definitely working faster than we ever have before."

Overall, she's quick to answer when asked about the best part of her job: "Working with my husband. I get so much satisfaction knowing we stayed strong in making Big Machine something that has made it to 20 years. We have more fun now than we've ever had."

Congratulations

TO LONG-TIME PARTNER AND FRIEND
SCOTT BORCHETTA
ON **20 YEARS** OF BIG MACHINE!

...HERE'S TO 20 MORE!

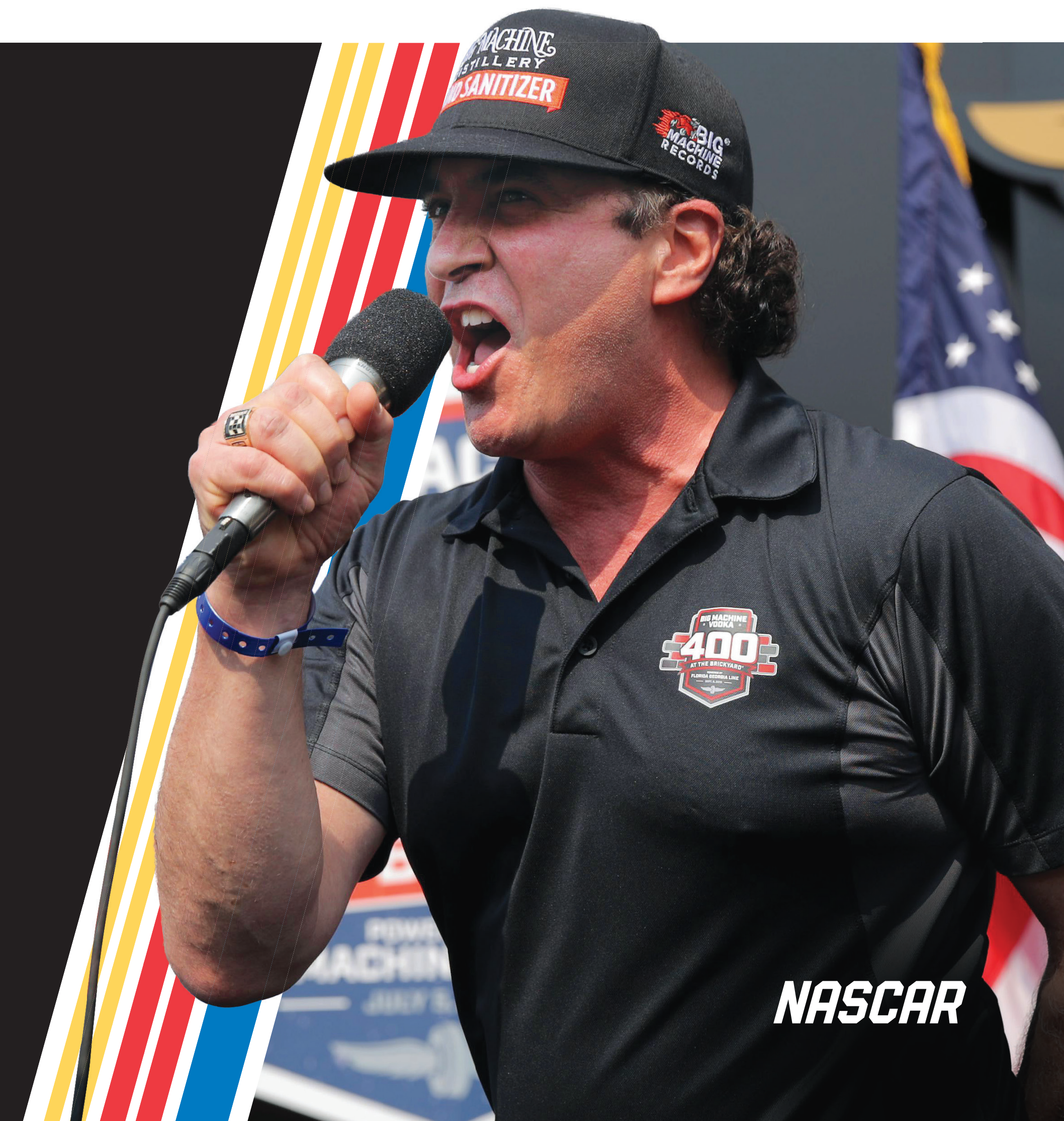
35TH ANNIVERSARY
CHIP GANASSI
RACING

BORCHETTA
— BOURBON —



ALEX PALOU
REIGNING & 4X NTT INDYCAR
SERIES CHAMPION

CONGRATULATIONS FROM NASCAR TO
BIG MACHINE LABEL GROUP
& SCOTT BORCHETTA
ON 20 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP.



NASCAR

BIG MACHINE



EST. 2005

SINCE OPENING ON SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2005

the Big Machine Label Group has sold more than **226 MILLION ALBUMS** and tallied **187 NO. 1 SONGS** with more than **400 RIAA-CERTIFIED TRACKS**.

Artists on the label's roster have scored **76 GRAMMY NOMINATIONS**, **14 GRAMMY WINS**, **54 ACM AWARDS WINS**, and **28 CMA AWARDS WINS**, as well as multiple American Music Awards, Billboard Music Awards, CMT Awards, and more.

BIG MACHINE
LABEL GROUP

BIG MACHINE
RECORDS

THE
VALORY MUSIC
CO.

NASHVILLE
Harbor
RECORDS & ENTERTAINMENT



226 MILLION

ALBUMS SOLD

147,613,640 MILLION

TRACKS SOLD

119,594,324,867 BILLION

AUDIO STREAMS

11,610,555,343 BILLION

VIDEO STREAMS

187

#1 SINGLES



in 2011, and it washed over me that we'd become an industry leader, but we just weren't doing enough. It seemed that in no time flat we had gotten word that one of General Mills' agents wanted to fly down and present an idea to us. A lot of times these companies are looking for one superstar artist to cover all the media needs and they end up not getting everything they want and need while paying through the nose. We changed the mission for General Mills to take advantage of the entire label group roster to over-deliver all their media needs for their new hunger initiative. That idea became Outnumber Hunger and the slogan: "It takes a Big Machine to Outnumber Hunger." When we approached the artists, it became a pretty easy sell when we told them, "Four out of 10 children in Middle Tennessee go to bed hungry every night."

We had Cheerios boxes with Reba on the front and our new artists on the back. We were on Yoplait yogurt; so many products. Over seven years we did more than 50 million meals to Second Harvest Food Banks. We felt so much pride around that.

That was the first big chunk of work that felt like what we were supposed to be doing. Then it was, "What more can we do?" That's where Music Has Value was born, as well as the Big Machine Neighborhood at Vanderbilt's Monroe Carrell Children's Hospital.

Two or three times a year, Sandi and I will get a letter at the house from someone who is so thankful, saying, "We never thought we'd need neonatal care, but thank God it was there when we did." At the ribbon cutting, I saw Jimmy Harnen get very emotional and I asked if he was okay. He said, "It's because we had to do this with [my son] Luke." [Ed. Note: Borchetta paused the interview at this point for a few minutes.] Sorry, thinking about that moment with Jimmy ...

I understand. So, are you thinking about legacy more? My heroes in the record business were Mo Ostin and Ahmet Ertegun. Unless you're in the business, does anyone really look back and appreciate what they did? Do they even know who Jimmy Iovine is? If Jimmy and Dre didn't do the big USC integration, young people might not even know about Jimmy's historic production, artist, and label contributions. So, I don't really worry about legacy. I worry about the work. If people look back and go, "Man, they did good work," that's enough.

"The moment that you think you've cleared the mountain, and there's not another mountain, that is the beginning of the end, as far as momentum goes. Keith Richards has this great quote: 'I wish I could just keep the band on the road because we keep getting better.' That's how I've always felt. There are moments where you lift your head up, but more often than not, keep your head down."
-The Interview, June 2009



Let My People Go: WSIX/Nashville PD Jon Anthony parts the Rhett sea during a 2012 visit to the BMLG offices to meet Valory's Thomas Rhett. Pictured (l-r) are Matthew Hargis, Megan Knutson, Jack Purcell, Scott Borchetta, George Briner, Rhett, Anthony, Jimmy Harnen, Jo-Jamie Hahr, Brooke Yancey and Stacy Blythe.



TaylorHeartsRadio, Guys: The big guys hang with Big Machine's Taylor Swift at the 2012 iHeartRadio Music Festival in Las Vegas. Pictured (l-r) are BMLG's Scott Borchetta, Clear Channel's Bob Pittman, Swift and CC's Tom Poleman.



Cogs In The Big Machine: Florida Georgia Line celebrate American Country Awards wins in 2013. Pictured (l-r) are FGL's Brian Kelley, BMLG's Scott Borchetta, FGL's Tyler Hubbard, Justin Moore, and BMLG's Sandi Spika Borchetta and Jimmy Harnen.

Outside of Mike Curb, you're now the longest tenured label head in Nashville. Would you have ever envisioned that for yourself?

Never. Because just until yesterday, I still thought I was 35. Haha. But if you're plugged into music and working with young people, our business keeps you young. Age is really only what's upstairs.

Beyond philanthropy, do you feel responsibility to the country music community to leave something behind for future generations?

It's really fun to see so much of our DNA in the business with things we did and things that people replicated. How we changed radio promotion. And now following Mike Curb's lead and being philanthropic. I hope that reminds people that it's our job to give back, to make things better. And I know we've done that and are doing that.

Things like the Borchetta Bourbon Music City Grand Prix aren't big sources of income, but they're an investment in Nashville. As is our distillery and other

things we've been involved with. Those of us who have been here for a while can be really proud of what we've built. You want to complain about traffic? Look around. The reason people want to come here is we've done a great job of building it. And by we, I mean all of us. We built this city.

What's your take on the current country business landscape, and all the influx and influence that entails?

Things are obviously happening for which we don't have answers yet. When you come in and disrupt a financial ecosystem ... we don't know the outcome of that. One thing we do know with talent, be it music, racing or executive, when you give them a bunch of money before they've done any work, there's the question of whether the work ethic survives. And we've got real-time examples both ways.

If you have to overpay because they won't sign with you unless you do, is that the right thing? Success and failure are all around us. That's just the business. But I'm hearing too many stories like, "Well, I signed with

St. Jude patient **Cypress** with country music artist **Sam Hunt**



Music saves lives. So does St. Jude.

Thank you for supporting the kids of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital® facing cancer and other life-threatening diseases. We believe that every child deserves a chance to live their best life and celebrate every moment, and you help make that possible. Your generosity means that families never receive a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing or food – so they can focus on helping their child live. Together, we will continue the fight against childhood cancer, and we won't stop until no child dies from cancer.

Become a Partner in Hope
musicgives.org



**Congratulations, Scott & team on
20 INCREDIBLE YEARS OF BMLG.
Cheers to many more!**

*with love from the Crüe,
Vince, Nikki, Tommy, John*





Eight Is Enough: Taylor Swift, Florida Georgia Line and some very close friends celebrate their CMA trophies in 2013. Pictured (back, l-r) are BMLG/Republic Nashville's Jimmy Harnen, Universal Republic's Avery Lipman, FGL's Tyler Hubbard and BMLG's Scott Borchetta; (front, l-r) are Universal Republic's Monte Lipman, FGL's Brian Kelley, Swift and Universal's Lucian Grainge.



Same Ol' Situation: Just another typical night at CRS 2014 as Motley Crue's Vince Neil (l) hangs with Borchetta at the label's second party of the week.



Record Players: Dot's Steven Tyler (r) is presented with the first vinyl copy of *We're All Somebody From Somewhere* by the Borchettas in 2016.



Pace To The Finish: The Borchettas join the festivities at the 2016 Indianapolis 500.

them and can't get anyone on the phone. I don't even know who represents me." My response is, we tried to tell you. Of course, that's not the case for everybody, and none of us are 100% successful. But it's odd to wipe out thousands of jobs while positioning that as doing a better job for the artists. What were all those people doing, if it wasn't working for the artists? I'm not there internally, so I don't know. But it reads strange.

And it's a reminder. We made sure we didn't get too big. To this day, most of my executives don't have an assistant because they didn't need one. I always said, "Put the dollars on the screen." Make every dollar count – in the studio, on the video set, with content creation.

When you have that kind of culture and mentality, it becomes habit. Fortunately, I don't have 3,000 people and have to face cutting 1,000. Including publishing, I think we have 124 people, and that's globally. We have people on the ground in Toronto and London, and that pays dividends. We planted those seeds long ago and now they're established. What's going on at other companies is tough. I don't think any of us like to see our comrades get fired. Those are hard days for everybody.

"The next five years is about being nimble and understanding what my artists and executives need. When we do this again in five years, I think we're going to look 50-60% different. The most dramatic changes in the business are right in front of us."
-Print interview, Feb. 2021

Nashville has historically been an artist and career development minded town. Is that still the case, and will it be for the foreseeable future?

To a certain extent it has to be. If you start off as a TikTok moment and add streaming, but you've never played enough to offer a compelling live experience, that's a huge missing piece. Or, you're great live, but have no socials or habit around that – well, that has to be developed. You have to be very well-rounded, and I put all of that under artist development. It's constant. As is the radio tour.



Titan Up: BMLG Records' Brett Young (c) receives a plaque from the label's Jimmy Harnen (l) and Borchetta recognizing gold certification of his debut album, platinum for "Sleep Without You" and double platinum for "In Case You Didn't Know" in 2017. Young was presented the honor onstage in Nashville during his opening performance as part of Lady Antebellum's *You Look Good Tour*.



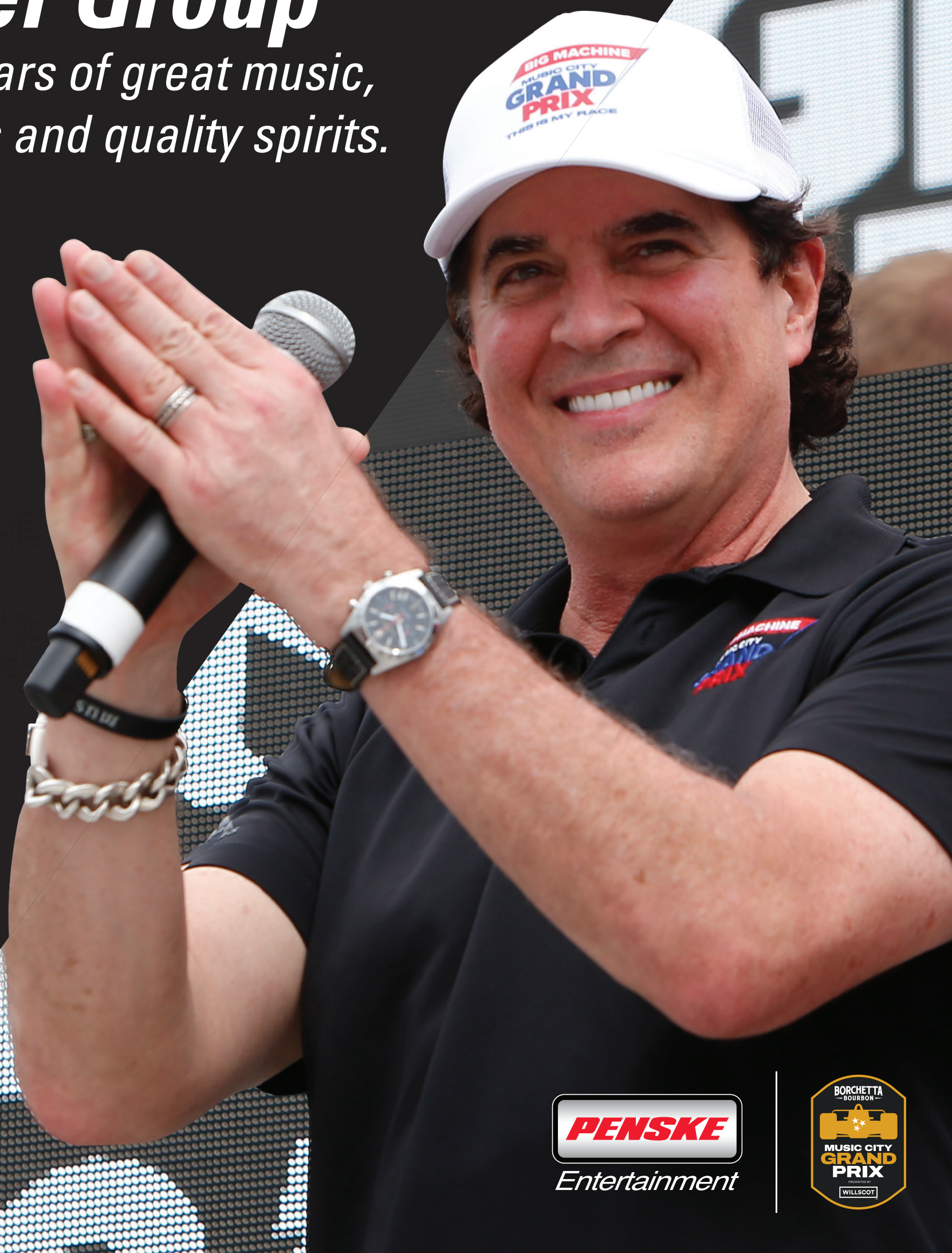
Goldfinger: Big Machine's Carly Pearce receives a plaque recognizing gold certification of her first No. 1 single, "Every Little Thing" in 2017. Pictured (l-r) are the label's Mike Rittberg, Jim Weatherson and Kris Lamb, Pearce and the label's Scott Borchetta and Erik Powell.

***Penske
Entertainment***

congratulates

***Scott Borchetta &
Big Machine
Label Group***

*on 20 years of great music,
fast cars and quality spirits.*





When It Reigns It Pours: River House/ Columbia's Luke Combs is presented a plaque to commemorate 12 No. 1s by Big Machine Music in 2022. Pictured (l-r) are BMM's Alex Heddle and Michelle Attardi, BMLG's Scott Borchetta, Combs, BMM's Mike Molinar and MakeWake Management's Chris Kappy.



Vandy Land: Opening Big Machine Neighborhood at Monroe Carrell Children's Hospital in Nashville with Thomas Rhett, Rascal Flatts, Sheryl Crow, Sandi Spika Borchetta and Carly Pearce.



Appreciate In Value: Scott and Sandi Borchetta's Music Has Value Fund donates \$150,000 to Music Health Alliance in 2022. Pictured (l-r) are Sandi, MHA's Shelia Shipley Biddy, Scott and MHA's Tatum Allsep.



Laurel Keith: Show Dog/BMLGR's Toby Keith returns to the stage with a three-show Las Vegas run in December, 2023. Pictured (l-r) are BMLGR's Ryan Dokke, iHeart's Michael Jordan, BMLG's Sandi Borchetta and Scott Borchetta, Keith, BMLGR's Jimmy Harnen, iHeart's Rod Phillips and KWNR's MoJoe Roberts.



Left On Red: BMLG Records' Riley Green (c) is given a plaque commemorating his debut single, "There Was This Girl," being RIAA-certified gold in 2019. He's with Borchetta (l) and Jimmy Harnen.

Brantley Gilbert walked in about eight years ago and said, "Man, when is my radio tour over?" I'm like, "Good question. Garth Brooks just won Entertainer and do you know what he does? He picks the low hanging fruit. He's not walking by a radio station or a fan without talking to

them." That's nothing against Brantley, but from that day forward, he never complained again. The day you end your radio tour, stop wanting to engage and decide you don't have anything left to learn is the day you've decided you don't want this anymore.

What part of the Big Machine story hasn't been told?

Andrew and Sandi have been here from the first minute. When I told Sandi what I wanted to do, she didn't hesitate. She has been there through every crazy idea and iteration. Every up and down. And she's been unrelenting in her belief.

It's not a cliché to say she's been a rock through all of this. And I don't think she gets enough credit for her creative genius, but it's on display in the Country Music Hall of Fame – dresses for Reba and Taylor, and other things she's created. She doesn't care about credit, but she just deserves a lot.

Andrew doesn't care about credit, either, but he deserves a lot. We knew when we started this thing that I was going to get a few shots at radio – a honeymoon phase. But looking back, talk about an education.

What Andrew and I went through to learn how to do this business, and how far he's taken his learnings to have one of the most robust and smartest backrooms in all of the industry is amazing. People are blown away continuously at how strong and transparent our backroom is. Those two are the unsung heroes who make sure I can fly at 50,000 feet.

Then you look at George Briner, Jimmy Harnen, Kris Lamb, Eric Powell, Allison Jones – all the people who have been here a decade or more. There's a core here that believes in the vision. I started it, but they know it's their job to add to it. Everyone has ownership of that.

CAC



Party My Crash: Accepting the 2024 CRS President's Award, Borchetta told the crowd, "It all would have read very well on a tombstone. But I'm still here. I'm still fucking here." Pictured with CRB's R.J. Curtis (l) and Kurt Johnson.



One Bourbon, One Shot, One Cheer: BMLG's Scott Borchetta and Sandi Spika Borchetta celebrate Borchetta Bourbon-sponsored Alex Palou winning the Indy 500 with limited edition Borchetta Bourbon 2025 Chip Ganassi.

THANK YOU,

SCOTT BORCHETTA, FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO COUNTRY MUSIC AND MUSIC EDUCATION!

CMA

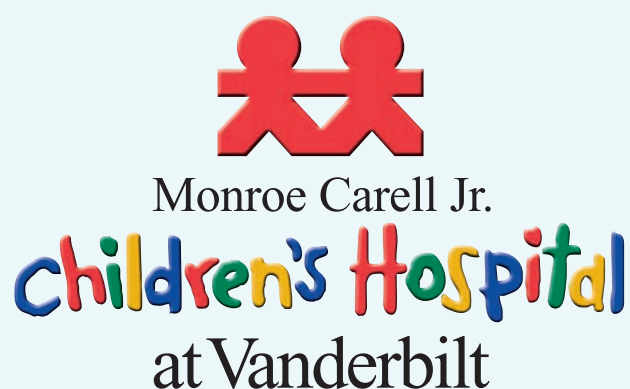
CMA
FOUNDATION

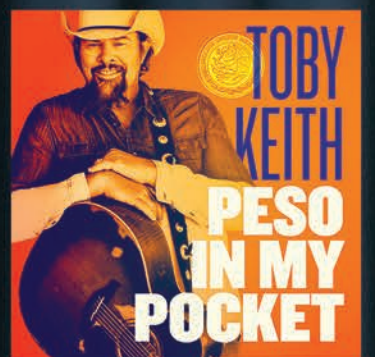
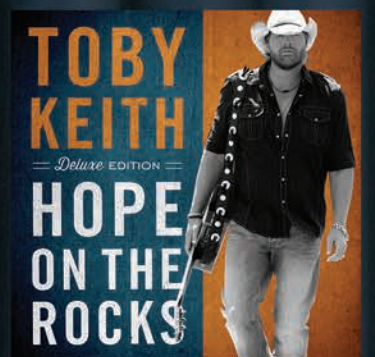
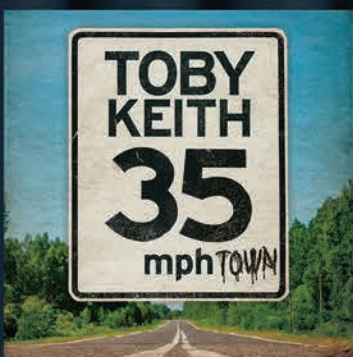


Celebrating 20 Years of Big Machine, and Big Dreams.

We at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt
send congratulations to Scott Borchetta and
Big Machine Label Group on celebrating
20 years of great music.

Thank you for all you do for our community and for the
patients and families cared for at Monroe Carell.





Toby Keith's Show Dog Nashville Celebrating 20 Years

of No. 1 Hits by multiple artists including
Toby Keith, Randy Houser, and Joe Nichols

In his lifetime, Toby Keith amassed

42 top 10 hits ★ 44+ million albums sold

33 No. 1s - 27 were written by Toby, 12 of which are solo writes

100+ million BMI performances ★ 10+ billion streams

Songwriters Hall of Fame ★ Country Music Hall of Fame ★ BMI Icon

Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame ★ National Medal of Arts

Toby is **one of four artists to top Billboard's Top 200 chart** while active and posthumously, joining Michael Jackson, John Lennon and Elvis Presley.

Toby **skyrocketed back to the Top in 2025** with his song, "Courtesy of the Red, White And Blue (The Angry American)" hitting No. 1 in July and driving his 35 Biggest Hits back to the Top 10 of the Billboard Top 200

At the core of Toby's unparalleled success is his songwriting, which has powered an astounding succession of hit songs. With his accomplishments **as a multi-award winning songwriter-artist, Keith has joined an impressive list of Country legends**, including Loretta Lynn, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Dolly Parton, and Johnny Cash, as well as multi-genre royalty Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen, Carole King, Tom Petty, and more.

We miss you Toby





THE N

59th Annual

ENTERTAINER

- ★ Luke Combs
- ★ Cody Johnson
- ★ Chris Stapleton
- ★ Morgan Wallen
- ★ Lainey Wilson

FEMALE

- ★ Kelsea Ballerini
- ★ Miranda Lambert
- ★ Ella Langley
- ★ Megan Moroney
- ★ Lainey Wilson

MALE

- ★ Luke Combs
- ★ Cody Johnson
- ★ Chris Stapleton
- ★ Zach Top
- ★ Morgan Wallen

GROUP

- ★ Lady A
- ★ Little Big Town
- ★ Old Dominion
- ★ Rascal Flatts
- ★ The Red Clay Strays

DUO

- ★ Brooks & Dunn
- ★ Brothers Osborne
- ★ Dan + Shay
- ★ Maddie & Tae
- ★ The War And Treaty

SINGLE

- ★ "4x4xU" - Lainey Wilson; Producer: Jay Joyce; Mix Engineers: Jason Hall, Jay Joyce
- ★ "Ain't No Love In Oklahoma" - Luke Combs; Producers: Luke Combs, Chip Matthews, Jonathan Singleton; Mix Engineer: Chip Matthews
- ★ "Am I Okay?" - Megan Moroney; Producer: Kristian Bush; Mix Engineer: Justin Niebank
- ★ "I Never Lie" - Zach Top; Producer: Carson Chamberlain; Mix Engineer: Matt Rovey
- ★ "You Look Like You Love Me" - Ella Langley & Riley Green; Producer: Will Bundy; Mix Engineer: Jim Cooley

ALBUM

- ★ *Am I Okay?* - Megan Moroney; Producer: Kristian Bush; Mix Engineer: Justin Niebank
- ★ *Cold Beer & Country Music* - Zach Top; Producer: Carson Chamberlain; Mix Engineer: Matt Rovey

- ★ *F-1 Trillion* - Post Malone; Producers: Louis Bell, Charlie Handsome, Hoskins; Mix Engineer: Ryan Gore
- ★ *I'm The Problem* - Morgan Wallen; Producers: Jacob Durrett, Charlie Handsome, Joey Moi; Mix Engineers: Charlie Handsome, Joey Moi
- ★ *Whirlwind* - Lainey Wilson; Producer: Jay Joyce; Mix Engineers: Jason Hall, Jay Joyce

SONG

- ★ "4x4xU" - Songwriters: Jon Decious, Aaron Raitiere, Lainey Wilson
- ★ "Am I Okay?" - Songwriters: Jessie Jo Dillon, Luke Laird, Megan Moroney
- ★ "I Never Lie" - Songwriters: Carson Chamberlain, Tim Nichols, Zach Top
- ★ "Texas" - Songwriters: Johnny Clawson, Josh Dorr, Lalo Guzman, Kyle Sturrock
- ★ "You Look Like You Love Me" - Songwriters: Riley Green, Ella Langley, Aaron Raitiere

EVENT

- ★ "Don't Mind If I Do" - Riley Green f/Ella Langley; Producers: Scott Borchetta, Jimmy Harnen, Dann Huff
- ★ "Hard Fought Hallelujah" - Brandon Lake w/Jelly Roll; Producer: Micah Nichols
- ★ "I'm Gonna Love You" - Cody Johnson w/Carrie Underwood; Producer: Trent Willmon
- ★ "Pour Me A Drink" - Post Malone f/Blake Shelton; Producers: Louis Bell, Charlie Handsome
- ★ "You Had To Be There" - Megan Moroney f/Kenny Chesney; Producer: Kristian Bush

MUSICIAN

- ★ Jenee Fleenor - Fiddle
- ★ Paul Franklin - Steel Guitar
- ★ Brent Mason - Guitar
- ★ Rob McNelley - Guitar
- ★ Derek Wells - Guitar

VIDEO

- ★ "Am I Okay?" - Megan Moroney; Directors: Alexandra Gavillet, Megan Moroney
- ★ "I'm Gonna Love You" - Cody Johnson w/Carrie Underwood; Director: Dustin Haney
- ★ "Somewhere Over Laredo" - Lainey Wilson; Director: TK McKamy
- ★ "Think I'm In Love With You" - Chris Stapleton; Director: Running Bear
- ★ "You Look Like You Love Me" - Ella Langley & Riley Green; Directors: Ella Langley, John Park, Wales Toney

NEW ARTIST

- ★ Ella Langley
- ★ Shaboozey
- ★ Zach Top
- ★ Tucker Wetmore
- ★ Stephen Wilson Jr.

OMINEES

ual CMA Awards

BROADCAST PERSONALITY

WEEKLY NATIONAL

- ★ *Country Countdown USA with Lon Helton* - LH Productions
- ★ *The Country Top 40 with Fitz, Cory "Fitz" Fitzner* - Hubbard Broadcasting
- ★ *The Original Country Gold*, Rowdy Yates - Compass
- ★ *Today's Country Radio*, Kelleigh Bannen - Apple Music Radio
- ★ *Y'all Access with Kelly Sutton* - Compass

DAILY NATIONAL

- ★ *Big D & Bubba*; Derek "Big D" Haskins, Sean "Bubba" Powell, Carsen Humphreville, Jonathan Shaffer, Garrett Freche - Silverfish Media
- ★ *Highway Mornings with Cody Alan*; Cody Alan, Lauryn Snapp - SiriusXM
- ★ *Ridin' With Rowdy*; Rowdy Yates - SuiteRadio / RFC Media
- ★ *The Rob and Holly Show*; Rob Stone, Holly Hutton - Audacy
- ★ *Wilhite and Wall Show*; Darren Wilhite, Tim Wall - Ebert Productions

MAJOR MARKET

- ★ *Chris Carr & Company*; Chris Carr, Sam Sansevere, "Dubs" Michael Wilczynski - KEEY/Minneapolis
- ★ *Hawkeye and Michelle*; Mark "Hawkeye" Louis Rybczyk, Michelle Rodriguez - KSCS/Dallas
- ★ *The Lo Show*; Lauren "Lo" Sessions-Barker - KKBQ/Houston
- ★ Rachel Ryan; KSCS/Dallas
- ★ *The Scotty Kay Show* - WUSN/Chicago

LARGE MARKET

- ★ *Deb & Matt in the Morning*; Deborah Honeycutt, Matt Malone - WFMS/Indianapolis
- ★ *The Q Morning Crew w/ Mike & Amanda*; Mike Wheless, Amanda Daughtry - WQDR/Raleigh
- ★ *Scott and Shannen*; Scott Dolphin, "Shannen O" Oesterreich - WMIL/Milwaukee
- ★ *Tim & Chelsea*; Tim Leary, Chelsea Taylor - WIRK/ West Palm Beach
- ★ *Wayne D and Tay*; "Wayne D" Danielson, Tay Hamilton - WSIX/Nashville

MEDIUM MARKET

- ★ *The Doc Show with Chewy*; Ken "Doc" Medek, Sean "Chewy" Medek - WGGY/Wilkes Barre
- ★ *Ellis and Bradley Show*; Bill Ellis, Beth Bradley - WSSL/Greenville, SC

- ★ *Joey & Nancy*; Joey Tack, Nancy Barger, Karly Duggan - WIVK/Knoxville
- ★ *Mo & StyckMan*; Melissa "Mo" Wagner, Greg "StyckMan" Owens - WUSY/Chattanooga
- ★ *Spencer Graves Show*; Spencer Graves, Megan Terry, Blair Davis - WDXB/Birmingham

SMALL MARKET

- ★ *Ben & Arnie*; Ben Butler, Arnie Andrews - WCOW/La Crosse, WI
- ★ *Brent Lane and The Cat Pak Morning Show*; Brent Lane, Jordan Glass - WYCT/Pensacola
- ★ *Dan Austin Show* - WQHK/Fort Wayne, IN
- ★ *Hilley & Hart*; Kevin Hilley, Erin Hart - KATI/Jefferson City, MO
- ★ *Liz & Scotty in the Morning*; Liz Del Grosso, Scotty Cox - KCLR/Columbia, MO

RADIO STATION

MAJOR MARKET

- ★ KKBQ/Houston
- ★ KSCS/Dallas
- ★ KYGO/Denver
- ★ WUSN/Chicago
- ★ WXTU/Philadelphia

LARGE MARKET

- ★ WCTK/Providence
- ★ WMIL/Milwaukee
- ★ WSIX/Nashville
- ★ WUBE/Cincinnati
- ★ WWKA/Orlando

MEDIUM MARKET

- ★ KUZZ/Bakersfield
- ★ WHKO/Dayton
- ★ WIVK/Knoxville
- ★ WLFP/Memphis
- ★ WQMX/Akron

SMALL MARKET

- ★ KATI/Jefferson City, MO
- ★ KCLR/Columbia, MO
- ★ WCOW/La Crosse, WI
- ★ WKML/Fayetteville, NC
- ★ WXBQ/Johnson City, TN

MCA would like to congratulate

**Scott
Borchetta**
& BIG MACHINE RECORDS

On **20** High Octane Years.

**Happy
Anniversary!**

MCA
MUSIC CORPORATION OF AMERICA™

AMAZON MUSIC'S MICHELLE TIGARD KAMMERER & EMILY COHEN BELOTE

THE
INTERVIEW

Globally Obsessed

As they sat down for this interview in the listening space of their new Music Row offices, Amazon Music Global Head/Country Music Michelle Tigard Kammerer (pictured, right) and Global Lead/Country Music Programming Emily Cohen Belote revealed their new titles. Asked when and how that happened without any sort of fanfare, the response was, "Well, we're making it official right here!"

Together, MTK and ECB lead the company's prodigious efforts in country music, which have seen more than 28 billion streams for Country Heat alone since the brand's 2016 launch. And they take their stewardship of everything country under the Amazon Music umbrella very seriously.

CA: Congratulations on the new titles. Do they indicate a shift in focus?

MTK: I don't think it's a shift as much as making sure we are aligning with the global rise of country music. There's been a lot of growth for the genre in the U.S., but also ex-U.S. We've seen streams increase by over 75% in the U.K. over the past two years – the biggest increase of a major genre in the territory. We know country's strong in Canada and Australia, and we continue to see continued growth globally. What we're doing with the titles is streamlining support for all of these territories. A lot of country music comes out of Nashville, as we know, so we want to make sure we're a resource and super serving our customers.

Is ex-U.S. programming different?

ECB: We always want to be global, but also stay hyperlocal. Yes, a lot of country is programmed by me and veneered locally, but this also allows us to lift up territories that have their own versions of country music – Brazil, Germany and even Regional Mexican, which is obviously massive in America. Their customers are very similar. The question is, how can I take our structure and help them grow in Brazil? But also vice-versa. If we're doing something at *CMC Rocks* in Australia, how can I amplify that here? Great songs can come from anywhere and any person. An Indian artist recently performed at the *Opry*, which is incredible. So it's making sure we all have the same goal: People listening on our service to the programming we're doing around the world.

MTK: She mentioned Regional Mexican, and our Whiskey & Tequila playlist fuses that genre with country. This year at *C2C: Country To Country* we did an *Amazon Music Original* with Avery Anna, who of course is based out of the U.S., but was at *C2C*. So we were able to create a bigger global moment. The cool thing about streaming is, if you have a device, you can listen to country music. It's available everywhere.

How big is the team here?

MTK: There are seven including us, Mgr./Label Relations Rio Van Risseghem, Mgr./Artist Relations Sarah DeMarco and Coord. Maggie Carter. Our rock curator Andy Harms recently moved here and, on the Christian/gospel side we have Lauren Stellato. That's the core Nashville team. We also have POCs [points of contact] in the various verticals of not only Amazon Music, but Amazon. We may have a person who handles vinyl, someone who handles merch, a person at Audible or Prime Video. They may not be directly tied to the country team, but we're working with them on country projects. For example, the *Amazon Music Original* we just did with NASCAR and Prime Video. We also recently did one with Eric Church and John Fogerty, *Up Around The Bend*. And we were working across all those different teams to make those big moments come into view.

What's the weekly workflow like?

ECB: No week or day is the same. Yes, there's a loose structure. We work Friday to Friday, as that's the day most releases come out. We're constantly looking through the pitches to make sure we know what's coming, because we want to give everybody their due. For me, in addition to internal meetings, it's a lot of listening. I block off Thursdays for programming Country



Heat, Bonfire and all that stuff. Other than that, it's always changing, which keeps it exciting. I don't think anybody gets into the music business to work a traditional nine-to-five. We're working all of the time. Some weeks are more show or event heavy. I like that.

THE INTERVIEW

Stagecoach and the ACM Awards are tentpoles, of course, but how does the annual cycle for Amazon Music break down?

MTK: The company's number one leadership principle is customer obsession. That points us to our priorities. We see a moment at C2C, and that now becomes part of our calendar. We have an incredible partnership with *Stagecoach*, which is an opportunity to ask, "How can we plus this up?" ACMs, CRS, CMA Fest and Country Music Month in October are also in there. If we see customers leaning into something, we lean in as well. That could be what we did with NASCAR, the movie *Roadhouse* or something else that happens in the world of Amazon.

What is country's place in Amazon Music and, beyond that, Amazon Music's place in Amazon?

ECB: When we launched ... I say "we" like I was in Jeff Bezos' garage (laughs) ... the second thing Amazon launched after books was music, so it's incredibly integral, even within Prime Video. Obviously, music is insanely important in something like *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. The week I started at Amazon over eight years ago, we launched the Garth Brooks catalog exclusively. That immediately said to me that country music is important. I worked at a previous streaming service located on the coast and it was difficult to communicate how important country music is. I've never had to do that here.

Our programming has earned the trust of our customers, which makes me feel great because it means I'm serving music I know they'll like, but also, hopefully, new music they will like. There's a lot of conversation about whether genre matters. I'm of the belief that it still does, but less and less. We've gotten into mood and activity based programming as people are consuming music in different ways. They want that soundtrack to their lives, and obviously Amazon's devices and the ease of requesting music is so important to that.

MTK: When she started, it was the launch of the Garth Brooks catalog. The week I started it was the launch of the *Country Heat Weekly* podcast. Seeing that take off, the guests we've had and the Country Heat brand becoming global is incredible. It all shows that country music is a cornerstone of Amazon Music.

What are the key advantages that Amazon and Amazon Music bring to country music?

MTK: This is one of my favorite questions! We have the opportunity to elevate country music through all of Amazon's verticals, as well as the unique, compelling and exclusive content on Amazon Music. That's live streams, *Amazon Music Originals*, merch, vinyl – and all of the different moments and events we already discussed. We



Michelle Tigard Kammerer

can put artists in those situations and places while giving our customers a 360 experience. A good example of that is ACMs with the Explore page for nominees that links to music, merch, their artist pages and all kinds of other information. As a fan, you can go down that rabbit hole – which aligns perfectly with our customer obsession.

ECB: Voice is a really big part of that. Active customer engagement: somebody asking to play your song or album, or saying a lyric and easily getting the song back that they want. Also, one of our most requested genres is country, and a lot of that is just customers going, "Alexa play country music." That's through the app or a voice device.

MTK: And we're making it very accessible with our three different tiers – free, Amazon Music that comes with being a Prime customer and Amazon Music Unlimited.

Like many tech companies, Amazon is reticent to share data. How have you navigated that within the company and in Nashville, which is relatively collaborative even amongst competitors? How much can you share?

MTK: What data we do share is linked to our Amazon Music For Artists tool, which labels and artists can see. They can see how many fans they have. And voice data is on a measurable of cool, warm, hot or fire, so they can see the extent to which customers are leaning in or not. If their voice data is in that cool zone, a lot of artists will post a social video saying, "Ask Alexa for my song." Or they'll do a campaign with an Easter egg or a custom utterance. We also recently launched Insights on the Amazon Music app for customers to be able to see their most played artists.

Where does the Amazon Music country fan fit in the ecosystem demographically? Are they a reflection of what the industry already understands the audience to be, or do you have insights that are different from that?

MTK: No one size fits all. You can't point to one median fan as "a female of this age who does these things" because streaming is global and there are so many different nooks and crannies for finding music on our service. I'll let Emily speak to this, but we're super serving everyone. BigXThaPlug is an artist we're leaning into with his new country album. How does he cross all the possible country fans? There isn't just one type.

ECB: Exactly. I was that kid growing up who liked everything but classical and country, with no basis for that whatsoever. Of course I knew who Garth Brooks and Brooks & Dunn were, but in the Bay Area at the time I was an hour-and-a-half from a Country station. It was in the late '90s with Faith Hill, Shania Twain and The Chicks – pop music at the time – that I really started to listen. To MTK's point, country music isn't a monolith. Garth, for example, wasn't originally seen as country enough, which is wild. Maybe we're in a time like that now. Few people grow up only listening to one genre, so it makes complete sense that pop, hip hop, rock and other influences have made their way into country. Artists are more connected than ever, whether it's BigX and Ella Langley or Jelly Roll and Alex Warren. Drawing hard lines is tough to do. Our job is to amplify what's happening as much as possible if our customers are into it.

Are there other challenges you face in the Amazon ecosystem?

MTK: When we talk about customer obsession, if we find they are wanting more of something, we lean in with them. The Bonfire playlist is a perfect example.

ECB: From a programming standpoint, we're on the front lines and constantly watching pop culture trends. Our team came up with a Coldplay playlist after that concert moment, for instance. With Bonfire, we were seeing artists like Noah Kahan, Zach Bryan and Kasey Musgraves creating some of the biggest music, not just in America, but in the world. The tendency with stomp-and-clap or folk music has been to push it down or make it smaller like it's a sub-genre of country instead of honoring where it is in the world right now. Putting that all together, it's a little bit country, a little bit folk, a little bit alt ... but it all works.

The cool thing is a lot of these artists are friends. Zach Bryan recently put out a song with Kings of Leon, and he's worked with Kasey. Noah has worked with Kasey. Our U.K. team has told us Bonfire is really effective over there, where their own brand of folk music is really important and a gateway into mainstream country as well. We launched Bonfire around Stagecoach two years ago with an *Amazon Original* from Charles Wesley Godwin. I spend a lot of time on it and it's deeply important to me.

What's the workflow balance between programmed playlists, stations, algorithmic playlists, original programming and events?

ECB: A lot of our core brands like Country Heat and Bonfire are hand curated by me. On the artist stations and things like that, the algorithm takes over. But for the most part, our playlists and key stations are touched by a human being. We have voice [data] telling us customers want a chill playlist, music for sleep, music for a cookout and things like that, so we're thinking about it holistically. It's not just about the project or the single. Does this work better in "country for running" or "country for sleep?" As for events, as MTK said, we have tentpole moments and what's kind of lovely about country right now is we know what those are and can supplement those with bigger artist moments as well.

MTK: We're always pushing back to the music. There's a *Stagecoach* playlist, but on the *Stagecoach* landing page, there's Country Heat, Bonfire, Neon Stars and playlists of all the artists because our hope is that customers go to the landing page, find their music and explore. The music is where it starts, so it needs to end with the music, too. We're constantly trying to close that loop.

How is AI being integrated into your workflow? Disruptive or additive?

MTK: We look at it as a discovery tool. We have a feature called Maestro for which the video demo shows someone putting in emojis and it then gives back a playlist. My niece thinks it's the coolest thing ever because she's in that place of constantly using emojis.

ECB: We work with living, breathing artists. I saw a meme or something that said, "I don't need AI to create pottery." I'm not an expert, but I want it to help me be more efficient. We do a lot of programming manually, but



Emily Cohen Belote

we can't do it all for each specific customer. Having a tool like that serves a purpose and fulfills a customer need.

How do you cut through the noise in which we're all inundated?

MTK: One of the best examples is our breakthrough program with Dasha, which highlights the levers that are unique to Amazon Music and Amazon. She was playing at *Stagecoach*, which we amplified with an Amazon Music Original for "Here For The Party." Then she's on the ACMs red carpet, where she met Gretchen Wilson. That became a moment. Then we had her on our Spotlight stage at *CMA Fest* for a taping of *Country Heat Weekly* with Kelly Sutton and Amber Anderson, but also a fan moment with a wrapped bus and meet-and-greet. We continued to support her throughout the year across verticals. Amazon itself, Prime Video, Twitch and our livestream festival business are some of the tentacles exclusive to us that help us cut through for our customers and partners.

ECB: We're not just competing amongst country music, we're competing with the world. People's attention spans are short. Including mine – especially since having children. The "Story Of A Song" panel we do at CRS is a great example of how we all come together to amplify an artist or a song. I remember seeing Jelly Roll on a *Vice* documentary in 2017 and thinking "country rapper, got it." The first EP was delivered as rock. But I was like, he's country. No ifs, ands or buts. Radio started to play it, I put it in our programming and it continued from there. Country Heat is a megaphone and we can do a lot, but we need the team, touring, other audiences to bring it all together. It's incredible to play even a small part in uplifting great music.

What's the best part of the gig and what's the hardest part?

ECB: The best part is uplifting new artists. I take Artists To Watch and our Breakthrough program very seriously. Yes, I will honor the superstar who is selling out stadiums and continuing to have massive hits, but I get really excited about helping a new artist who stands out. Recently, Zach John King and Bayker Blankenship come to mind. When I'm immediately like, "Smash!" ... that feeling is the best. I do the dive into the bio. "Oh, your parents are poets. You wear overalls because of your uncle." When a song is well written and the artist is interesting it stops you in your tracks. Then you start thinking of all the places we can put that music and be a part of getting that out there.

The worst part is when something doesn't work and you have to relay difficult information. But I also believe that everyone is one song away. Just because it didn't connect this time doesn't mean it won't. And we've seen that in real time. People ask me if something comes off Country Heat, would it ever go back on. I always point at Chayce Beckham's "23," which moved through our programming very quickly after he won *American Idol*. But then it jumped again because of radio airplay and we put it back on. There's not one way to program, and there's more than one journey songs can take.

MTK: Growing up in teeny, tiny, small town Kansas, I fell in love with country music when I was really small. I remember listening to the *Grand Old Opry* and loving the songwriting, storytelling and music. Sharing that feeling with as many people as possible is what I get to do at Amazon Music on a global scale. I'm grateful every day to be part of this global team that does that so thoughtfully and passionately – as Emily just displayed. If we have even the smallest part in someone finding a song that timestamps their life, speaks to them, gets them through a breakup, birth or death, or becomes the first dance at their wedding – that is ultimate joy to me.

The hardest part is how much good music is out there right now, and I can't listen to it all. I try so desperately, but there are only 24 hours in a day. Creators from all over the world are able to easily upload through Amazon Music For Artists, and I find so much from what Emily does on Breakthrough Country – one of my favorite playlists. But I will listen to country as much as I possibly can every single day.

CAC

MEDIABASE[®]

WE KNOW MUSIC

Spins, Streams & Scores

For more information about any and all of these services,
please contact Robin Rhodes **ROBIN@MEDIABASE.COM**

MEDIABASE.COM

©2025 MEDIABASE. All Rights Reserved. All marks and logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective companies.

SCOTT,

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE MOST AMAZING
FIRST 20 YEARS THAT I HAVE SEEN
DURING MY 60 YEARS IN THE RECORD
BUSINESS.

WE HAVE WON TOGETHER IN MUSIC,
WE HAVE WON TOGETHER IN MOTORSPORTS,
AND MOST OF ALL WE ARE WINNING
TOGETHER WITH OUR COLLEGES
AND OUR CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES.

Mike
MIKE CURB

CURB
R E C O R D S



MIKE CURB & SCOTT BORCHETTA AFTER WINNING THE 2011 INDIANAPOLIS 500



SCOTT, MIKE & LINDA WITH COLTON HERTA AFTER WINNING THE 2024 BIG MACHINE MUSIC CITY GRAND PRIX IN NASHVILLE



LINDA CURB, MIKE CURB, SANDI BORCHETTA, SCOTT BORCHETTA & DAN WHELDON WITH THE CURB/BIG MACHINE CAR AFTER WINNING THE 2011 INDIANAPOLIS 500



MIKE BORCHETTA; MIKE CURB; GOV. NED MCWHORTER; UNIVERSAL PRESIDENT/CHAIRMAN, SID SHEINBERG AT THE CURB/MCA/UNIVERSAL PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT (SCOTT BORCHETTA, VP OF PROMOTION - 1992)



SCOTT, SANDI, LINDA & MIKE WITH RICHARD PETTY'S 200TH VICTORY CAR AT DAYTONA



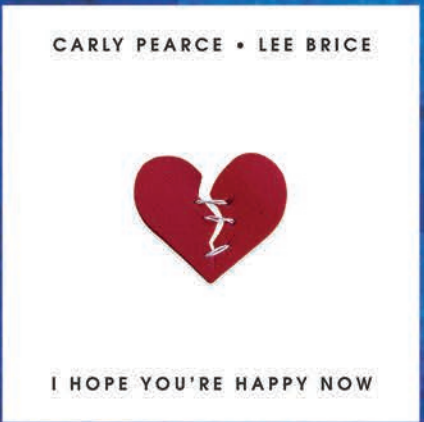
WYNONNA
#1 ALBUM, ACM AWARD
5X PLATINUM



GARTH BROOKS
"MORE THAN A MEMORY"
ONLY RECORD TO EVER DEBUT #1
ON THE BILLBOARD COUNTRY CHART
(KYLE JACOBS, LEE BRICE,
BILLY MONTANA)



TIM MCGRAW
(CURB/BIG MACHINE)
ALL PLATINUM
& MULTI-PLATINUM SINGLES



CARLY PEARCE & LEE BRICE
#1 SINGLE, 5X PLATINUM
2 ACM AWARDS & 2 CMA AWARDS

NEW MUSIC



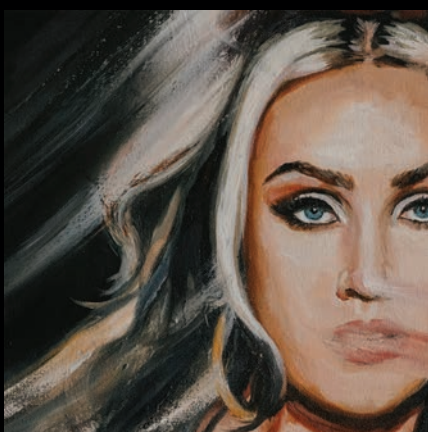
JOSH ROSS LATER TONIGHT – OUT NOW

His debut album featuring his #1 smash “Single Again” and his new single “Hate How You Look”



CARTER FAITH CHERRY VALLEY – OUT 10/3

Her critically acclaimed debut album featuring “Betty”



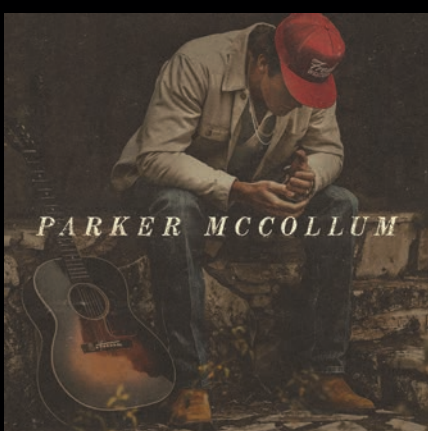
PRISCILLA BLOCK THINGS YOU DIDN'T SEE – OUT 10/10

Featuring the title track and “Couldn't Care Less”



JORDAN DAVIS LEARN THE HARD WAY – OUT NOW

Includes the hits “I Ain't Sayin'” and “Bar None” plus next single “Turn This Truck Around”



PARKER MCCOLLUM OUT NOW

Includes the hit “What Kinda Man”

