

AIRPLAY ANALYSIS



SEXISM IN COUNTRY



WOMEN OF INFLUENCE

WOMEN *in* COUNTRY

MARY HILLIARD HARRINGTON THE INTERVIEW



COUNTRY AIRCHECK

JUNE 2021

PRISCILLA BLOCK

just about over you

Current Single from Priscilla's self-titled EP

DEBUT ALBUM set to be released 3rd Quarter of 2021



A UNIVERSAL MUSIC COMPANY

LAUREN ALAINA WITH JON PARDI *GETTING OVER HIM*

Current single

from Lauren's new album on Mercury Records Nashville

SET TO BE RELEASED 3RD QUARTER OF 2021



woman YOU GOT

MADDIE & TAE

First track from their next studio album



A UNIVERSAL MUSIC COMPANY

NEW TRACKS COMING IN JULY AND SEPTEMBER
LEADING UP TO THEIR NEW RELEASE ON MERCURY

LAINÉY WILSON



APPLE MUSIC

"UP NEXT"
SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM

IHEARTRADIO

ON THE VERGE ARTIST

**SPOTIFY HOT
COUNTRY**

ARTIST TO WATCH

SIRIUSXM

#1 HOT 30 WEEKEND
COUNTDOWN

PANDORA'S 2020

COUNTRY ARTISTS
TO WATCH

BILLBOARD

CHARTBREAKER

TV APPEARANCES



FEATURED 3 TIMES IN THE HIT TV SHOW "YELLOWSTONE"

PERFORMING ON THE JASON ALDEAN: *BACK IN THE SADDLE TOUR 2021*



BMG



Updating and expanding Country Aircheck's June 2015 feature story and airplay analysis regarding female artists, this issue is largely devoted to the broader idea of women in country music. From an extension of that prior data to a first-of-its-kind study of industrywide perceptions of the realities faced by female artists and women in the industry, it is aimed conveying a more thorough understanding, starting with a discussion between five women, each of whom was given an early peek at the data distributed over the next several pages: Sony/Nashville Dir./Marketing **Olivia Laster**; Pandora/SiriusXM Head/Country Music **Beville Dunkerley**; Dick WRNS/Greenville, NC OM/PD/morning personality **Crystal Legends**; MCA SVP/Promotion **Katie Dean**; and Albright & O'Malley & Brenner partner/consultant **Becky Brenner**. Topics centered on the female experience in Country radio and records, work-life balance, harassment and sexism, and female airplay. The conversation was moderated by Country Aircheck Sr. Radio Editor **Monta Vaden**.

CA: Each of you bring a different level of understanding and a unique perspective on varying sides of the industry. Can you share your earliest experiences as a female in the music business?

OL: I had so many women who were champions. I wouldn't be where I am today without Lesly Simon, Jen Vessio and Jennifer Way. They taught and invested in me when they didn't have to – they were busy women. Randy Goodman has done the same and helped me see potential growth into different departments. Josh Easler was my boss previously and empowered me to grow in areas where I was passionate. When people reach out to me now, I give them my time, because others did that for me.

Fewer females in the workplace and the gender pay gap run across all industries, not just ours. When I started at Sony, it was male-dominated leadership, but there are more females in those positions now, which is a testament to our executive team. They empower and promote women ... and people with talent and passion, in general. It's not necessarily a "woman thing," it's whoever is best for the job.

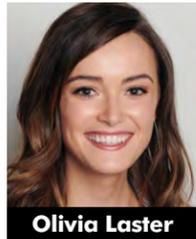
BD: I started in terrestrial radio, where I once had a PD pull me into his office and tell me he wished all women would stay in the kitchen so he could only work with men. Of course, terrestrial radio has gotten a lot better, but look at the DSPs. When I'm on panels with people from that world, it's Brittney Schaffer and Rachel Whitney from Spotify, Kelly Rich and Emily Cohen from Amazon, Sally Seitz from Apple ... it is all women here in Nashville, which is amazing. I don't want to psychoanalyze it, but women are in tune with what fans want. Especially country fans, which do skew more female, so I hope women will try to be in this industry. We have our finger on the pulse of what fans want to hear.

CL: I've never had someone tell me to stay in the kitchen but have dealt with people being dismissive of my talent, intelligence and what I bring to the table. Men have physically turned their back completely to me during meetings. And the pay differences are real! I did mornings before becoming PD, and there wasn't a male counterpart who didn't make double or triple what I made. You're both hosting the show; just because someone is pushing the buttons doesn't make them more important.

As far as being an on-air talent is concerned, there's a lot of work to be done. I've worked with men who ... let's say it's been a tough working relationship. But I've also been lucky enough to have male bosses who believed in and backed me and helped me get to the position I'm in. It's not that I didn't deserve it to begin with; I have confidence in who I am. But I if some of these men hadn't stood before other people and said, "No, she's it. She's the one for the job," I'm not sure I would have been afforded the same opportunities.

KD: It's important to have someone who believes in you and will be an advocate. My mentors happened to be male. What drew me to Nashville were the female country artists in the '90s. I was spending my \$10 on a cassette of Mary Chapin Carpenter's *State Of The Heart* album after seeing her on *Austin City Limits*. Patty Loveless, Reba McEntire, Trisha Yearwood and Suzy Bogguss drew me here, but when I got to town, record promotion was a male-dominated industry. If you were female, you were a publicist. I wound up working with Luke Lewis, who challenged me and appreciated what I brought to the table. He elevated me very quickly within Universal – in some people's minds, too quickly. Mike Dungan was an advocate, as well, and has continued to be a champion for females.

To my knowledge, I have the only all-female team at a major label. I'm proud of that, but I want to downplay it, because it should just be about them being badass and great at their jobs. I want to dispel the myth that women don't root for other women. I would argue my team is closer than any in the business; we want to share, win, champion each other and put our best foot forward.



Olivia Laster



Becky Brenner



Beville Dunkerley



Crystal Legends



Katie Dean

BB: Finding a person who believes in your talent and will support you no matter your gender – and then having a tough skin – is important. I started out at 18 in 1977 during a generation when women weren't on-air between 6am and 7pm. They said nobody wanted to hear women on the radio. The journey from there hasn't been all that hard for me, and I think it's because of all the things that the women here are saying ... and because I was oblivious to it.

All of my mentors in the early years were very supportive men. I moved from overnights to afternoon drive in six months on an AM/FM combo in a state where very few women were even on-air. There's no doubt women must be better, stronger,

faster and work harder because of the preconceived notions that men have ... or at least may have had in the past. I really think it's a lot better now, but I know there are a lot of women that don't, and that's why it was fascinating to me to read these survey results. Progress is being made, but this is evolution we're dealing with. It takes time. You're changing people's perceptions of how they were raised, and you need to get their minds thinking differently to react differently. There's so much to change, and it's not going to happen overnight.

When I joined the CMA board in the early 2000s, Connie Bradley and a couple other women were already there, and the CRB board had two or three women, too. Since then, more women were added to boards, and it's because men are starting to realize female opinions matter. Women pay more attention to the needs, wants and desires and how to deliver on that.

Do any of you feel a bias – conscious or unconscious – against women from your male peers? If so, how do you handle those situations?

OL: For some guys, it isn't something they're thinking about, and it's how they talk to everyone. Sometimes it might be taken the wrong way, and sometimes it might be on purpose, but it is important to be aware of the way you react to it. I know where I stand and am respectful but also confident. There's a mutual respect that gets built after that.

Sometimes I'm feisty, because you have to demand respect in your conversations – in a polite way. There's a balance between being mean and firm, and that has helped me in conversations where I was being talked down to or not taken seriously.

BB: I was raised in an era of male chauvinists, racists and all the monikers that go with that generation of white men. I learned to be tough and stand up for myself, and it prepared me to be in an industry that was male-dominated.

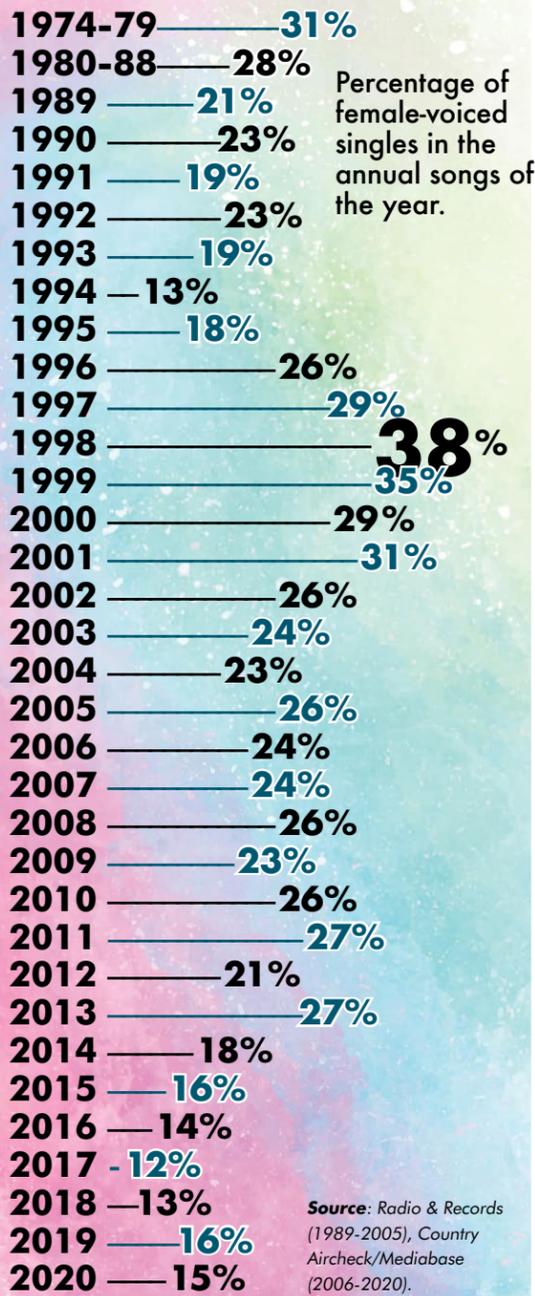
KD: Let's be honest, I'm a five-foot tall lesbian, so a lot of times conversations happen above my head – physically above my head – and I had to figure out when it's appropriate to be loud and how to make sure I'm heard, because what I have to say has value. Your work ethic and record will stand up for you, and I've been fortunate to be appreciated and valued. As I've gotten older, it's important to me to continue that for the next generation and provide support and opportunities for other women.

What about when it comes to balancing family and career? Do you feel extra pressure to manage your job and a household? Or, if you don't currently have children in the home, is there an expectation that you pick up an additional workload because you aren't a mother?

OL: I've only been married a year; he's in the medical field, and I'm a workaholic! I'm friends with many women with families, and I have so much respect for the balancing act they do. There's not more work put on me, but it's a personal decision about where to draw boundaries. How are you finding the balance? I struggle with that even without kids – not responding to emails after hours. I know there are many other perspectives, but I don't have pressure placed on me.

BD: I've been in this business more than 20 years and have only been a parent for eight. I think moms put pressure on themselves. Pre-pandemic, I was putting in as much face time at the office as

LADIES ROOM



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COUNTRY AIRCHECK

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Special thanks to the women of Country Aircheck – Addie, April, Caitlin, Kelley and Monta – whose investment in and work on this issue was extraordinary.

CAM

TILL THERE'S NOTHING LEFT

26 MILLION STREAMS • 25,500 DOWNLOADS

**"AN ARENA-COUNTRY PROMISE OF
UNINHIBITED BACKSEAT PASSION"**

-NEW YORK TIMES



Women In Country

everyone else, regardless of if they had children or not. I've had nothing but supportive bosses who have told me family is first – leave for every soccer game – and have been very, very lucky in that respect. But honestly, I put a lot of pressure on myself, because I don't want to be passed over for a project lead just because I have two children.

It's competitive. We are all incredibly lucky to have jobs in the music industry, and I don't want to take that for granted. It is 2021, and I wish I could honestly tell you it's the same, but it's not.

BB: The work-life balance is easier once your kids get to college. I started raising my kids in the '80s and '90s, and there wasn't a lot of concession. I couldn't take time off to go to a soccer game and was hauling my kids to remotes, concerts and fairs. They still talk about all the things they had to go to because I wanted to make sure I still had a job. When people ask me why there aren't more female PDs, I say women are too smart. They know it's all consuming, and you must work 365 days without much work-life balance. But I did it, and it's doable, I just don't think you can ever give 100% to either one.

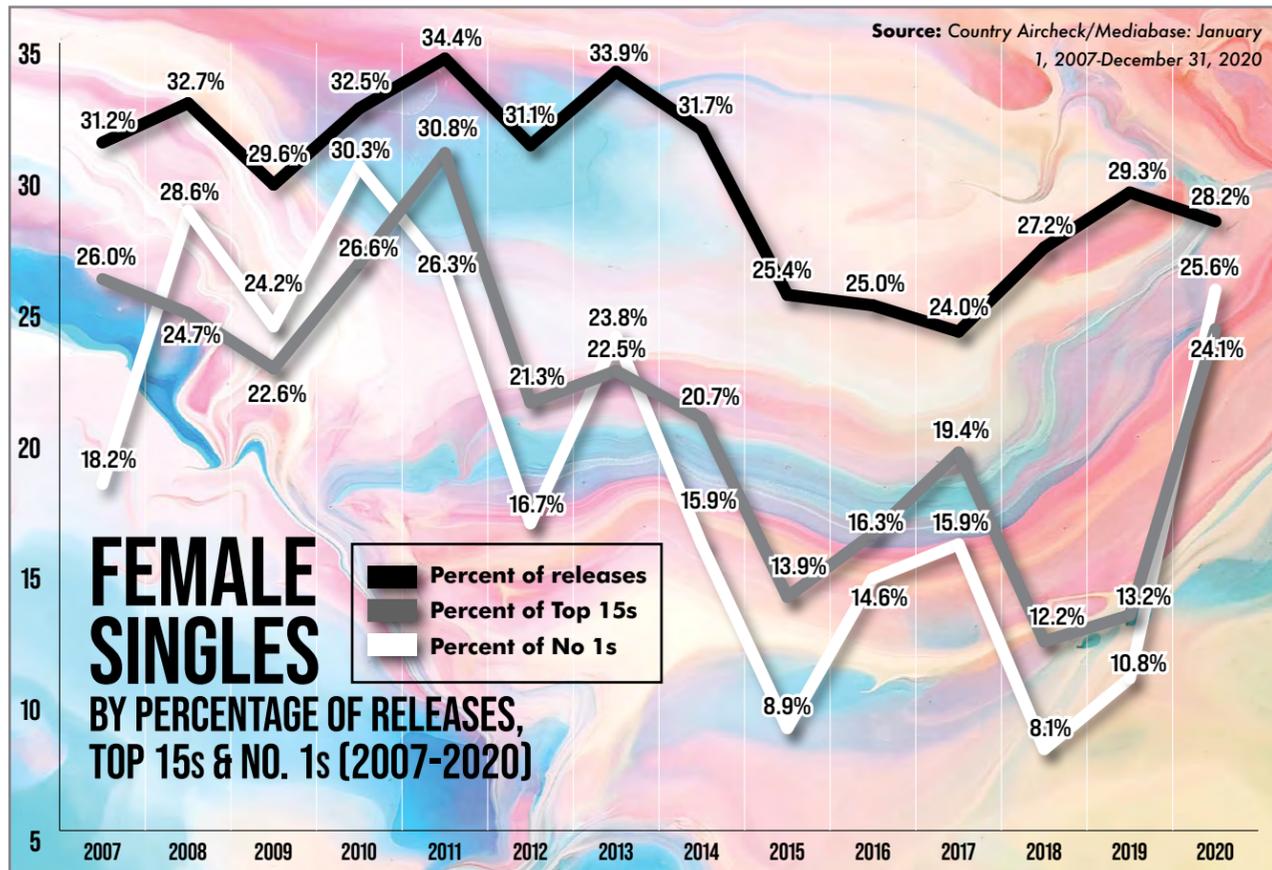
Do I wish I would have done a few things differently? Of course. I missed my son's last high school football game because I was at a client conference. That was kind of sucky, but it's what I felt I had to do. Now, we have Mentoring And Inspiring Women In Radio (MIW), the program in radio that has executives mentoring, growing and helping females. I think that's why we've seen even that huge jump from five years ago to now, partly because of the work they've been doing.

BD: At SiriusXM, we have a female CEO who was promoted right before the pandemic. I feel incredibly supported, not only as a woman in the business, but as a working mom going through the pandemic.

CL: I could talk forever on this. There's always the question, "Well, is she a mom?" No one asks a man if he's a dad or how many children he has. I finally had to say, "I understand that you want me to do X, Y and Z, and I'm doing the best I can. I'm going to get everything done, but you're going to have to bend a little." The stay-at-home wife in my world is me. I do everything we do at work and everything a housewife does. I'm doing twice as much as any man in the room, so don't question me. If you can stay home, that's a beautiful thing, but that's not everybody's life.

I have fallen asleep on my kids' floors after tucking them in. It's crazy to question whether we can juggle it or if motherhood will affect our performance, because women are badass who can make everything work. On the other hand, I've had women apply for jobs and tell me, "Hey, I don't have kids, so I can do it. I can do it all, don't worry about that." But I don't think it's fair to put more work on women without children just because I have kids and they don't. It doesn't mean their free time or time with their spouse, friends or pets is any less valuable than my time. That's not fair, either.

KD: I outkicked my coverage when I married sweet Paige, and she has been fantastic. I'm a dog mom and



FEMALE SINGLES BY PERCENTAGE OF RELEASES, TOP 15s & NO. 1s (2007-2020)

Source: Country Aircheck/Mediabase: January 1, 2007-December 31, 2020

captain in terrestrial radio. Do you see this changing soon? How can we continue to encourage women to raise their hands for leadership positions?

CL: We don't have format captains at Dick, but all three of my cluster's PDs are women. We have a VP/Programming, and if he leaves, I'm going after his job! There are women that could easily fill those format captain shoes, but it goes back to who's championing whom. Was the hire done on merit and experience, or was it based on friendships?

I've been in radio for 23 years, and when I started, I was the only female on the entire staff. Now my building's on-air team skews female, which is a fun shift to see. But I don't want women in positions of power just because we need to see more women. We've got amazingly talented women who have earned their spots, so I'm sure we'll have a female format captain soon.

BB: As women rise through the ranks, it's inevitable we will see a female format captain sooner rather than later. There are more women who will have equal experience and more years behind them. Companies like Beasley, Audacy and Cumulus have women at the top of the chain, and those women are looking to support other women when they can. There's a level of experience you have to have, and because women came into the middle tier later than men, there were already a bunch of men in the funnel. Now we're getting to the point where women will have as much or more experience than the men, and that's when we will start to see women moving to the next level.

Have any of you encountered situations where you've needed to take action against sexism or harassment in the workplace? Do you feel confident in your company's system for handling those situations?

KD: On the promotion side, we're very good about taking care of each other. When we bring in a new hire or a baby regional, we have a wealth of life experience and are very protective. Let's be honest,

he's got balls, and he's doing a great job." How fair is it that a man has a meltdown or screams and yells at you about something, and he's just standing up for what he believes in, but if a woman screams and yells at you about something, and she's being dramatic ...

OL: Or emotional.

BB: Exactly. It's not right to think that way, but it still exists. I don't have anybody to harass me anymore, and if I find clients who do, I fire them. But I think some of the smaller companies are still struggling. I'll occasionally overhear a comment from an owner or market manager that makes me think, "Wow, I feel for your employees." Sometimes I don't say anything to them, but when it happens, I probably should speak up. I worry about whether their employees have a place to go since they don't have large corporate compliance offices and HR. For many women, it's difficult to stand up and, if you aren't confident doing that, you can struggle.

OL: We go through training seminars on a regular basis to make sure we know who to talk to and that there's a hotline number. They do a great job making sure we have multiple avenues of expressing anything we might need to talk about in a confidential manner or anonymously.

BD: Aside from the number of emails we get from our HR department telling us about mental health resources, and the training on harassment and sexism, there's a certain sensitivity that comes along with [having a female CEO]. I'm sure that would have happened with a male CEO, as well, but it certainly is refreshing and nice to feel continually supported without having to ask.

KD: I had a radio person call me about a comment that had been made, and she was really upset. We're not that close, but she was seeking counsel. That speaks to this larger issue of needing to take care of each other. If you don't know the right way to retort, if you have somebody you can call, it helps. That's one of the underground

“ The stay-at-home wife in my world is me. I do everything we do at work and everything a housewife does. I'm doing twice as much as any man in the room, so don't question me. If you can stay home, that's a beautiful thing, but that's not everybody's life. —Crystal Legends ”

am very passionate about that, but I've taken a lot of stock of the family vacations I've ruined. I remember my nephew's first birthday when my dad dog-cussed me, because I was in a Sugarland No. 1 battle and was not paying attention to the birthday boy. Ultimately, that's the choice I made. I never felt that pull to be a mom per se, so to me, this was the focus I wanted.

It's a personal choice, and I have moms on my team. If things are not good at home, that doesn't lead to people being productive employees. No matter what business you're in, it's a people business, and you must take care of your people. They must feel valued, appreciated and respected. Life happens, it's messy and it can get in the way of work priorities. But what you want to put your money down on is the performance guaranteed by people being happy and fulfilled.

As women continue to rise through the ranks, we have more females in leadership roles as OMs, PDs and MDs, but we currently do not have a female format

there are skeezy people no matter what business you're in. In my younger years, my naiveté led me into a couple places where I realized, "Oh, shit, this is bad, and I need to get out quickly." I didn't know any better. In addition to the corporations getting wise to the fact that you must be educated and aware, we all know who to alert when there are potential situations.

CL: I have a direct line to the owner, CFO and CEO if I need it. Most of them are men, but I feel very confident. Recently, I had an issue with someone being extremely sexist. I went all the way to the top with it and said, "They're not going to talk to me like this." I wasn't sure how it was going to go, and I started packing my office. My boss came and asked what I was doing. When I told him what happened, he said, "You're ridiculous. Put your stuff back on the wall. We'll handle this." I feel secure in my position, but women have to be willing to say, "You're not going to talk to me like that."

BB: How fair is it that when a woman stands up for herself, she's a bitch, but when a man does, it's "Wow,

things we can all do for each other, and we should be mindful of that.

In 2017, Country radio hit an all-time low of female airplay at 12%. Where do we start in identifying the root of the problem, and what are you and your team doing in your sector of the business to address the issue?

OL: Everyone deserves a fair shot, whether you're female or male. I'm fortunate to work with Miranda Lambert and she is, excuse my language, a total badass who represents females. I also think about Ingrid Andress, and she's just incredible. We have to be sure we're putting focus on those women and giving them the spotlight they deserve. If you have great music, people are going to react. I want to give every artist 100%, whether they're female or male, and I would never do a lesser marketing plan for a male versus a female.

KD: I love that you brought up Ingrid Andress. If it was based purely on song, Ashley McBryde and Ingrid would

Celebrating our women in country music



Alysa
Vanderhey

Amy
Wadge

Ashley
McBryde

Ashley
Monroe

Audra
Mae

Ava
Suppelsa

Cassidy
Daniels



Emily
Weisband

Femke

Gina
Venier

Hillary
Scott

Jessi
Alexander



Josie
Dunne

Kacey
Musgraves

Karen
Fairchild

Karley Scott
Collins

Kat
Luna



Kimberly
Schlapman

KK
Johnson

Kyndal
Inskip

Lauren
Alaina

Lauren
Duski

Liz
Rose

Lydia
Vaughan



Mickey
Guyton

Nelly
Reeves

Nicolle
Galyon

Parker
Welling

Peytan
Porter

Priscilla
Block

RaeLynn



Riley
Roth

Robyn
Collins

Robyn
Ottolini

Summer
Overstreet

Sykamore

Tegan
Marie

Tiera



LILY ROSE

OVER 37M
ARTIST ON-DEMAND
STREAMS

“WITH A WARM, SOULFUL
VOCAL TONE THAT HAS A
HINT OF KIMBERLY PERRY,
ROSE HAS A WAY OF MAKING
HER SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE
VERY RELATABLE.”

- *RollingStone*

“AS CLOSE A THING
AS THERE IS TO A REAL
OVERNIGHT SENSATION”

- *VARIETY*

“VILLAIN”

TOP 5 CONSUMPTION PER SPIN
FOR 10 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS SINCE RELEASE

OVER 6.4 M VIEWS ON YOUTUBE



Mackenzie PORTER

“PORTER’S
STAR POWER
IS UNDENIABLE.”

American
- **songwriter**
the craft of music

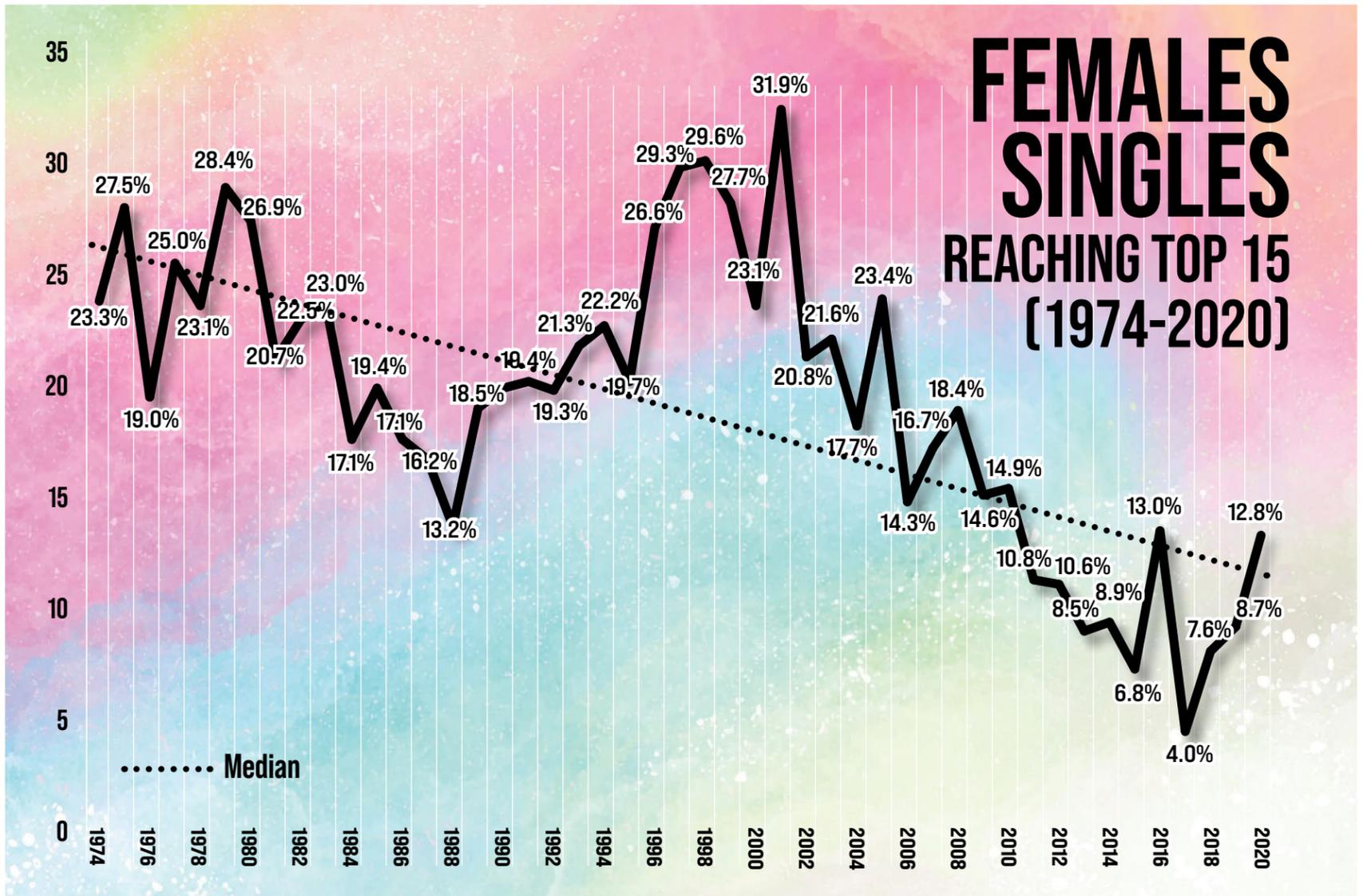
OVER 64M
ARTIST
ON-DEMAND
STREAMS

“PORTER’S GIRL-NEXT-DOOR
VOCALS CUT LIKE A BLADE
WHILE THE DISTINCT LIFT OF
HER CHORUSES COMES DIRECT
FROM THE TAYLOR SWIFT
SCHOOL OF SONGWRITING.”

- **billboard**

CURRENT SINGLE “THINKING ‘BOUT YOU”
WITH DUSTIN LYNCH:
OVER 80 STATIONS ALREADY ADDED

BIG LOUD



Women In Country

be superstars right now. I'm all about letting the best song win, but there has to be a level playing field across the board. I find it fascinating this seems to be a country problem, because females dominate the pop charts.

It is bullshit to think females don't want to hear other females, and I have never believed that. It's why I moved to this town. But, where the core country listener is a female, the gatekeepers are still overwhelmingly male, which becomes a challenge for promotion people picking singles.

I am encouraged by the last couple years' trends and hope it's an indicator of the cyclical nature of the format. My hope is that we'll continue to see a resurgence of female artists on Country airwaves.

female, female, female, male, female. I was so heartened and was thinking, "Wow, that's several million dollars you're betting on these women." They're placing these bets based on radio success, and when they're betting on someone like Kassi Ashton or Caylee Hammack or The Sisterhood band, do they have a chance of getting to No. 1? Not if history is any indication.

KD: I agree about it being cyclical, and I said at the CRS panel I moderated last year there are ebbs and flows. We're hopefully about to come back to where females are cresting again. And Crystal, I'm sorry, but the research thing makes me bananas.

always going to be about the best song.

I had an interesting conversation with some songwriters who said, "Partially, we feel it's our fault, too. I find myself writing for men all the time. When I sit down to write songs, I don't tell myself to write for women." It starts at the very root of the song, and then it works its way through the entire process. All we can do is ensure everyone makes decisions as unbiasedly as possible. We could play a song here right now, and the six of us will never agree on it, and yet the radio model is based on finding songs that all six of us will agree on so we all keep listening.

Are you seeing any shifts in the attitudes of others in the industry in putting a focus on breaking female artists?

BB: Of those 37 songs I mentioned earlier, if everything is equal and there's a female in the mix, I have several PDs who will give the add to the woman.

“ I had an interesting conversation with some songwriters who said, “Partially, we feel it’s our fault, too. I find myself writing for men all the time. When I sit down to write songs, I don’t tell myself to write for women. ”

—Becky Brenner

CL: From our side, there's nothing more frustrating than when I add a female artist and it doesn't test. It drives me insane. I get my own testing, and I don't understand, because every female I know likes it, so how is my testing coming back so low?

We have a lesser percentage of women in the pool, but from the label and management perspective, are there as many females gunning to get a contract? Are an equal number of women coming to get signed, and are we sending them away and choosing the men because men sell more? I guess that's my question. Are we not represented enough? I don't honestly know how many women want to do this versus how many are being worked to us in radio.

KD: Labels must take ownership of this. We get told females don't test, which means we don't sign females, which means there are no females in the pipeline, which means there are no developing artists that are females. Now I'm off my soapbox, but there you go.

BD: I see a cyclical problem. A CEO of a major record label here in town told me signing an artist is like putting a million dollars on red at a roulette table. I want to come in defense of the labels, in particular, not just because Olivia and Katie are on here, but UMG and Sony are doing a great job of signing new female acts. Look at Kassi Ashton, Caylee Hammack and Priscilla Block on the UMG side.

I sat in a conference room with Randy Goodman two years ago, and he said, "I want to tell you what's coming down the pipeline." A giant slide came

CL: It drives me crazy, too! I champion females, and then the single gets pulled by the label. I can play the ever-loving heck out of it, but I can't save it alone. I had a listener tell me Caylee Hammack wasn't country, and I said, "Are you kidding me? That is, hands down, one of the most country girls I've seen." I play a lot of women, but then I watch the masses not support it. We do have more women signed right now ... really, really talented women ... and they should all take off.

BD: A lot of this is about familiarity. You can point the finger at terrestrial radio or at DSPs – they're not playing enough women, so they're not familiar, so these female artists aren't making it to No. 1. You can't blame the labels; you can't just blame DSPs, though, and you can't blame just terrestrial, because our fans are listening to everything. Our fans are at concerts, listening to Spotify at home, and SiriusXM in their car. They're all over the place, so we're all to blame, and there's no one answer. If they're being played on terrestrial, they'll do well on DSPs. I hate to say that we're not independent of that, but we're not. Because it is familiarity, familiarity, familiarity, so it is a pleasant surprise to see an independent female breakthrough.

BB: This is a no-win conversation for radio. We listen to 36 to 37 records per week, and those are just ones with major label support. I have approximately 120 new singles available every week. I do listen to some of the independent ones, particularly the ones I know have found great music in the past. It's still

KD: Obviously, you're trying to hedge your bets on what's going to work. The number of females who are currently in the industry or actively trying to have a career in country are representative of the population at large. We are everywhere. Women are 50% of the world's population, and that should be represented. I would give a body part to have a massive No. 1 hit on a female on our roster, and I am very passionate about all the females we have signed.

I don't believe it's a conscious bias from anybody. There is an overwhelming amount of music in the marketplace, and I believe Crystal is making the best decision she can based on her programmer instincts and love of music. Part of my job is to make sure my record is newer and shinier and better than whatever it's going up against, but ultimately, it's going to have to prove itself as a hit. That's all we're after. I just want enough people to hear it to tell us if it's a hit, then we've done our job.

Beville, for you specifically, how can radio, records and artists work with DSPs to break more females?

BD: It's hard to get ahead on terrestrial radio, and that goes together with having a hit on DSPs. [Fans are] listening to WSM[-FM/Nashville] in the car but listening to Spotify or Amazon or Pandora at home. For someone who has banged down every terrestrial radio door and can't break through, we tell artists, "Please let your fans know that they can hear these songs on demand, through your socials, or through other marketing elements. And help us help you."



SHOUTOUT LADIES

Audacy proudly supports
all the wonderfully audacious
women who make Country
Music so special.

Women In Country A Roundtable Discussion

There is a misconception you have to know the country programmer at Spotify and know their email address and take them to a steak dinner, and it's not true. Any DSP will tell you, you can't game DSPs; the fans control our algorithms. If your song is getting thumbs down or getting skipped, it's not going to be a hit. You can spend millions of dollars on booze and steak, and nothing's going to change the way the fans react. That's what's so beautiful about DSPs – having a hit is truly up to the fans.

People at major labels, as I'm sure Katie can tell you, present DSP data to terrestrial radio and are met with a closed door because there is a sense of competition. They don't want to believe that listeners of Pandora are also listening to their station, and they believe they have their finger on the pulse of their listenership better than we do. But DSPs can help them with programming, because we have such granular data we can tell you down to that city, state and county who played Jake Owen's latest single last week. I wish we could all be allies, especially in the country music world, and work together to try to break female artists.

Do any of you feel there are biases still present in the way women are treated regarding their looks? Is there still a pressure and an expectation, either internally in the industry or externally from fans, for female artists to market themselves in a certain way?

OL: That's a societal problem we need to check ourselves on. It's human nature to want a superstar to look a certain way, but then you have someone like Luke Combs who is the most normal looking guy and has exploded. I don't know if a woman would be as fortunate, honestly. What should matter is your music and if it's a hit, and that's why I love how Sia handled her brand and said, "I'm not going to let you judge me. You're going to base it on my music, and you're not going to base it on what I look like."

BB: Although Sia chose a very dramatic, amazing look, too, and picked something that would make her stand out.

KD: It's okay for Luke Combs to look like a P1, but you don't want your female superstars to look like that. You want to Shania to look like Shania. It's disheartening, and this is where I blame MTV. Heart is my all-time favorite band, and Ann Wilson says the ruination of her was MTV, because for the first time she realized she was fat and not pretty. That's the systemic thing we've been dealing with and the different expectations for women. I wish I had the answer, because I want to believe people just want to hear great music. But that has nothing to do with radio or country – it's a worldwide problem.

In the next 12 months, what can everyone do to help women in the industry, be it business professionals or artists? What do you hope to see from your peers?

OL: Sometimes we feel we're going through something alone or that it's in our head. It's important to be honest, and if you're struggling with something, let people know. Sharing, being vulnerable and allowing other people to understand and relate is important to thriving in this business.

BD: I would love to see more women on big tours. I love that Blake Shelton put Lindsey Ell on his tour as one of the main featured guests, and I want to see more people follow in his footsteps. And not in tiny font on the marquee! That's how women get a new fan base, too – being on giant tours, and I think it's the men's responsibility to help make that happen.

KD: Champion the creators. That means consume the music, buy the tickets, help get those writers signed. That's how things change, because then you create an indefensible argument that they must be played.

CL: I want to see women who are already in elevated roles be more self-confident and encourage each other. We need to continue to help women be assertive yet professional. There's strength in numbers, and the more women stand up for themselves and are firm and confident instead of being demure, the further we can get together. Women need to champion themselves, including the artists. I hope talented and deserving women continue kicking down doors and don't bow their heads and walk away.

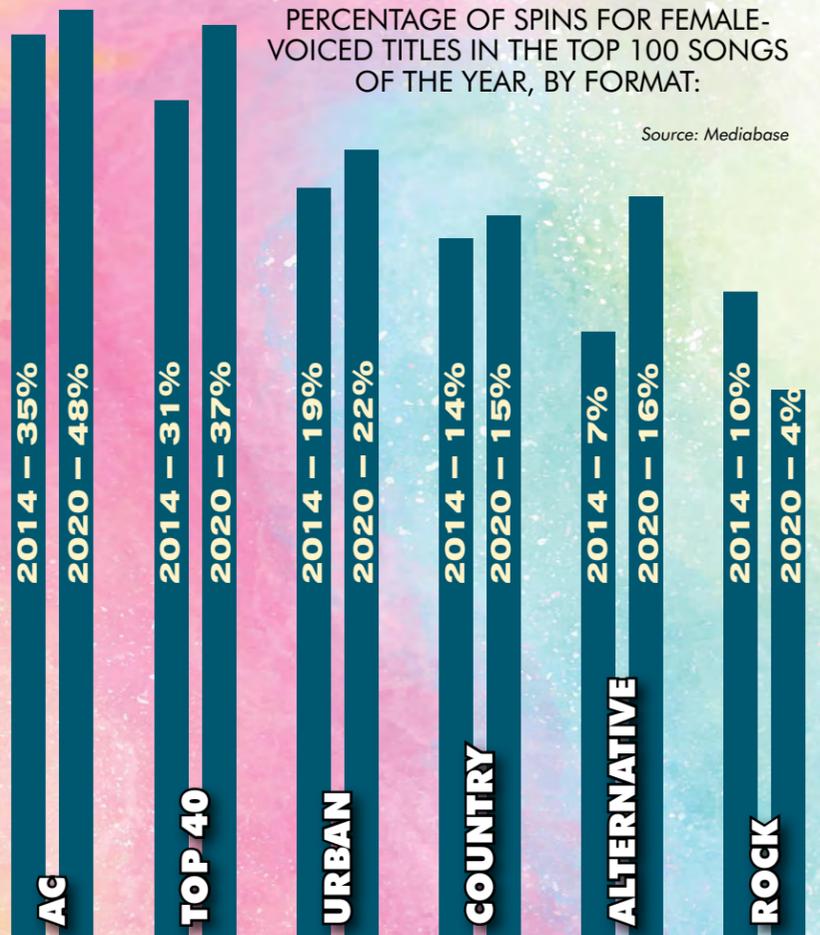
BB: A woman told me early in my career, "As soon as you catch yourself starting to say, 'I feel...' just change that to 'I think...'" It changes everything, because men see women as being too emotional. I started practicing that long ago and could see a difference. The other thing I want is for any woman reading this who really loves radio and wants to be on-air but doesn't feel like they're getting their opportunity, please call me. Send me a résumé and all of your information. I want more female talent on-air.

CAC

DOWN PLAY

PERCENTAGE OF SPINS FOR FEMALE-VOICED TITLES IN THE TOP 100 SONGS OF THE YEAR, BY FORMAT:

Source: Mediabase



PERCENTAGE OF SPINS FOR FEMALE-VOICED TITLES IN THE TOP 100 SONGS OF THE YEAR, BY...

All Reporting PDs

14%
(2014)

15%
(2020)

Female PDs

15%
(2014)

15%
(2020)

Source: Mediabase

BIG SKY
MUSIC GROUP

A FORCE • A VISIONARY • A TRAILBLAZER

STEPHANIE QUAYLE



LAUREN ALAINA



KASSI ASHTON



PRISCILLA BLOCK

THE

MICKEY GUYTON



WOMEN

CAYLEE HAMMACK



LITTLE BIG TOWN



MADDIE & TAE



OF

UMG

KYLIE MORGAN



REBA MCENTIRE



CHRISSY METZ

NASHVILLE

CATIE OFFERMAN



SHANIA TWAIN



CARRIE UNDERWOOD



KACEY MUSGRAVES



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP NASHVILLE



BLACK RIVER ENTERTAINMENT CELEBRATES **OUR** *women* IN MUSIC!



Kelsea Ballerini
Black River Records Artist



Hannah Kerr
Black River Christian Artist
& Black River Publishing Writer



MaRynn Taylor
Black River Records Artist
& Black River Publishing Writer



Anna Vaus
Black River Publishing Writer



Nikki Abbamont
Black River Records



Katie Barolak
Black River Publishing



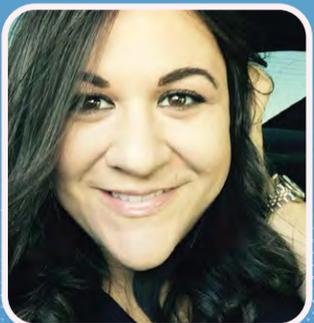
Ainsley Barry
Black River Records



Hope Buser
Black River Entertainment



Natalie Davis
Black River Records



Dawn Delvo
Black River Entertainment



Theresa Ford
Black River Records



Rebekah Gordon
Black River Publishing



Megan Hazeltine
Black River Records



Emily Hungate
Black River Entertainment



Taylor Kelly
Black River Records



Abby Miller
Black River Records



Tanya Schrage
Black River Entertainment



Rachael Skvorak
Black River Publishing



Bailey White
Black River Records

WOMEN of INFLUENCE

Country Aircheck asked the industry leaders included in the 2020 reader-voted Power 31 to nominate one woman in the industry and outside of their company they feel deserves recognition. Those nominees were asked to share the most powerful piece of advice they received from or would give to fellow women in the industry.

Aaronee Cottam

KIYK & KCIN/St. George, UT
PD/morning personality
Nominated by: Becky Brenner
“[Former Cherry Creek AC KREC/St. George morning host] Cindy Olsen has been my competition for years and is the epitome of grace and personal connection; her fans love her and follow her anywhere. Radio without connection might as well be dead air.”



Addison Nunes

Warner Music Nashville, Sr. Analyst
Nominated by: Gregg Swedberg
“Never stop learning. There is always a new skill to develop, question to ask or conversation to have.”



Ali Matkosky

Big Loud, Dir./National Promotion
Nominated by: Charlie Cook
“I have been fortunate enough to have many strong female leaders invest in my growth, all of them leading this advice by example: Never mimic the way others do business just because you have seen it work for them. Be true to who you are, and the people around you will see your passion and authenticity, and you’ll have more fun along the way!”



Alicia Mathews

MakeWake Artists/Range Media Partners, Artist Manager
Nominated by: Seth England and Stacy Waugh
“1. Learn as much as you can about every aspect of the industry, absorb knowledge and work to understand how everything works together. 2. Take time to nurture yourself and your hobbies outside of work. It will revive and inspire you and make you a better manager, leader, colleague, friend and partner. 3. Find the parts of this business that light a fire in you and run full speed towards them. This industry isn’t an easy one, but it’s rewarding, even more so when you love the projects you work on and the people you work with. 4. It will get hard. Don’t give up.”



Amanda Good

The AMG, Exec. Dir./Marketing
Nominated by: Bobby Young
“The advice I would give the next generation of female leaders in the industry is to not let fear of failure keep you from trying. The best lessons and moments in your career will come from seeing an idea come to life that you were part of building.”



Anna Weisband

Sony/ATV Music Publishing Nashville, VP/Creative
Nominated by: Allison Jones
“The best advice is advice that is hard to implement in this business: take care of yourself early in your career. Make time to pour into yourself, even if you feel you

haven’t ‘earned’ that yet. It will help you service your songwriters and your team to the best of your abilities. You can’t pour into others when you’re running on empty.”

Ashley Wilson

iHeartMedia
Kentucky-Indiana Region Dir./Country Programming
Nominated by: Carson James
“You’ll never get to a point in your career where you don’t need a mentor. Don’t ever stop building connections. Align yourself with people who not only elevate women but those who have passion and do good work.”



Aubrey Schwartz

KP Entertainment
Sr. Creative Dir./Publishing
Nominated by: Rusty Gaston
“In a blend between advice and learning: find the talent, nurture the talent, work hard, keep your head down, be honest with yourself and with your writers, go with your gut and — most importantly — be a kind human through it all.”



Becky Gardenhire

WME/Nashville
Co-Head/Partner Agent
Nominated by: Cris Lacy
“I remind myself of this piece of advice Michelle Obama has given: ‘Success isn’t about how much money you make, it’s about the difference you make in people’s lives.’ It keeps me grounded and reminds me of the ripple effect we all have the power to cause. One impactful thing can have a long tail in this business.”



Callie Bartz

Red Light, Day-to-Day Manager
Nominated by: Katie Dean
“My biggest piece of advice is to work hard and make yourself a valuable asset to as many people as possible. Always be friendly and get the job done. You never know who you might be working for or with later down the road.”



Callie Cunningham

Red Light, Manager
Nominated by: Scott Borchetta
“Your intuition is one of the strongest tools you have. Trust it, even if it means having a hard conversation or sharing an unpopular opinion. If it feels scary, you’re probably doing something right.”



Cameo Carlson

mtheory Nashville
President/CEO
Nominated by: Cindy Mabe
“When I came up in the industry, many of the worst sexism I faced was from other women. We were pitted against each other and seen as competition for limited access to the table. The advice I have for the next generation of women leaders is to expand that damn table at every chance you get and bring another woman to sit alongside you every. single. time.”



Candice Watkins

Big Loud, VP/Marketing
Nominated by: Leslie Fram & Brittany Schaffer

“The way you get something is typically the way you have to keep it. In all your ‘getting’ — jobs, promotions, clients, deals — do it with integrity so you don’t have to sustain it with compromised character. There’s enough to go around; achieve in such a way that you can always stand by it and be proud of it.”



Emily Cohen

Amazon Music
Principal Music Curator
Nominated by: Ben Vaughn
“Remember to take stock in the special moments of joy that come along with working in the business, like a concert or successful record launch. These moments can ebb and flow in your career, and it’s important to take a mental picture so as not to forget the times that solidify and fuel your passion for the music.”



Hillary Borden

The Bobby Bones Show, Producer
Nominated by: Lauren Thomas
“Don’t compare your journey to anyone else’s. It’s very easy to get caught up in the concerts, the awards shows and the lifestyle of the music industry. Know who you are as a person, stay true to it and don’t let anyone’s opinions or words make you feel less about yourself.”



Jackie Campbell

615 Leverage & Strategy
Co-Founder/Head of Business Development
Nominated by: Marci Braun
“If you are looking for your next job or trying to grow in your current role, write up your dream job description and figure out how that applies to your potential employer. In the ever-changing music industry, the job you want may not even exist yet, but there’s no reason you shouldn’t pitch it or try to find it.”



Jackie Tighe

iHeartMedia
Country Artist Relations
Nominated by: Kris Lamb
“How you do anything is how you do everything. No matter how small the task, do a great job with a good attitude. And shout out to all of the incredible female leaders in Nashville that are as kind as they are smart — you’re an inspiration!”



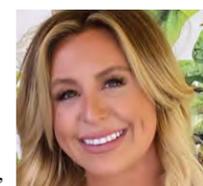
Janet Weir

42 Entertainment/Red Light
Manager
Nominated by: Steve Hodges
“Try as many things as you need to find what your passion is, then go after it. Be confident in your abilities, but not so confident that you aren’t able to gracefully accept advice — never stop learning. And ... don’t let the bastards get you down. Bitches came to win!”



Jenna Johnson

Warner/WAR
Mgr./West Coast Regional Radio & Streaming Promotion
Nominated by: Nate Deaton
“The best thing I’ve been taught is if you want something, you have to find the confidence to ask for it. Don’t ever stop being your authentic self, and always remember to support and build others up, because when you do, incredible things will happen.”



Jennie Smythe

Girilla Marketing, Founder/CEO
Nominated by: Ken Robold
 "Honor your own value and be quick to recognize value in others."



Jillian Shuhart

iHeartMedia/Albany, NY
 Dir./Promotion, Coord./Integrated Media Sales and WRVE on-air personality
Nominated by: Kevin Callahan
 "Diversify your skill set, while also being careful not to be taken advantage of. Having experience in different departments than what you know or think you were hired for will only make you a stronger asset to your team. While some can be linked to pure timing, when you're willing to pitch in, grow and learn new things, it will ultimately provide sustainability to your career. Be ready for change and never say 'this is how we used to do it.'"



Jojaime Hahr

BBR Music Group/BMG Nashville, SVP
Nominated by: Kelly Rich
 "Cindy Mabe, who I respect immensely and look up to as a mentor and friend, told me to own who I am. This resonated with me, because it taught me that not only can I be in a leadership position and be exactly who I am, but that it's vital to success and I should. She also taught me to focus my energy into the places where I can make the most difference. My advice to anyone in the business, male or female, is to work harder than everyone else in the room."



Katelyn Lester

Monument
 Mgr./Regional Promotion
Nominated by: Royce Risser
 "Just because you're ready for something doesn't mean it's ready for you. Be patient, give yourself grace, and the right opportunity will come along."



Katie Bright

Capitol, Dir./Midwest Promotion
Nominated by: Kristen Williams
 "The best advice I received from another woman in the industry when I was traveling and had two small children was, 'You can't pour from an empty cup. Don't try to be everything to everyone all the time. Take care



of yourself first, then you'll turn up to work ready to rock.' Find your tribe. Don't work by yourself and wait to be discovered. Network a lot; find your people; collaborate; and make genuine, solid, advantageous relationships."

Katie McCartney

Monument, GM
Nominated by: Gator Harrison & Ashley Gorley
 "Show initiative, show passion, trust your gut and take risks. Confidence and belief are key; you can make anything happen!"



Kelly Bolton

Tape Room, Music VP/Creative
Nominated by: Shane McAnally
 "Have dreams, but master the work you're doing today – it will serve you in the long run. Lift up your peers and celebrate others' successes. Doing so creates community and it will ultimately make your own successes more gratifying. Above all: stay kind, work hard, listen to your gut and, as Celia Froehlig once told me, 'Go be brilliant.'"



Kimsey Kerr

Red Light Management, Marketing
Nominated by: Shane Allen
 "Be true to your authentic self and genuine to everyone around you. Take pride in everything you do and trust the journey to bring you where you're supposed to be. Aim to leave a legacy behind that you'd be proud to leave again and again."



Kristie Sloan

The GreenRoomPR, Co-Owner
Nominated by: Clarence Spalding
 "Don't let a fear of failure prevent you from speaking up and sharing ideas – but also know when to shut up and listen."



Laurel Kittleson-Cobb

Curb, VP/Artist Development & A&R
Nominated by: Jimmy Harnen
 "I've recently had some amazing women mentor me and share their honest experiences, which makes me want to pay it forward. My advice is to be kind to other women in the industry, lift each other up, celebrate one another's successes and take care of each other when needed."



Lauren Black

Country Now, Editor-in-Chief
Nominated by: Coran Capshaw
 "Never give up. I truly hit rock bottom after a layoff in 2018 and considered leaving the music industry. When a new opportunity came my way, I jumped on it and now, I'm happier than ever and so proud of the path that got me here."



Lauren Hamrick

Wide Open Music
 Day-to-Day Manager
Nominated by: Jon Loba
 "The good Lord gave you a gut feeling. Follow it. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are different, but instead take ownership of the role you've been given, keep your head on a swivel and do the job that only you uniquely can do."



Mallory Michaels

RCA, Dir./Regional Promotion
Nominated by: Johnny Chiang
 "There doesn't have to be all this pressure for a work-life balance. It's all your life – the whole thing. Find something you love to do, be true to yourself and savor living your life."



Margaret Hart

YouTube, Head/Nashville Label & Industry Relations
Nominated by: John Esposito
 "Best advice I have been given (a summary): Men are often asking for promotions and raises, and going out for jobs before they check all of the boxes. Don't sit around and wait to go after that next step until you are (over)qualified, start the conversation earlier than you are comfortable and make your intentions clear. Best advice I have to give: Don't suppress your uniquely female perspective because we work in a male-dominated industry. Bring your whole self to work: empathy, caregiving, strong communication and listening skills, etc. These traits can foster a more open and accepting work environment, not to mention an overall healthier, happier and more productive team. PS: Caregiving absolutely does not mean taking on every housekeeping task for your team from notetaking to lunch ordering."



Margaret Tomlin

Sony Music Nashville, VP/A&R
Nominated by: Dann Huff
 "Be an advocate for yourself. Leave as little to chance as



Women
WHO LED

Here's a look at some notable trailblazing women in country music and Country radio. Their inclusion is by no means intended to

exclude the notable contributions of Sharon Allen, Mae Boren Axton, Janet Bozeman, Beverlee Brannigan, Lori Dale, Janet Gavin, Jessica James, Juanita Jones, Jessica Langston, Carolyn Metheny, Dianne Petty, Hazel Smith, Georgia Twitty (no relation) or the hundreds if not thousands of other women without whom this business could not have been built.



Frances Preston
 BMI (1958)
 Established Nashville office; rose to run BMI; CMA co-founder.



Jo Walker-Meador
 Country Music Association (1962)
 First employee, rose to Exec. Dir.



Ruth Meyer
 WHN-AM/ New York (1973)
 First female PD in a rated market.



Maggie Cavender
 NSAI (1967)
 Founding Exec. Dir.



Connie Bradley
 ASCAP (1976)
 Rose to head Nashville office.



Cathy Martindale
 KSCS/Dallas (1976)
 Second female PD in a rated market.



Donna Hilley
 Tree Publishing (1978)
 Rose to head Sony/ATV



Carol Parker
 WMZQ/Washington (1978)
 Third female PD in a rated market.



Carolyn Parks
 Radio & Records (1981)
 Country Editor



Jacki West
 WGTO/Lakeland (1981)
 First woman to win CMA DJ of the Year Award.



Dale Franklin
 Leadership Music (1989)
 Founding Exec. Dir.

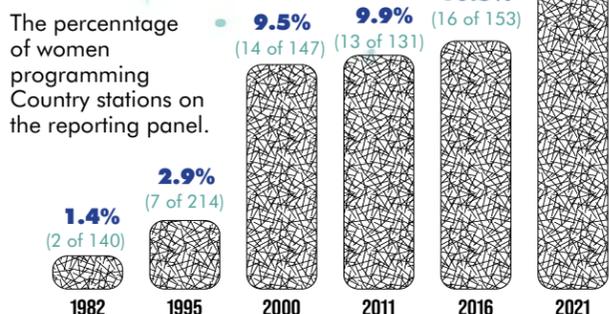


Shelia Shipley
 Biddy Decca (1994)
 First woman to head a Nashville major label.



Evelyn Shriver
 Asylum (1998)
 First woman to head a stand-alone major label in Nashville.

REPORTERS
 By The Numbers



Source: Radio & Records, Country Aircheck.

Hannah Ellis



NEW MUSIC SUMMER 2021

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RECORDS
curb.com

possible. If you are intentional and assertive about building and nurturing your career, others will notice your dedication and offer you a seat at the table. Once you are there, have confidence that your opinion is valued. Speak up and, most importantly, be kind."

Martha Earls

Efg Mgmt, 1021, Demasiado, Owner
Nominated by *Randy Goodman*

"The most powerful advice I have received is also the advice I would give: Don't downplay your capability. Don't apologize for your success or hide your knowledge.



Anyone who tries to punish you or dismantle your confidence is offering opinion you don't need to listen to. Furthermore, don't apologize or hide being a mother, married, single, successful, shy, out-going, etc. In short, don't apologize for who you are. You are enough and capable of incredible things."

Mary Catherine Kinney

Spotify, Nashville Lead/Strategic Music Partnerships
Nominated by: *Mike Dungan*

"Invest deeply in your peers and the community around you. The close relationships you make in the early stages of your career, when everyone is hustling alongside each other, will be the foundation that steadies you through every twist and turn of this industry. The people make it all worth it."



Michelle Tigard Kammerer

BMLG Records, Sr. Dir./National Promotion & Marketing
Nominated by: *Tom Martens*

"Dolly Parton – arguably one of the best businesswomen in the industry – once said, 'Always be on time; in fact, be early. Because, when you're not, you're telling the other person that you're better than them. That your time is more important than theirs.' So true! Always respect others and thank them for their time."



Miranda McDonald

MCA, Dir./Southwest Regional Promotion
Nominated by: *Shari Roth*

"Surround yourself with people you respect and who respect you enough to always be honest with you and who have good intentions. There is always a way to achieve what you want in your career by being your authentic self, but sometimes it takes a heavy dose of patience and knowing how to choose your battles."



Nicole Rodriguez

G Major Management
Manager/Digital Marketing
Nominated by: *George Briner*

"The best advice I ever got didn't come in the form of a single sentiment, but through daily

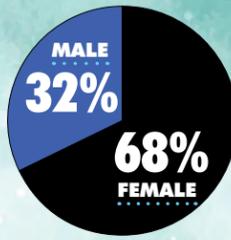


Radio & Records: The Next Generation

Fall 2020 undergraduate enrollment at a sample of top music business and broadcast programs leaned significantly female, as seen below. Additionally, enrollment in CMA EDU – the organization's leadership development program – is 85% women in the 2021-2022 class.

Broadcast Degree Enrollment

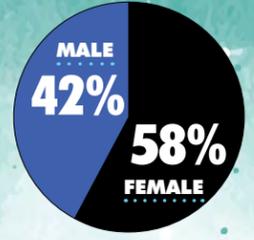
Fall 2020 Undergraduate Broadcast Degree Enrollment



Sources: University of Florida, University of Nebraska, Texas A&M, University of Missouri, University of Tennessee, Ole Miss, Gonzaga (broadcast programs);

Music Business Degree Enrollment

Fall 2020 Undergraduate Music Business Degree Enrollment



Belmont University, Berklee College of Music, Middle Tennessee State University, New York University, University of Miami (music business).

example. I am surrounded by those who exemplify what it means to continue growing and bettering themselves in order to better their teams, projects and communities. If I could offer a piece of advice to the next generation it would be to keep your eyes open to all that inspires you – your work will stay inspired if you are."

Nikki Wood

Big Loud
Dir./Northeast Promotion
Nominated by: *Lee Adams*

"You have to be willing to work harder than everyone else around you, but be careful not to let that idea isolate you. Remember that the same people around you are also the ones that can not only support and motive you but can inspire you. Never miss those opportunities to grow."



Paige Altone

Sony Music Nashville
VP/Marketing
Nominated by: *Clint Higham*

"You have to be passionate and work hard, but don't lose yourself. Be open-minded and flexible, and don't work from a place of fear because this industry is changing so fast. –River House Artists Found/Owner Lynn Oliver-Cline."



Rachel Whitney

Spotify, Head Editorial/Nashville
Nominated by: *John Marks*

"Many of the companies driving music and culture now weren't around when I started my career, which wasn't that long ago! Stay curious and keep learning. The jobs you'll have may not even exist yet."



Raffaella Braun

Triple Tigers Records, Dir./National Promotion
Nominated by: *George Couvi*

"I learned so much by watching WME's Risha Rodgers when



I worked for her at CAA. I believe women have incredible intuition and interpersonal skills directly tied to effective negotiating and compromise. Communication skills and passion are integral to this business, and the greatest creativity arises from the synergy between the two."

Stephanie Wagner

NY Country Swag, Founder
Nominated by: *John Foxx*

"Dream big, work hard, and be kind. You'd be surprised how many doors will open for you when you live your truth and lead with passion."



Tali Canterbury

50 Egg Music, GM/Co-Owner
Nominated by: *Ashley Sidoti*

"You absolutely can have a family life and be in the music industry; it does not have to be one or the other. When all is said and done, I will be proud of the things I did in the industry, but my relationship with my family will define who I am."



Tiffany Kerns

CMA Foundation
Executive Director; CMA VP/
Community Outreach
Nominated by: *Kurt Johnson*

"Earn your success based on service to others, not at the expense of others. When you focus on people and put service at the center, the rest falls into place."



Victoria Mason

Warner Music Nashville,
VP/Strategic Marketing
Nominated by: *Rod Phillips*

"Renewal is not a 'nice to have.' It is an imperative. Make time to take good care of yourself; it's the best thing you can do for those around you."



CAC

MEGHAN PATRICK
HEART ON MY GLASS

AVAILABLE EVERYWHERE 6/25

I CANNOT WAIT
TO GET ON THE ROAD AND
MEET EVERYONE ON MY
UPCOMING RADIO TOUR!



WE LOVE COUNTRY!



Carson
Host, *Country with Carson*
The Big D & Bubba Show, Co-Host



Amber Atnip
Producer/Co-Host
Taste of Country Nights



Kelly Sutton
Host
Y'all Access with Kelly Sutton



Congratulations to the Top Women in Country Music.
And we say — “Thank You” to all the women representing
Compass Media Networks for providing leadership and support
to our 7,000 affiliates nationwide.



DeDe McGuire
Host
DeDe In The Morning



Kayla Thomas
Host
PopCrush Nights (CHR)



Toni Gonzalez
Host
Loudwire Nights



Anna Zap
Co-Host
The Anna and Raven Show



Jennifer Kushinka
News Anchor
This Morning with Gordon Deal
Your Money Now



Nicole Murray
Host
PopCrush Nights (HOT AC)



Connie Sellecca
Intelligence For Your Health
Tesh Media - Intelligence For Your Life



Lady Jade
Co-Host
DeDe In The Morning



YoYo Loni Love Angelique
Hosts
Café Mocha



Kelly Cheese
Co-Host
The Free Beer & Hot Wings Show



Audrey Lee
Co-Host
The Dave and Mahoney Show



Alexis A
Show Personality
The Ace & TJ Show



Cari Lague
News Anchor
The Joe Pags Show



Sam Pags
Producer
The Joe Pags Show



Betsy Chase
Exec Producer / VP Programming
Tesh Media



Joyce Rizer
Producer
Y'all Access



Sheila Eldridge
Founder, Miles Ahead Broadcasting
Café Mocha



Michelle Salvatore
General Manager/
Executive Producer, Sports



Nancy Abramson
Vice-President
Affiliate Sales and Content



Laura Peyer
Account Director



Helene Wexler-Gold
Director of Audio Sales



Liane Sousa
Associate Director
Affiliate Sales



Kelli Grisez
Art Director
Creative Marketing Consultant



Cari Brucker
Director of Continuity



Elizabeth Coskun
Executive Assistant
Yamanair Creative



Asya Paez
Assistant Project Manager
Yamanair Creative



Danielle Dietz
Digital Director
Yamanair Creative



Devon Gedney
Director of Administration



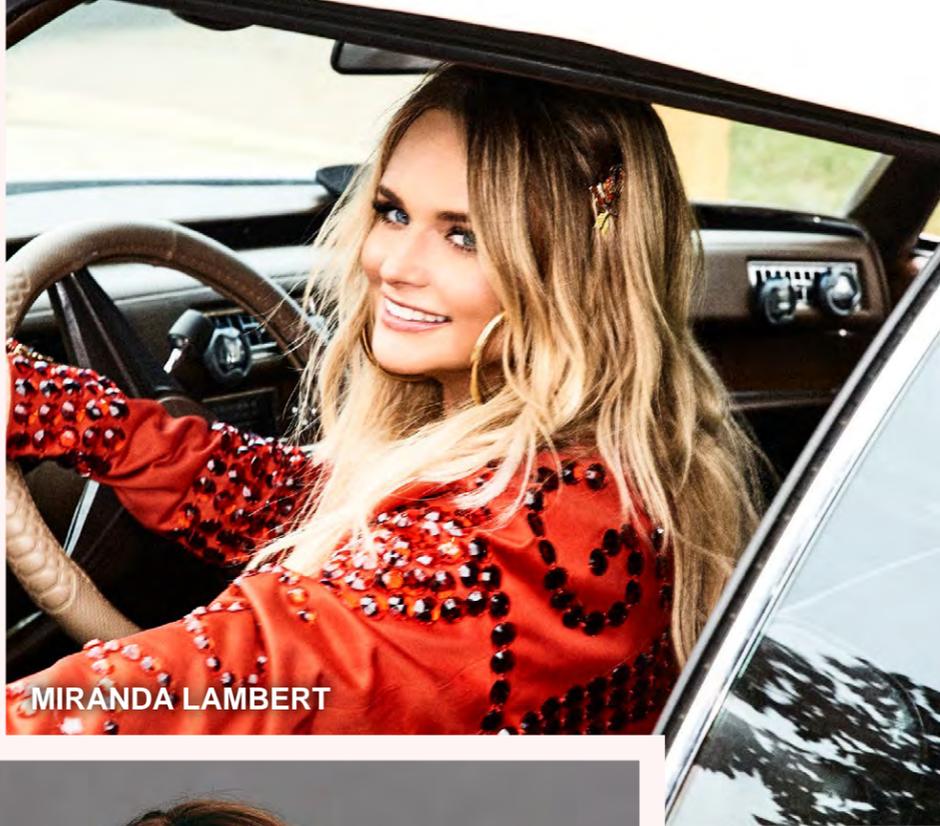
Kristen Pavich
Operations Manager



SONY MUSIC
NASHVILLE
CELEBRATES
OUR
**AMAZING
WOMEN IN
COUNTRY
MUSIC**



SONY MUSIC | NASHVILLE



MIRANDA LAMBERT



MAREN MORRIS



TENILLE TOWNES



RACHEL WAMMACK



PISTOL ANNIES



KAT (OF KAT & ALEX)



HANNAH DASHER



GEORGIA WEBSTER



ELLE KING

PRESLEY & TAYLOR



WITH OUR THANKS TO THE
ORIGINAL MAMAS OF THE
COUNTRY MUSIC INDUSTRY



CONNIE BRADLEY
DONNA HILLEY
FRANCES PRESTON
JO WALKER-MEADOR



WHITE MUSTANG RECORDS

LET'S GROW, GIRLS

Labels share what to expect from the women on their rosters in 2021 and beyond

19th & Grand

Coming off her first No. 1 at Country radio with "Somebody Like That" and an ACM New Female Artist nomination, **Tenille Arts** is set to release her third studio album later this year. "Back Then, Right Now" is the lead single. "With the success of 'Somebody Like That' breaking records across the board, it becomes the highest-charting song and the only No. 1 country song written, produced and performed by an all-female team," reminds VP/Promotion **Jim Malito**. Arts is touring this year with Lady A, with another tour confirmed for Jan. 2022.



Tenille Arts

BBRMG

"In her latest trilogy of music, **Brooke Eden** has beautifully shown the world her most authentic self, not only giving everyone a glimpse of her heart, but also proving she has found an infectious sound that is connecting with consumers," begins SVP **Jo Jamie Hahr**. Eden, who has been



Brooke Eden

focused the past few years on honing her sound, recently made a triumphant return to country music with a trilogy of releases that caught the eyes of the industry, earning ink in *Rolling Stone*, NPR, MTV News, *Billboard*, *People* and the *Washington Post* while amassing more than 38 million on-demand streams and receiving

substantial support on SiriusXM. Her music video for "Got No Choice" premiered on a billboard in Times Square, and the video for "Sunroof" amassed more than seven million streams in its first 36 hours, beating out "Silk Sonic" (Bruno Mars and Anderson.Paak) for the No. 1 all-genre position on iTunes.

Big Loud

"We are proud to have such a strong female presence at Big Loud," shares VP/Promotion **Stacy Blythe**. "Each of these women have a unique voice that is propelling the genre forward." **MacKenzie Porter** has a single out with Dustin Lynch and will spend the summer recording music for release later this year. She's already earned a spot as a Pandora



Lily Rose

2021 Country Artist to Watch, a Juno Award nomination and achieved the most-added single alongside Lynch. Revamping her critically-acclaimed 2020 debut album, *The Dream*, **Hailey Whitters** surprised fans and critics alike with an extended version calling on a star-studded roster of collaborators — Brent Cobb, Jordan Davis, Hillary Lindsey, Little Big Town, Lori McKenna and Trisha Yearwood. The deluxe album finds Whitters moving from fantasizing "the dream" to actually living it. Releasing new music this summer, Whitters will be taking it on the road with Midland later this year.

Lily Rose made waves last year with her TikTok reactive hit "Villain." Her identifiable tone sets her apart, with "Villain" gaining traction at Country radio. Collaborating with producer Joey Moi, the "promising new talent" (*Billboard*) is in the studio gearing up to release music throughout the year. **Ashland Craft** is putting the finishing touches on her debut album releasing later this year, produced by Jonathan Singleton, and joins the Zac Brown Band tour this summer and fall. As *American Songwriter* says, "There's a new country badass in town, and her name is Ashland Craft."

Big Machine

"Next Girl," the follow-up to **Carly Pearce**'s CMA and ACM award winning platinum single "I Hope You're Happy Now" — and featured on her latest collection, *29* — climbs inside the Top 20 at Country radio. The third most-played female artist in the format last year (**Country Aircheck**), Pearce is scheduled to release a collection of new music this fall. She's also featured on the soundtrack for the Netflix film *The Ice Road*,

out June 25. Pearce returns to the road in late July as direct support for the upcoming *Lady A: What A Song Can Do Tour*.

Callista Clark is already Top 40 with her debut single, "It's 'Cause I Am." Chosen by the majority of broadcast companies as a new music initiative and most recently selected as iHeartCountry's *On The Verge* artist, the 17-year-old is celebrating the release of her debut collection, *Real To Me*. "The thing that sets Callista apart, and that both listeners and programmers see and hear, is that she is real," says GM **Clay Hunnicutt**. "She's lived the songs she sings and delivers them in a powerful way that is perfect for mainstream Country radio and their listeners." Following the release of her sophomore album, *I Don't Believe We Met*, **Danielle Bradbery** will also be releasing new music this summer. "Danielle is one of the most incredible female vocalists in music — period," insists SVP/Promotion & Digital **Kris Lamb**.



Callista Clark

Big Sky

Stephanie Quayle readies her next digital release, "Lone Ranger," to join her 2021 collection of songs "By Heart," "Wild Frontier" and "We Buy Gold." The new sound from Quayle reflects her creative chemistry with producer Alex Kline. "The country music fan is consuming music at the highest rate we've ever seen, and our pivot in strategy reflects this," hails VP/Strategic Partnerships & Development **EJ Bernas**. "We are highlighting Stephanie's evolution creatively by releasing music every 8-12 weeks." Quayle continues to build her résumé of brand partners with the addition of Lucchese, to be formally announced this summer.



Stephanie Quayle

Black River

MaRynn Taylor moved to Nashville in 2019 to pursue music and stepped into an almost dreamlike scenario. She was standing in the rain — when doesn't it rain during *CMA Fest* — ready to go home when she was handed a flyer for Black River's *60-Second Spotlight*. As luck would have it, the talent opportunity was closed for the day, but as fate would have it, the executive staff enjoyed the conversation and invited her to sing. The first song she wrote and released last summer is a tribute to her father, "Dads And Daughters." Taylor released "I Know A Girl" in February and "Lies Of My Fears" arrived June 11.



MaRynn Taylor

As seen with "Half Of My Hometown" (f/Kenny Chesney), **Kelsea Ballerini**'s storytelling delivers modern twists on traditional country themes. "She remains an ambassador for the format as she continues to use her platform to support up-and-coming artists," points out SVP/Promotion **Mike Wilson**.

BMLG Records

Lady A's current single "Like A Lady" continues to climb the charts, and their latest collection of music, *What A Song Can Do Chapter 1*, was released June 25. Look for their tour of the same name to launch July 30. BMLGR is also gearing up for the launch of their newest artist, **Laci Kaye Booth**. Hailing from Livingston, TX, Booth grew up with country music in her blood playing around the state until 2019 when she went on *American Idol* and placed Top 5. After moving to Nashville to hone her writing skills, she was signed in 2020. Booth is currently in the studio with producer Dann Huff, will be releasing music later this summer and has touring plans for 2021.



Laci Kaye Booth

Broken Bow

Lainey Wilson knows some things a man ... and woman ... oughta know. Called a "song every country fan needs to hear" (*Taste of Country*) and a "must listen" (*Rolling Stone*), "Things A Man Oughta Know" is climbing through the teens. And she's just getting started, according to VP/Promotion **Lee Adams**: "Lainey's work ethic is second to none. Her content is creative and continuous." With her signature "Bell Bottom Country" sound, Wilson's blend of traditional country with a modern-yet-retro flare can be found throughout her album, *Sayin' What I'm Thinkin'*. "Lainey proved early on that she connects and that she will be a major part of our format and its future," says Adams, who touts Wilson's streaming and consumption numbers as nearing 70 million on-demand streams and gold consumption. She's back on the road and will join Jason Aldean's *Back In The Saddle* tour in August.



Lainey Wilson

Capitol

Caylee Hammack is in the studio working on new music, according to VP/Promotion **Bobby Young**, who says "We're excited about getting her back out in front of programmers." Hammack is also a support act on Luke Bryan's *Proud To Be Right Here Tour*, kicking off in July.



Caylee Hammack

Columbia

After officially making her entrance in the format, **Elle King**'s "Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home)" (w/ Miranda Lambert) is impacting Country radio now. The ACM and CMA award winning artist's musical style was deemed "a little bit country, a little bit rock n' roll" by *Rolling Stone* and "punkish country" by *Variety*. On the heels of an award-winning year, **Maren Morris** has been all over the airwaves while taking home Female Artist of the Year trophies from the most recent ACM and CMA Awards, in addition to Song and Single for "The Bones." She's currently ascending the chart with her collaboration with husband Ryan Hurd, "Chasing After You." "Maren is spending a good part of this summer writing and recording, and there's so much anticipation to hear what's coming next from this world-class entertainer," shares SVP/Promotion **Shane Allen**. After earning rave reviews on her 2020 debut album, *The Lemonade Stand*, **Tenille Townes** will have new music coming throughout the year. Her first release, "Girl Who Didn't Care," is available now.



Elle King

Curb

"I am so excited to be talking about a female artist," exclaims SVP/Promotion **RJ Meacham**. "**Hannah Ellis** is our first new female act in a while, and trust me, the Curb team has big plans." He adds, "If you've had the chance to be around Hannah at all, you know she is the absolute total package and real deal. Her voice, her personality, her look — she has it all. Get ready for Hannah's new music coming very soon. And we will make sure that each of you have a chance to hang with and get to know this star ASAP!"



Hannah Ellis

EMI Nashville

"Some of you were able to meet **Kylie Morgan** right as the pandemic began, and we are excited to get her back out on the road and continue what we started," says VP/Promotion **Jimmy Rector**. "The Oklahoma native released her first EP to DSPs June 11, and we look forward to bringing her music to radio."

GrassRoots Promotion

Actress **Veronika** from FX's *What We Do In The Shadows* is climbing the charts at Country radio with her

debut single, "Homesick." After going viral on TikTok performing a song she wrote about her bad taste in men, **Mary Heather Hickman** makes her debut at radio with "Treasure." "We are excited about these distinctive female voices and the stories they are telling," shares Managing Partner/Co-Owner **Nancy Tunick**. "We are a 100% female-owned company, and eight of our 12-member staff are female, including our accomplished VP/Promotion **Renee McClure**. We feel passionately about helping women contribute their unique perspective to the country music landscape."

Gwendolyn Records

This year marks the 30th anniversary of **Trisha Yearwood**'s self-titled debut album and record-breaking debut single "She's In Love With The Boy." To celebrate this milestone, Yearwood recorded a special new rendition that will be featured on her upcoming *Every Girl 2021 Deluxe Album* to be released this summer.



Trisha Yearwood

MCA

Kacey Musgraves' next album, which will be jointly released via Interscope and UMG, is expected later this year. **Reba McEntire** contributed "Somehow You Do" to the motion picture *Four Good Days*, currently available on demand. This year marks several anniversaries in McEntire's catalog, as well, and those will be spotlighted at DSPs and retailers. Joint Interscope/UMGN artist **Kassi Ashton** has also been in the studio working on new music. Finally, MCA welcomes **Catie Offerman** to the roster. The Texas native is an accomplished fiddle player. Coupled with her abilities on guitar, she has a unique sound rooted in traditional country with thoughtful lyrics. Offerman is currently working on her debut album, and SVP/Promotion **Katie Dean** expects to introduce her to radio later this year.



Catie Offerman

Mercury

"The women of Mercury are coming strong with new music in the second half of 2021," says SVP/Promotion **Damon Moberly**. **Lauren Alaina** enlisted the help of Jon Pardi for current tempo jam "Getting Over Him," the single from her new studio album set for Q3 release. "Lauren Alaina is a staple of our playlist at KRTY/San Jose," says GM **Nate Deaton**. **Priscilla Block**, who KSCS & KPLX/Dallas PD **Mike Preston** calls "an emerging star," hit the scene in the middle of a pandemic but is now getting out on the road to meet programmers and fans as the debut single "Just About Over You" — from her self-titled EP — climbs the charts. Her full-length debut album will be released in the third quarter. **Maddie and Tae** are coming off a No. 1 ballad as the Mercury team brings their new single "Woman You Got!" for the summer. Additional tracks will follow in July and September leading up to the release of their next studio album.



Priscilla Block

Monument

In 2021, Monument shipped powerhouse vocalist and songwriter **Caitlyn Smith**'s first single to Country radio, "I Can't" (f/Old Dominion). Getting creative on 2021's version of a radio tour meant renting out full venues in cities across the country for five or six people at a time to hear her sing. "Luckily, with an artist like Caitlyn Smith, whether over Zoom or in a 'socially distanced' theater, she's going to blow you away," says VP/Promotion **Drew Bland**. With new music coming from nearly all the label's artists through the end of the year, including Smith and newly signed sister-duo **Tigirlily**, Co-Pres. **Shane McNally** teases, "The music Monument is getting ready to release is what the label was built on — creativity, innovation and true originality."



Caitlyn Smith

RCA

Miranda Lambert's "Settling Down" continues to resonate with listeners. SVP/Promotion **Dennis Reese** remarks, "We're going for No. 1 at the end of July, giving her back-to-back top-of-chart hits." He adds, "She's been writing and is in the studio and will have new music sooner than later." She's also featured on "Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home)," Elle

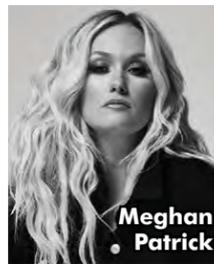


Miranda Lambert

King's first single released to Country. Meanwhile, stop by Lambert's new Nashville cantina, Casa Rosa.

Riser House

"Speaking as one with too few X chromosomes (or one Y too many), I'm proud Riser House was co-founded and led by a woman," says SVP/Promotion **Bob Reeves**. **Meghan Patrick** released her *Heart On My Glass* LP June 25, and the woman who signed her, Pres. **Jennifer Johnson**, says, "She has a distinct voice, not only in music, but as an intelligent, opinionated woman with a grounded life perspective." Reeves and Johnson "can't wait" to introduce her one-on-one to radio and their listeners.



Meghan Patrick

Sony Music Nashville

With more than 1.2 million TikTok followers, **Hannah Dasher** has built a dedicated fanbase with "just the right amount of leather and lace" (*Billboard*). Her latest release, "Left Right," sets the pace for her upcoming project *The Half Record* (arriving July 9), confirming her role as "the country-rock goddess country music needs" (*Taste of Country*). Says VP/A&R **Margaret Tomlin**, "With her bold lyrics and contagious personality, Hannah is carving a significant place for herself in country music." Rising country/Latin husband/wife team **Kat & Alex** made waves with the release of their debut track "How Many Times" and its accompanying Spanish version. The duo recently released "You And The Radio" and "Heartbreak Tour," which *The New York Times* called "an earnest power country slow-burner."



Hannah Dasher

River House Artists/Sony Music Nashville newcomer **Georgia Webster** first gained attention when her song "Tell Your Mom" went viral on TikTok, picking up nearly three million views in a few days. Now, with her new track "Push And Pull" earning critical acclaim and more than 240,000 TikTok followers, Webster is gearing up for the July 16 release of her debut EP, *My First Goodbye*. "When Lynn Oliver-Cline brought us Georgia, we knew instantly we needed to partner with River House Artists, making her the first female signing with the joint-venture," notes SVP/A&R **Taylor Lindsey**.

Stoney Creek

In their debut outing with "Met Me Now," sibling trio **Track45** (Jenna, Ben and KK Johnson) immediately caught radio's attention, nabbing the most-added position of the week with a sound described as "new old school" by songwriter/producer **Ashley Gorley**. "Track45 is fresh, young and old school — blended with their familial harmonies — it's a one-of-a-kind sound that is missing from our format," says VP/Promotion **Adrian Michaels**. While young, each sibling is a musician and earned publishing deals on their way to a record deal. Collective writing credits include Justin Timberlake, Charlie Puth, Dierks Bentley, Lee Brice, Weezer and Hardy.



Jenna & KK Johnson

Triple Tigers

Cam became the first solo female in 2021 to have the most-added record on impact with current single "Till There's Nothing Left" off her critically-acclaimed album *The Other Side*, released in October. *The New York Times* calls the track "an arena-country promise of uninhibited backseat passion." SVP **Kevin Herring** adds, "I don't think there's a better litmus test for a track than having almost 1,200 spins on The Highway, which helped drive more than 25 million streams and 3 million video views. Radio can be more confident than ever about the validity of this song and artist." Cam is "a global brand," as Herring puts it, with a massive following, and "Till There's Nothing Left" is a prime example of her captivating vocals and natural artistry.



Cam

Warner/WAR

Gabby Barrett continues leading the charge for the next wave of soon-to-be country music superstars. Her debut album made history, with her 5x platinum-certified debut single ("I Hope") hitting No. 1 on the airplay charts and its platinum-certified successor ("The Good Ones") following suit for three weeks. She has been nominated

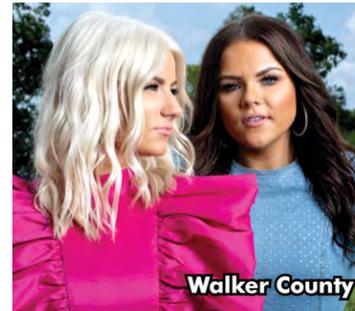


Gabby Barrett

for and won a multitude of awards, including ACM New Female Artist of the Year, and has already topped one billion global career streams.

Warner/WEA

Ingrid Andress has had a big 2021: she was nominated for three Grammys and was the only country artist who earned a nod in the all-genre Best New Artist category. Her No. 1 debut "More Hearts Than Mine" has been certified platinum, and her current single "Lady Like" is Top 40 and climbing with nearly 100 million streams heading into June. This fall, Andress will get the opportunity to start where she left off before the pandemic: opening for Dan + Shay's arena tour beginning in September. *CMT Listen Up* and *Next Women of Country* duo **Walker County** are celebrating the radio release of their debut single, "Bits & Pieces." Lead vocalist Ivy and percussionist sister Sophie have been performing together for as long as they can remember — and have been on the road meeting radio. They will also open for Old Dominion this summer.



Walker County

Warner/WMN

Robyn Ottolini signed with WMN in Oct. 2020, just weeks after her song "F-150" became a viral sensation. The post-breakup hit reached No. 4 on Spotify's US Viral 50 chart and No. 3 on *Rolling Stone's* all-genre Trending 25 chart. By spring, it garnered more than 20 million streams globally. With numbers like that, "F-150" became the obvious choice for her debut Country radio single and was among the Top 5 most-added songs upon impact. As the world starts to open back up, Ottolini will hit the road this fall as direct support for Breland, performing songs from *The But I'm Not Always Sad* EP. **Ashley McBryde** earned Album of the Year nods at the ACM, CMA and Grammy Awards (country) for her sophomore record *Never Will* and was selected to co-host the 2020 *CMT Awards* with Kane Brown. She kept the spirits of country music fans high throughout lockdown with her weekly quarantine content and the release of *Never Will: Live From A Distance*. McBryde is now back in the studio working on new music, and this summer she is out on her own headlining tour before joining the Luke Combs tour as direct support this fall.



Robyn Ottolini

Wheelhouse

Comprised of Naomi Cooke, Natalie Stovall and Jennifer Wayne, **Runaway June** are the "Next Hot Trend in Country Music" (*Billboard*). In the past few years, the trio has been nominated for New Vocal Duo or Group of the Year at the ACM Awards, selected for CRS *New Faces* Class of 2020, released their debut album to critical praise, toured the country on Carrie Underwood's *Cry Pretty Tour* and made history with single "Buy My Own Drinks," which marked the first time a female trio has broken into the Top 5 on the Mediabase/Country Aircheck chart since The Chicks in 2003. Runaway June are currently in the studio working on new music — slated to be shared during their sets on Luke Bryan's *Proud to Be Right Here 2021 Tour* this year.



Runaway June

White Mustang

Flagship artists **Presley & Taylor** will continue to grow their "unique blend of country vibes and God-given sibling harmonies" with more releases in the fall. New music is being finalized with producer/label head James Stroud and comes on the heels of their debut single, "Everybody Sees It," which garnered more than a million streams and two million video views. Their current single, "Don't Even Know Your Mama," is already showing faster growth. Head/Marketing **Pepper Meiler** says to keep an eye out for the "cinematic brilliance of director Gus Black" on the single's new video.



Presley & Taylor

CAC



RADIO

CELEBRATES THE 2021 CLASS OF

CMT *Next*
Women
of COUNTRY



ASHLAND CRAFT / BRITTNEY SPENCER
CHAPEL HART / HANNAH DASHER / HARPER GRAE
MACKENZIE PORTER / PRISCILLA BLOCK
REYNA ROBERTS / SACHA / TENILLE ARTS

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WITH CODY ALAN

AFTER
MIDNITE
WITH CODY ALAN

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Melanie Ainsworth
Controller



Mallory Allgood
Executive Assistant, Creative



Michelle Attardi
Director, Publishing - BMM



Jayme Austin
Manager, Touring & Events



Kimberly Baker
Sr. Manager, Royalty Accounting
& Income Analysis



Sandi Borchetta
EVP, Creative



Iren Coutiel
Label Assistant - UMG UK



Courtney Daly
Manager, Digital Partnership
& Streaming



Kylie Dembek
Coordinator, Promotion - BMLGR



Brooke Diaz
Director, NE Promotion
& Marketing - BMR



Bekah Digby
Manager, Streaming



Jenn Dobbins
Director, Royalty Accounting
& Income Analysis



Lizzy Gallatin-Rector
Coordinator, Publishing - BMM



Bari Gant
Manager, Data Management



Katherine Graham
Graphic Designer



Kelsey Hamrick
Sr. Manager, Label Resources



Alex Hannaby
Label Manager - UMG UK



Ellen Hogan
Assistant, A&R



Roxanne Kelly
Marketing Assistant



Donna Lidster
VP, Marketing - CANADA



Heather Luke-Husong
SVP, Head of Promotion - BM/JV



Amy Maunder-Taylor
Label Coordinator - UMG UK



Melanie Mitrof
Project Manager



Flo Myerscough-Harris
Intern UK



Stella Prado
Director, WC Promotion
& Marketing - BMLGR



Athena Puharic
Coordinator, Promotion - VMC



Macy Rivet
Manager, Communications



Kaitlyn Russell
Coordinator, Royalties



Liz Santana
Director, SE Promotion
& Marketing - BMLGR



Darielle Schroeder
Manager, A&R



Holly Taylor
Design Manager



Sabrina Taylor
Coordinator, Marketing



Dara Thomas
Manager, Interactive
& Web Development



Becca Walls
Manager, Content,
Host Big Machine Radio



Marie Wapelhorst
Manager, Streaming



Rachel Wendler
Sr. Manager, Communications

BIG MACHINE

LABEL GROUP

2021



Megan Bragg
Staff Accountant



Andi Brooks
Director, SW Promotion
& Marketing - BMLGR



Erin D. D. Burr
Sr. Director, Communications



Liz Butram
Marketing Creative Services



Jasmine Byrne
Manager, Streaming



Ashley Collier-Medley
Sr. Manager, Synchronization
& Rights Management



Amanda Duke
Coordinator, Copyright & Royalties



Kristen Etzler
Manager, Production



Madeline Farr
Manager, Digital Marketing



Molly Fisher
Project Manager



Nicole Flammia
VP, Creative, Photo & Video Production



Candice Fults
Director, Finance



Jenny House
Sr. Director, Employee Relations



Nicole Hunt
Project Manager



Allison Jones
EVP, A&R



Michelle Kammerer
Sr. National Director, Promotion
& Marketing - BMLGR



Meghan Kane
Executive Assistant



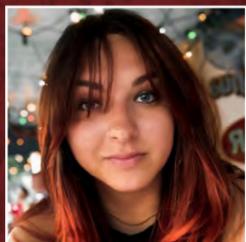
Samantha Kane
Coordinator, Promotion - BMR



Jessica Myers
VP, Rights Management
& Business Affairs



Cherylynn Nader
Manager, Reporting - Label Resources



Brooke Nixon
Director, SE Promotion
& Marketing - VMC



Shelby Paul
Manager, Communications



Alicia Pawlowski
Accountant



Mackenzie Pepper
Coordinator, Communications



Nicole Sherwood
Assistant, Creative Videographer-Editor



Ashley Sidoti
VP, Promotion & Digital - VMC



Allison Smith
National Director, Promotion - BM/JV



Amy Staley
Director, WC Promotion
& Marketing - VMC



Carly Strickland
Manager, A&R



Carolyn Szymanski
Sr. Staff Accountant



Tracy Wilkinson Gibson
Director, SW Promotion
& Marketing - BMR





ASHLEY



DANIELLE



DARBY



CYNDI



NATALIE



TAYLOR



MORGAN



MARY



MISSY



INGRID



MAREN



BRANDI

**THE WOMEN
OF UMPG**

**INDUSTRY LEADERS
ON AND OFF
THE STAGE.**



JODY



LACI



CAITLYN



CAYLEE

UNIVERSAL



**UNIVERSAL MUSIC
PUBLISHING GROUP
NASHVILLE**



TAMMY



CLAIRE



CATIE



AVALON



TEIA



ROXY



SHANIA



SARA

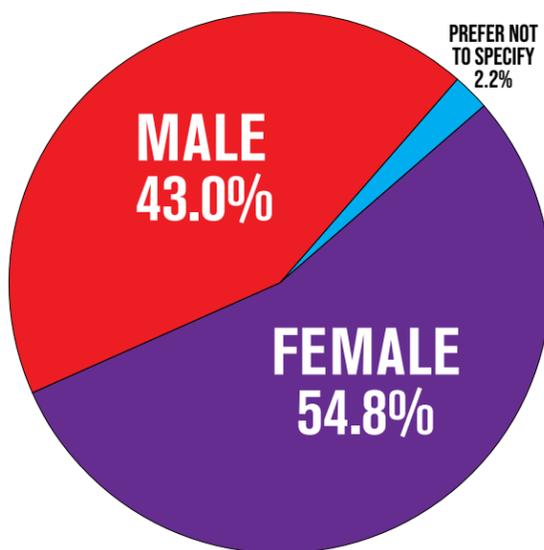
A recent survey completed by 600 music and radio professionals found that nearly half (45%) have experienced sexism in country music first-hand in the last three years. An additional 16% said they'd witnessed one or more examples of it. The findings were cited not only by women, but also by men – many of them. While respondents are split 36% to 33% on whether airplay opportunities are worse or better for women artists vs. men, agreement is widespread they are better than three years ago. Likewise, signing and development opportunities for artists, and advancement opportunities for women in the business, are seen as improving. Nevertheless, a marked disparity exists between how women and men perceive and experience these issues across all topics.

Arguably the largest-ever survey of its kind, Women in Country 2021 was distributed to Country Aircheck's entire readership of more than 6,000 subscribers, and responses were accepted May 5-18, 2021. Participants provided information about their industry sector, gender, years of experience and employment level; no personal information was asked. The survey's 11 questions dealt with development and airplay opportunities for female artists compared to male artists in the past three years, as well as career opportunities for women within the radio and music industries. The survey provided examples of sexism that they may have experienced or witnessed, among other issues. A remarkably high 97% of the participants answered every question.

The survey generated an even 600 industry responses. In the comments section, more than 100 respondents anonymously furnished personal stories and observations. This research used an opt-in methodology and not a randomly selected panel of readers, meaning the findings are not necessarily reflective of their various industries as a whole.

Among the respondents, 54.8% (329) were women and were split about 42% radio and 58% music industry/associated categories (below, right). Radio-related and record company personnel accounted for approximately 61% of the total. Apart from the small sample of songwriters and record producer/production/studio personnel, the radio industry is the only segment where male respondents outnumbered female participants.

RESPONDENTS BY GENDER



SEXISM IN COUNTRY?

Industry Says YES

by Stone Door Media Lab partners Jeff Green and Lauren Virshup

RESPONDENTS BY JOB SECTOR

Survey Question: Check the one description most closely associated with your main duties unless your work is equally divided between two or more descriptions.

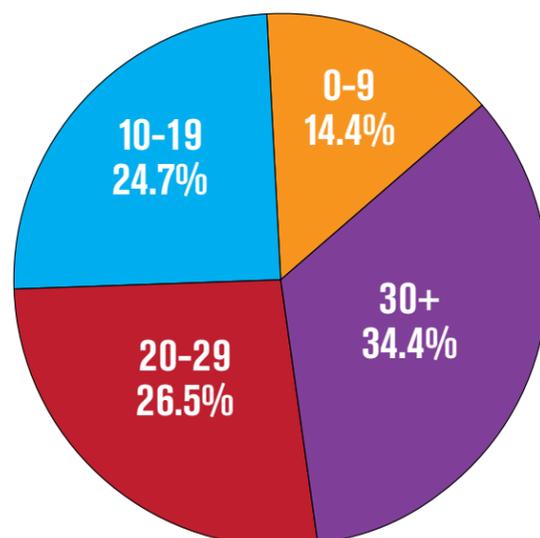
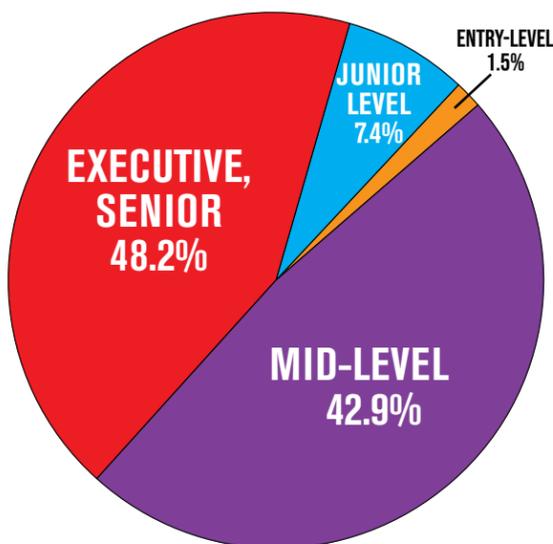
Radio (all positions at station, group, network, syndication or consultant)	41.7%
Record Company	19.2%
Artist Management	9.8%
Marketing/Promotion/Distribution Services	8.2%
Publishing/PRO	6.5%
Touring Business/Booking Agent/Venue	4.8%
Affiliated Media (TV, cable, video production, websites, press)	4.3%
Publicity	3.7%
Songwriter	2.5%
Digital Service Providers (DSPs)	1.8%
Legal/Business Affairs	1.8%
Trade Association	1.8%
Record Producer/Music or Video Production/Studio Business	1.7%
Artist/Musician	1.3%
Academic/Scientific (educator, student, research, analytics)	0.5%

WHO PARTICIPATED

More than 90% of participants ranked their jobs as being mid-level or executive. Of those describing themselves as executive/senior level, male respondents were a majority (55%). Female respondents represented a large majority at all other levels.

Similarly, more than 85% of respondents have at least 10 years of industry experience. This figure indicates they have had ample opportunity to become familiar with the issues. Only about 3% (19 individuals) reported having less than five years' experience. More than half of the male respondents have at least 30 years' experience. Men represent a solid majority of those with that level of tenure, whereas female respondents comprised the majority of those in all experience segments of less than 30 years. Women represented about three-fourths of those with less than 20 years' experience.

Apart from the very few entry-level respondents, females describing themselves at junior-level, mid-level and executive/senior level positions hold those ranks with eight fewer average years of experience than their male counterparts. This doesn't necessarily mean that females achieved those levels sooner; it's possible that males could have achieved those ranks sooner and simply have more longevity. A follow-up asking respondents how long it took to achieve their current position would help answer that question.



SEXISM EXPERIENCED

If there was any doubt about whether those in the music and radio industries experience sexism, the findings from this question put the issue to rest: More than 45% said yes, and another 16% noted that they had witnessed it, for a total of 61%. Looking into the numbers, the gender gap here is huge. Women experience far more sexism, with only 20% saying they had not, compared to only 21% of men who said they had. Among those in radio, men said no at three times the level of women, and it was by nearly four times higher at record companies.

SEXISM IN COUNTRY?

The proportion of women who've experienced sexism first-hand "often" compared to men was more than 4:1. The bottom line is that the situation, as reported, is widespread, as overall, more than 45% of respondents said either "often" or "a few times." Among the four business sectors with at least 40 respondents, at least 40% of all of them reported "often or a few times." Separating "often" from other responses, artist management personnel generated a higher proportion by far (29%) than the others or the average, including half the female artist management respondents.

Although there were fewer participants in other categories, at least half of the 327 female participants experienced sexism in all 15 business sectors except for legal/business affairs.

There were 252 women who said they experienced or witnessed sexism, and 248 identified the types they encountered. There were 110 men who said they experienced or witnessed sexism, and 103 identified the types they encountered.

As for types of sexism, it's worth noting that participants listed a wide range of combinations. For example, some said they were verbally and/or sexually harassed, but didn't experience receiving a lower salary or chances for promotion, while others noted the opposite. Several documented unequal workplace treatment in conjunction with one of the other five forms listed.

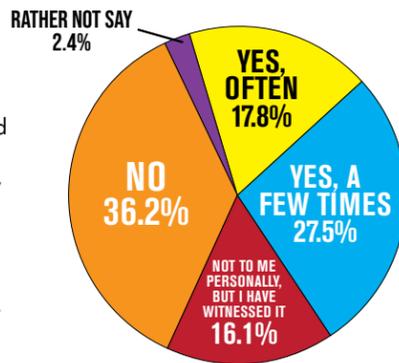
About a third of male respondents experienced or witnessed only one form of sexism, while less than a quarter of female respondents said so. More than 25% of women in the survey listed four or more forms of sexism – twice as large a proportion as did male respondents.

Among women specifically, 90 of the 252 female respondents who said they experienced or witnessed sexism in the past three years noted that they had experienced it often (27.5%). Of those 90, 75 mentioned lower salary, while 52 cited sexual harassment and 10 cited sexual assault.

Those who say they've experienced or witnessed sexism "often" are outnumbered by those who experienced it "a few times." However, those "often" respondents frequently tally more total examples and higher proportions of sexist treatment. While further research and a larger sample are warranted, the responses suggest that for women, the more severe sexist activity (harassment, assault) may bend towards those who experience/witness it often.

Finally on this topic, there are multiple unknowns that could be examined in a follow-up research: 1) Whether the specific form of sexism was both experienced personally and witnessed; 2) Whether the respondent experienced sexism by someone of the same gender; 3) Whether or how much the "witness" observed sexism against someone of the same gender as the respondent; 4) Whether there were any career consequences for either party resulting from any of those situations.

Different Treatment: Regarding the "Bias As Experienced" results, what

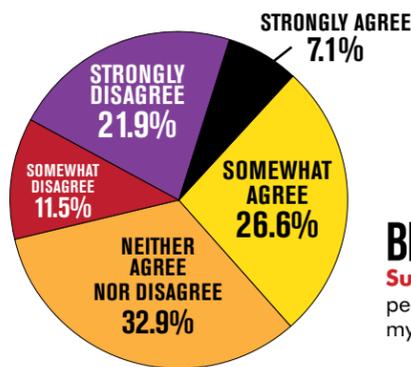
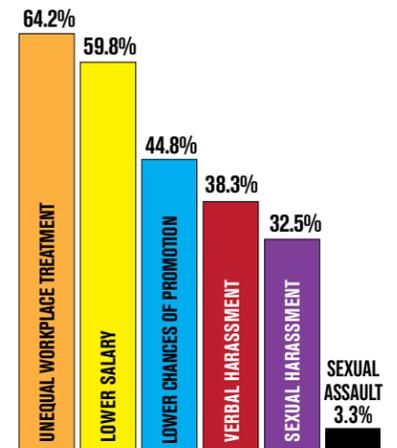


SEXISM ON THE JOB

Survey Question: I've experienced first-hand what I regard as sexism on the job, either overt or subconscious, in the past three years (whether in behavior, attitude, job assignments or compensation).

SEXISM AS EXPERIENCED

Survey Question: If you said yes to the above question about sexism on the job, what issues have you faced? (You may choose more than one). (Ed. Note: Response total for this question was 366.)



BIAS AS EXPERIENCED

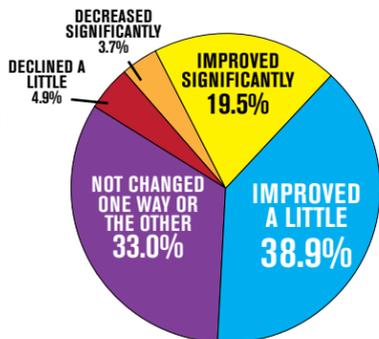
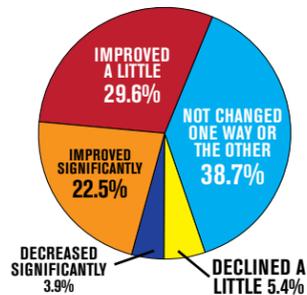
Survey Question: My industry peers treat me differently because of my gender.

"differently" means is open to individual interpretation, but those who said they "strongly disagree" led "strongly agree" by a 3:1 margin. Otherwise, this is the one question that generally was equally divided in overall opinion. A third of respondents agreed with this statement, a full third disagreed, and the other third neither agreed nor disagreed. By gender, the story is considerably different. Women agreed with this statement by more than a 2:1 margin (45%-20%) compared to men. Nearly 44% of women in radio agreed, more than twice the proportion of male broadcasters (20%). Similarly, women at record companies led their male counterparts by a 41%-17% margin.

Among women in radio, the proportion of those in mid-level roles agreed at more than twice the level of those in executive capacities (53%-25%). However, nearly the reverse was true at labels, where executive-level women agreed in much higher proportions than mid-level women (57%-34%).

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Survey Question: Entry-level employment opportunities for women in my field in the past three years have ...



ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITY

Survey Question: Mid-to-senior-level advancement opportunities for women in my field in the past three years have ...

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

It's a relatively good outlook for those seeking to work in the record business. A majority of opinions by both women and men were positive, but some concerns were expressed about radio, where consolidation has taken a toll. About one in four women in radio feel opportunities have decreased, compared to only one in eight among men in radio. However, senior-level radio executives – both female and male – were far more positive about entry-level jobs than were mid- or junior-level staff.

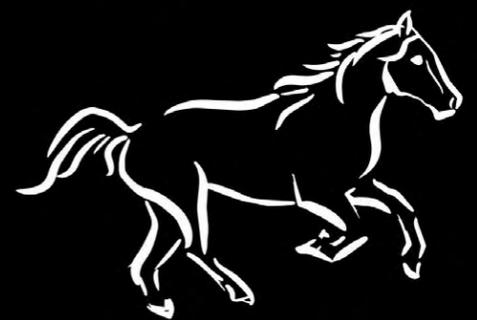
The outlook in artist management and marketing/promotion was also favorable. Nearly six-in-10 artist management personnel viewed opportunities as better. Men at those companies were significantly more upbeat than women, perceiving improvement by a 68% to 48% margin. And half of those in marketing/promotion/distribution viewed entry-level opportunities as improved.

Even better news was found on the advancement front, where respondents see improvement by an overwhelmingly positive 58% to 9% margin. However, there were some notable gender differences. In terms of stating "improved significantly," men overall registered 2:1 compared to women. At record companies, that ratio leaned male by nearly 3:1. At radio, 59% of mid-level men felt positively, compared to only 45% of mid-level women. In artist management, 86% of men felt the situation had improved, compared to 61% of women. Among those in marketing/promotion/distribution, 71% of men gave a favorable view, compared to just 42% among women.



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Lon, Chuck, April, Caitlin,
Chris, Monta, Kelley & Addie
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CAITLYN SMITH

I CAN'T (FEATURING OLD DOMINION)

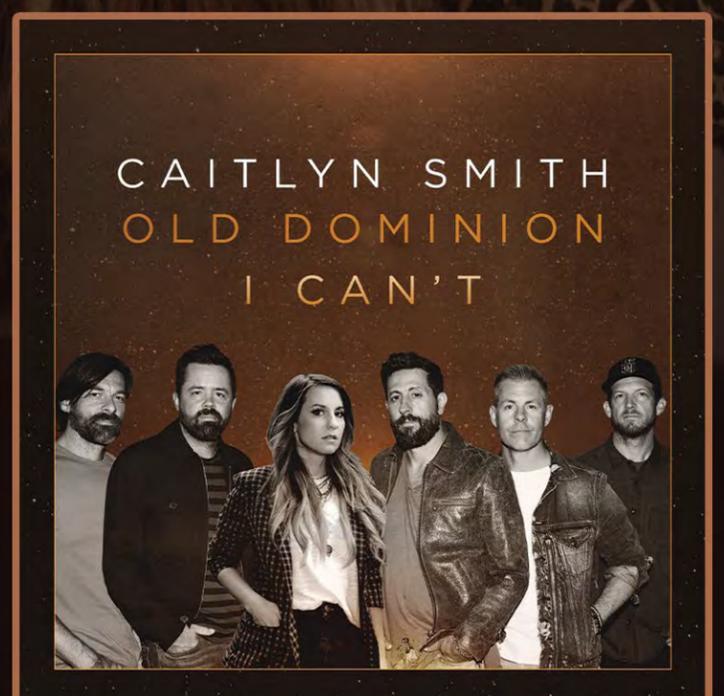
NOW PLAYING ON

WKXC WXBQ KKGO WNSH WDRQ KMNB WJVC KBEQ WDAF WGAR
WFMS WGH WYRK WHKO KHKI WXCX WQMX WWQM WPOR WTHT
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KWJJ KCYY KSOP KRTY KJKE WNOE KIIM KWEN KHGE KSKS WSOC
WWKA KRST WTGE KDRK KXLY KJUG KPLM WCKN WUSY WRNS
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WWGR WIVK KATM KCCY WKRO WDRM WUSJ WKML MUSIC CHOICE
AND MORE

ON TOUR THIS YEAR WITH
GEORGE STRAIT
LITTLE BIG TOWN
OLD DOMINION



MONUMENT



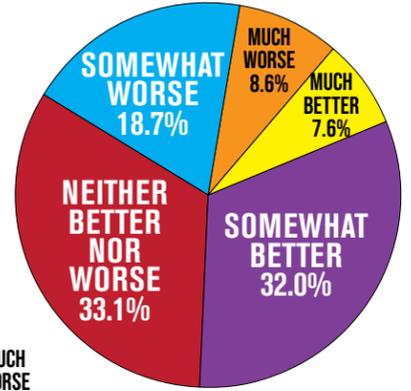
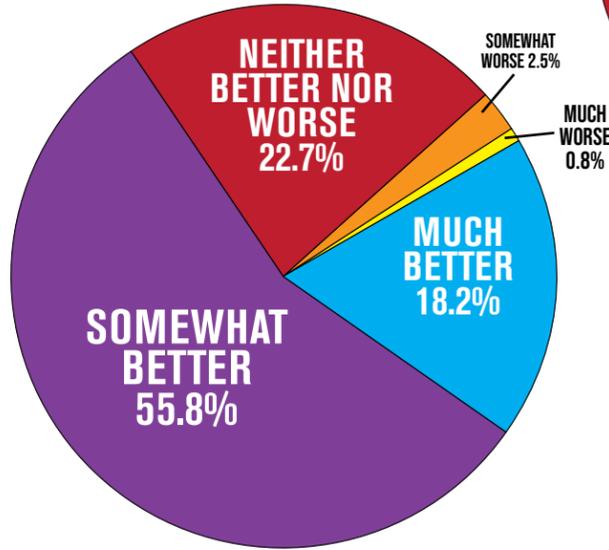
SEXISM IN COUNTRY? CREATIVE CONCERNS

In one of this study's most lopsided findings, nearly three-quarters say opportunities for signing and developing women artists have improved in recent years, compared to less than 4% who say they have decreased. In radio, records and artist management, more than 70% of both women and men felt opportunities for women artists and songwriters are better than three years ago. This consensus of 70% or more also applied to those at most position levels. Men were more positive than women in citing "much better" opportunities. At radio and overall, male respondents believe conditions are "much better" by more than a 2:1 margin compared to female respondents. Both men and women in artist management were particularly upbeat, with more than 85% collectively saying opportunities have improved.

While responses showed that participants overwhelmingly agree that signing/development opportunities are better than three years ago, there was much less positivity when framed as a question comparing women's opportunities with men's. More than 27% of respondents felt the situation is disadvantageous for women. Women in radio were more than twice as inclined to say "somewhat worse," while men in radio were nearly twice as inclined to say "somewhat better." Meanwhile, 40% of both women and men in record companies had a positive outlook ("much better" or "somewhat better").

ARTIST SIGNING & DEVELOPMENT VS. 2018

Survey Question: Compared to three years ago, signing or development opportunities for women country artists and songwriters today are ...

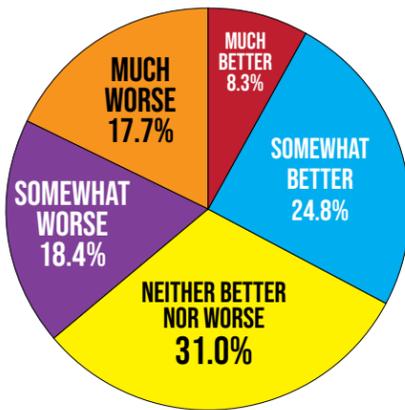
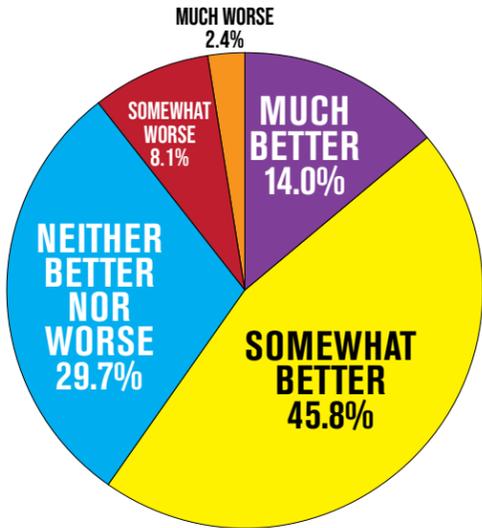


ARTIST SIGNING & DEVELOPMENT VS. MEN

Survey Question: Compared to men, signing or development opportunities for women country artists and songwriters today are ...

AIRPLAY OPPORTUNITIES VS. 2018

Survey Question: Compared to three years ago, radio airplay opportunities for women Country artists today are ...



AIRPLAY OPPORTUNITIES VS. MEN

Survey Question: Compared to men, radio airplay opportunities for women Country artists today are ...

AIRPLAY IS MIXED

Although not overwhelmingly so, there was general overall agreement across the board that radio opportunities have improved in recent years. Two notable differences: Men overall felt matters were "much better" by more than a 2:1 margin compared to women overall; men in record company roles regarded opportunities "much better" than their female counterparts by a huge 5:1 margin.

Regarding airplay opportunities for women versus men, the pessimistic perspective of "much worse" won by more than a 2:1 margin over "much better." In marketing/promotion/distribution, 26% said matters were "much worse" – the highest strong negative response among the four major industry segments. The downcast outlook was particularly true among women overall, who viewed matters "much worse" at about a 5:1 ratio over "much better," and overall worse than better by a 45%-25% split. This contrasts notably with men, who leaned just slightly towards "much worse" than "much better" and were overall 55% more positive than negative.

About 42% of female staff in both radio and records were downbeat compared to 33% of men in record companies and just 14% of men in radio. Approximately half of men in radio felt opportunities were better for women than men, compared to just 31% of women in radio. The proportion of female artist management personnel regarding matters as worse versus better was about 4:1, while men in that field were nearly equally split. The proportion of women in marketing/promotion/distribution who felt opportunities were worse compared to better was a lopsided 41% to 16%.

HUMAN RESOURCES

With the considerable amount and degrees of sexism issues reported by respondents, it's unsettling to see that more than half (55%) said they have no one to talk to or aren't sure if someone is even available. The "no" and "not sure" proportions were significantly higher for radio staffers (53%) than record company personnel (37%), and particularly so for women in radio posts (61%) vs. their counterparts in record professions (41%). For those in artist management, where firms may only employ a handful of employees and typically have no HR personnel, only 19% responded affirmatively, with those in marketing/promotion/distribution responding at a somewhat higher level (31%).

While only 45% of respondents said they had someone to talk to at their company, 64% said they had been or would be comfortable doing so. Among women, the respondents between the two questions climbed from 42% to 55%. Among men, the "yes" answer soared to an even wider margin, from 49% to 75%. While a more in-depth study would be more determinative, these differences suggest there's a need for more HR investment in the radio and music industries.

Nonetheless, while a majority of women responded affirmatively regarding being comfortable talking with someone at their company about sexism, more than 45% were negative or unsure. Among women in mid-level radio positions, nearly two-thirds were unsure or negative, more than twice the proportion of the 30% of female senior-level radio executives. Men in radio were far more comfortable compared to their female colleagues, by a 73%-45% margin. The "yes" differential leaned nearly 2:1 male among those at the mid-level position. Women overall said "no" at more than a 4:1 ratio compared to men, and by more than 3:1 in both radio and records. At labels, the "yes" ratio also strongly leaned male by an 81%-51% margin, including 88%-48% among those in executive capacities.

Survey Says: In addition to multiple choice survey responses, participants were offered a comment box, which more than 100 employed. Commonly mentioned is what's perceived as the long-running "old boys' club" operation with all its attendant accoutrements: salary discrepancies, opportunity stagnation, unequal treatment in various forms, verbal and sexual harassment, and worse. Many women have been and remain fearful of speaking out, knowing they risk being ignored, demeaned, retaliated against or even losing their careers.

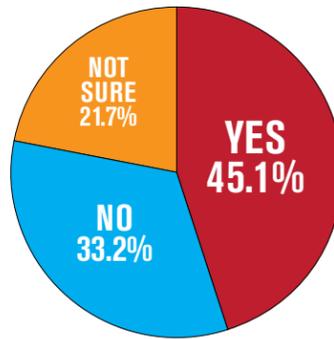
While not to the degree that women in country do, the results and comments show that men recognize these problems exist. Many women feel positive change is coming, but too slowly. By contrast, some men see a rapid political shift to address the imbalance, which they view as resulting in an over-correction or reverse bias, where decisions are based more on social pressure to fulfill a quota than on one's creative or business talent.

Opinions on some of the survey questions are lopsided by gender or career segment, but there are several examples of consensus as well. Even though many agree that the best artists, songs and staffers should win, the persistent problems make fairness and equal opportunity an elusive goal.

CAC

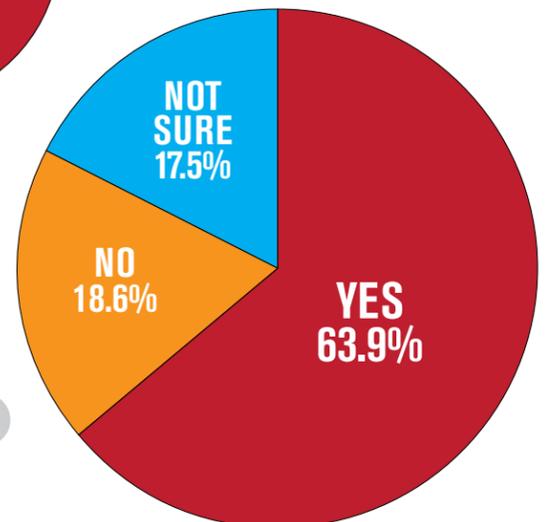
COMPANY SUPPORT

Survey Question: There is a person at my company whose job includes addressing sexism issues confidentially.



CONFIDENCE IN COMPANY SUPPORT

Survey Question: I have been/would be comfortable approaching someone at my company about issues around sexism.



About the Stone Door Media Lab: Founded by partners Jeff Green and Lauren Virshup, the research firm has made annual presentations in the past five years for Country Radio Broadcasters at CRS and for CRB webinars, among other projects including Arbitron/Nielsen's four annual national radio studies for seven years.

Green is a longtime industry veteran whose executive background includes the CMA, Country Aircheck, Radio & Records, Billboard's European publication Music & Media and the Americana Music Association. A Leadership Music and Disney Leadership Institute alum, he holds a BA degree in Radio & Television from San Francisco State University and an MBA from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Virshup holds both a BA degree in Psychology and an MBA from Yale University, a Master's in Public Health in population and family health from Columbia University, and a Master's in Sociology from Vanderbilt University, where her social psychology concentration focused on feminism and gender stratification.



JESSI ALEXANDER



TRANNIE ANDERSON



KELSEA BALLERINI



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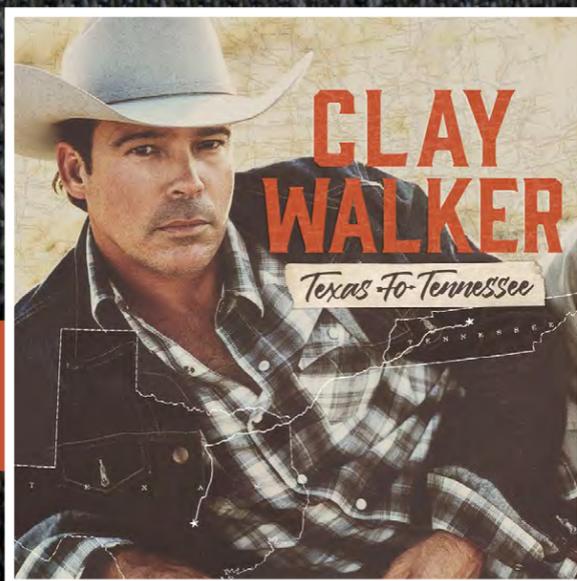


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**Featuring Hit Single
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**New TOBY KEITH music
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THE FOLLOW UP TO HER #1



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on the road on the Lady A tour!*

♥ Tenille Arts



Mary Hilliard Harrington

Music For The People

As an artist manager at Red Light and Chair of the CMA Board, Mary Hilliard Harrington has been at the forefront of some of the industry's greatest challenges over the past year. While working with clients Dierks Bentley, Elle King, Caylee Hammack and Tucker Beathard, she's been instrumental in CMA's pandemic response. A Florida native,

she moved from New York to Nashville and started her own

THE INTERVIEW

public relations firm, The GreenRoom – which she still co-owns – a year later. Creating opportunity for herself in publicity and subsequently management, and leading her team and the CMA, has been fueled by a people-focused mix of empathy and fearlessness.

Country Aircheck: From the management standpoint, what was the last year like for you?

MHH: I might compare it to treading water while wearing a weighted vest. I went through the different stages of what was, in hindsight, probably grief. Once we realized the shutdown was inevitable, I remember talking with Dierks about getting employees at Whiskey Row paid. They were going to have no income, but we thought it was going to be a short-term thing. He dug into his own pocket to give people some money to keep going. A couple months went by, and it was like, "Oh, wait. We're not reopening."

We had already decided we were going to pull back from the road a bit in 2020 and tour big in 2021. We still had some shows to cancel and tried the whole rescheduling, pushing three months, canceling and then re-booking for 2021 thing – the same process everybody went through – but it was probably not as bad for me in that area. It was a lot of counseling. A lot of us as managers frequently find ourselves in that role for our artists and employees.

There were definitely major down moments. Any time I was feeling exhausted with pandemic fatigue, I would try to find something to do with my daughter that I wouldn't have been able to do on any other workday. People talk about the beautiful things to come out of COVID, and that was certainly one of them. The ability to refocus and get my energy back was essential, because I was busier than I've ever been but not fulfilled. There were no wins. Not just the income, but the big, joyful moments we get to experience working in the music business – we didn't have them. You're wading through with all this heavy emotional weight on you.

Was there a moment where it hit you how real it all was?

I had those moments almost every day. In this role, there are so many people expecting you to have a crystal ball about when we might come back. I was living it, following the news, and keeping up in real-time. The oh-God-we're-stuck-here moments happened every couple of months with Dierks, who was one of the few artists who kept his band and crew on salary. Obviously, it was a major investment into those people who he considered family, so it wasn't ever a thought for him. But in my position of being fiscally responsible, we had to stop and take a hard look at it. What is this going to look like? When we come out of this, are we going to have the money that we need to start up a new tour? Ultimately, we decided to double down on our people and weather the storm. But it was a constant reminder of the state of the business and where we were.

When did the reality of the restart hit you?

I've been frustrated that so many of the decision makers in the touring business are in the New York and L.A. bubbles. I'm part of it, too, watching CNN and being in that bubble. Back in March, I went down to Broadway with a friend at 6pm on a Saturday, and it was insanity. Some people in masks, but a lot weren't. I was like, "Exactly! This is what I've been saying! We are in the bubble, and COVID is over down here." Those are our fans, and we were paralyzing ourselves.

Dierks and I were talking about a club run. What does that look like? What could the fallout be? Obviously, we don't want to get anyone sick. But once everyone had the ability to get vaccinated – it's go time. We could wait for someone in the government to tell us it's okay, or we could take control of our own fate. Thankfully, he was right there, too. Someone asked him if stage-diving at the first show was a good idea, and he answered, "I didn't do a whole lot of virtual shows or livestreams, because that isn't really what I do. Not going into the crowd, touching the fans or being close to them would be like asking a NASCAR driver to do the whole race in third gear. I don't know how to do that."

We had to rip off the band-aid, and it was so liberating. I learned a word from a podcast last week – "scited." Half scared, half excited. That's how I felt the day of the first club show. The minute he walked out and started "Gone," acoustic, at the top of the show, I was like, "Nope. This is it. This is what we do it for."

Where is the business when it comes to liability?

We're all taking a big, calculated risk. There are a lot of really smart people trying to figure that out, but I don't know that there's a clear answer. Having done so much advocacy work with CMA this year, I've really come to understand the number of people who rely on live events. Not just music, but all of it. It's hundreds of thousands of people, and we have to get back to work.



We made it mandatory that if you want to work with us, you had to get vaccinated. That was not an easy decision to make. We ended up losing one crew guy over it, and it's sad. But I can't have one guy on a tour bus getting sick and taking down the whole tour for two weekends worth of shows. Hard decisions have to be made.

Beyond vaccinations, have we lost people to other industries? Maybe gigs that offer benefits in a way the touring world doesn't?

That's a good point, but it's gone both ways. There are the people who've really loved having the extra time with their family, and then there are those who need the road. They're wired for it, and being still at home is very hard. There are mental health issues to consider. Then there's the conversation we're all having about working remotely or going back to the office. That piece will be fundamentally changed. I see my generation saying we need to be in the office. There are things you learn in the hallway, in the break room or passing someone's office door that we've just lost. And I see the younger kids being like, yeah, I don't ever need to go into the office again.

I started having my whole team go into the office on Wednesdays just to get the wheels turning again. Even if we're only there three or four hours, it's really

beneficial. Part of my frustration is companies that are expecting and will profit from artists putting themselves out there in public but aren't willing to have their employees drive to the office and work in a cubicle next to someone else. That's frustrating and feels very unfair.

How do you think the management landscape has been altered?

The managers in Nashville are closer than we've ever been. Right at the shutdown, a group of us started Zooming once a week to compare notes. Me, Clarence Spalding, Marion Kraft and Virginia Bunetta were the main ones, and Kerri Edwards would join sometimes. We talked constantly, and I learned so much. At times, it was comic relief. We've started doing it again recently as we're starting back up, and I'm grateful to have had them to lean on and for the camaraderie. In terms of how we deal with artists, it's become more apparent than ever how many roles we play, professionally and personally. Once the shit hits the fan, you realize how much you rely on each other, not just them on us.

THE INTERVIEW

How are the artists doing?

It's all over the board. If you just pay attention to social media, you think everybody is completely pumped to get back on the road, and it's going to be the best summer ever. But the truth is, they're coming out of a fog. The thing they have worked so hard to do – what they're fueled by – that fire was turned off and dimmed for a year-and-a-half. Some are doing better than others, but the switch just needs to be flipped again. They'll light back up and be ready to go.

When Dierks and I have talked about this year, I've been referring to 2021 as the on-ramp. Let's not try and go back and hit the interstate at 80 miles-an-hour. Let's step up, do these club shows and make sure we all remember how to do this. The band and crew need to remember what they do. I need to remember how to market shows. Then we'll do a bigger tour later in the summer. And then we'll get to next year. That takes some pressure off the notion of putting your game face on and going full bore.

What did we learn about media – legacy media, social media, all of it?

It's more important than ever. Having access and ability to communicate with fans through the internet was irreplaceable. But even if you had the most special thing going, there was such a barrage of digital assets that was tough to break through. We became numb to it.

Did we learn there's no substitute for in-person? There were notions we'd never do radio tours again.

I just don't buy that. The chill bump moment you get when you see an artist who's really great singing with an acoustic guitar – you don't get that over Zoom.

How did you win the lottery to be a CMA board officer – and now chair – in this special moment?

Quite a lottery win, wasn't it? CMA board leadership positions are a three-year deal. You start as President-Elect, move on to President, then to Chairman. My President-Elect year was smooth sailing. Jody Williams was Chair, and Kurt Johnson was President. The biggest thing I had to worry about was what kind of cocktail I was going to have at *Music Fest*. There were a lot of meetings and work to do, but more strategic planning, big picture conversations and marketing ... things I really love doing. My years as President and Chair have been way tougher. I tease [CMA CEO] Sarah Trahern asking why I didn't do this in 2013. But I'm sure they had problems back then, too.

My mom and dad tell me if there's going to be a natural disaster or terrorist attack, they can pretty much count on me being there. And it's been true for September 11 and Route 91. But I do feel that I am supposed to be here in this moment. I've been able to really dig in with Sarah and her staff to create MICS (Music Industry COVID Support) and what I think are important, impactful and lasting programs.

Last summer, when people were really starting to hurt, we got someone from every sector and type of company, put them in a room and started talking. They told us how a food bank was underway that had fed 2,000 crew people and their families that week. All they had to do was pull up, pop their trunk and the people at Soundcheck put a box of food in their trunk. And I was sobbing. I knew we had to do something.

I know you're covering a lot of things about women in this issue, and I do think it needed to be a woman in this role at this moment. I don't know why except for probably some sort of maternal instinct. I'm super empathetic, so I really feel all these people who are hurting. Then I get fired up. Let's go to work! As hard as it's been, I think I'm here in the right moment.

What are the moments relative to CMA that stand out to you over the past year?

The first time we canceled *Music Fest* was a big decision that affects a lot of people. That event funds the CMA Foundation and all kinds of music education, so being aware of how it affects these kids and their programs was a hard call to make. We figured out how to pivot into the *Best of Fest* show, which ended up being great, and ABC was really happy.



By the time we got to the awards, we'd seen so many shows doing Zoom versions with no audience. We all put our hands in the middle and said we'd try to celebrate these artists as safely as we can with people in the room. The community needed that. We got a lot of comments online about masks, but what Sarah and [Exec. Dir.] Robert Deaton pulled off in terms of safety, testing protocols and the bubble we were all living in – there wasn't a safer place on the planet than the CMA Awards. I'm really proud of that. It was a gamble, but in the room that night, the artists were so grateful.

How have you approached the controversy around Morgan Wallen's video?

As sad as I am that the Morgan Wallen incident happened, I do feel that some positive change has already come out of it. The industry is way more tuned in to the DEI needs our community has and the tremendous work that we must do as format. There are so many blind spots, and it's a really tricky thing to walk through. As a white woman, I'm not always going to get it right, but my heart is in the right place. The big systemic change that folks are looking for is not going to happen overnight; it's going to take time. In my day job, I've hired people of color to go on the road. I'm putting Black artists in support slots on shows and festivals where I can control that, and I'm in the middle of creating some TV opportunities and projects that will be able to help expose some of these artists. My idealistic hope is if we all start taking steps like those in our own businesses, they eventually add up to something greater for the industry.

Whether it's speaking out like Maren Morris and Luke Combs at CRS, or deciding if it's up to artists to deal with the confederate flags that sometimes pop up at country shows, what's the right balance between addressing social issues and just being entertainment?

I thought that CRS panel was awesome. And I also know this stuff is really hard. I don't want anyone to feel uncomfortable at one of our shows or events because someone is displaying some form of racism. And it's very difficult to police. Some really iconic vintage t-shirts have a confederate flag on them. Can you tell people they can't wear a Lynyrd Skynyrd, Charlie Daniels or Alabama shirt? I have to hope people can and will self-police; that this moment we've had over the last year has opened a lot of eyes. Maybe that's giving them more credit than they deserve, but that's my hope, because I don't think it's our job to regulate what people wear, in particular. But it's a hard place to be, because I want everyone to feel comfortable.

Your career is a pretty good testament that there's opportunity for women in country, and yet we see convincing data – in this issue and elsewhere – that the challenges are real. How do you reconcile those realities?

For better or worse, I don't think of myself as a woman. That's not a qualifier for me. When you talk about opportunities, as a human being you have to create your own. If you're sitting back waiting on someone to give you the opportunity, you're probably not doing everything you could be doing. I'm wired to go create those for myself as a person, not as a woman.

When you say nice things about my career, that's what I think about – not being afraid to take risks. I didn't know how to be a manager, but there was a bit of a fearlessness to it, though I have certainly made plenty of mistakes. I feel weird talking about opportunities for women, because I believe there are opportunities for everybody if you go and make them.

The other day, somebody I'm close to introduced me in a group of people as the best female manager in Nashville. Am I supposed to be offended or proud of that? I don't think about that until it's pointed out. Okay, right. I'm a female. Forgot.

And, of course, I'm really proud. I have so many young girls working for me at Red Light, on the road and at The GreenRoom. So, I'm proud to be able to

lead by example and to have people look up to me as a role model and a woman, but I don't think about it.

Navigating the singles chart is next to impossible for almost everyone, so if it's tilted even a few degrees for women, that can be tough to overcome. How do you sort out the complex factors that go into whether an artist makes it with the very simple reality that women don't do as well in country music, historically?

If I think too hard about the numbers, I will get real frustrated. They are pretty staggering.

The types of artists I'm drawn to are one-of-a-kind. If you think about Elle King or Caylee Hammack, you are not going to get them confused with anyone else if you hear their voices on the radio, see them live or meet them on the street. I'm drawn to that, but it also makes the job a lot easier, because if they're going to break, it is going to be 100% because of their individuality. Neither of them is trying to break through a crop of six blonde girls who are singing the same breakup songs. I'm willing to bet everything I have on that.

Do you think there's too much playing it safe when it comes to female artists?

There's too much playing it safe for both genders. In some ways, it's worse for men. When I'm listening to the radio or Spotify, there are times I can't differentiate the song and the artist from the guy that came before.

How is it the business, including radio, has seen more women in gatekeeper roles over the last decade, yet the empirical success of female artists declined?

Those women can only program what they're being served, and if the music's not great, what do you expect? Anecdotally, it seems labels are signing more girls than they were even five years ago. At the same time, COVID put a pause on some of the female focused initiatives; it put a pause on the whole business. I do think we're at the front end of the curve to get women more exposure. And I look to the DSPs as strongly as I look to radio for that.

We have a handful of superstar women, a lot struggling to break through and not a lot in between. Where are the mid-level female artists?

Maybe it's just because there aren't that many of them, but it feels like when a girl breaks, she breaks big. Look at Gabby Barrett. No one is streaming more than her, and she's on her second single. When it breaks, it really breaks. That's also my sense of what happened in the '90s when so many women had these big moments and became stars overnight. With the guys, it's more like one foot in front of the other, year after year. Taylor Swift ... even Gretchen Wilson ... they pop much faster. You go from being a baby to being upper class, or you struggle and go away. Or, you realize you want to have babies and put less time into your career.

How did you figure out music was going to be a substantial part of your life, if not your life's work?

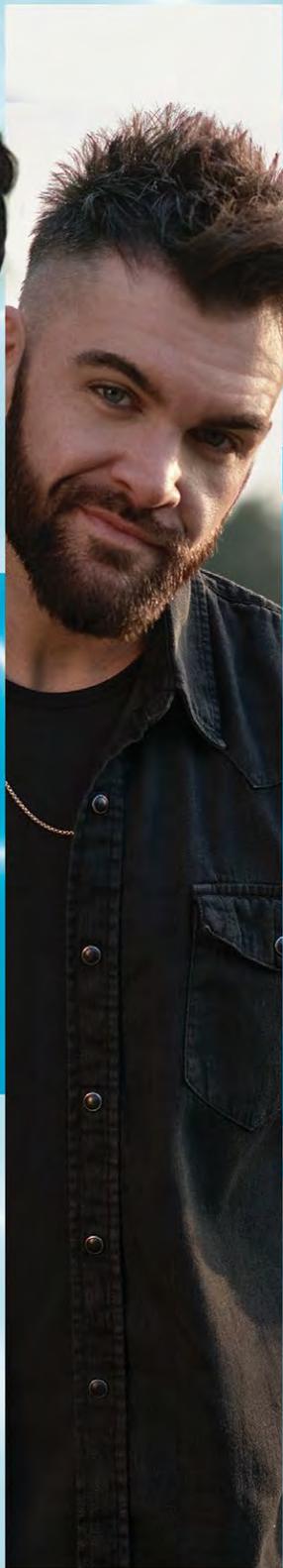
I don't think music is my life's work. People are. Music is clearly the vehicle for it right now, but I get so much more fulfillment out of the people that I work with – helping them find and attain their goals and dreams. With my artists and my businesses, the bands and crews – I'm doing all this for them, not the music.

If it wasn't in the music business, what would it be?

I could probably do that in any business, but it would still be in some form of entertainment. I'm not very corporate, live my life pretty loosely, and I like making my own schedule. And I'm better late at night than I am early in the morning. Don't get me wrong, I love all kinds of music, and I really love the live experience. But I find myself more chasing those magical moments with people than I do chasing the next hit.

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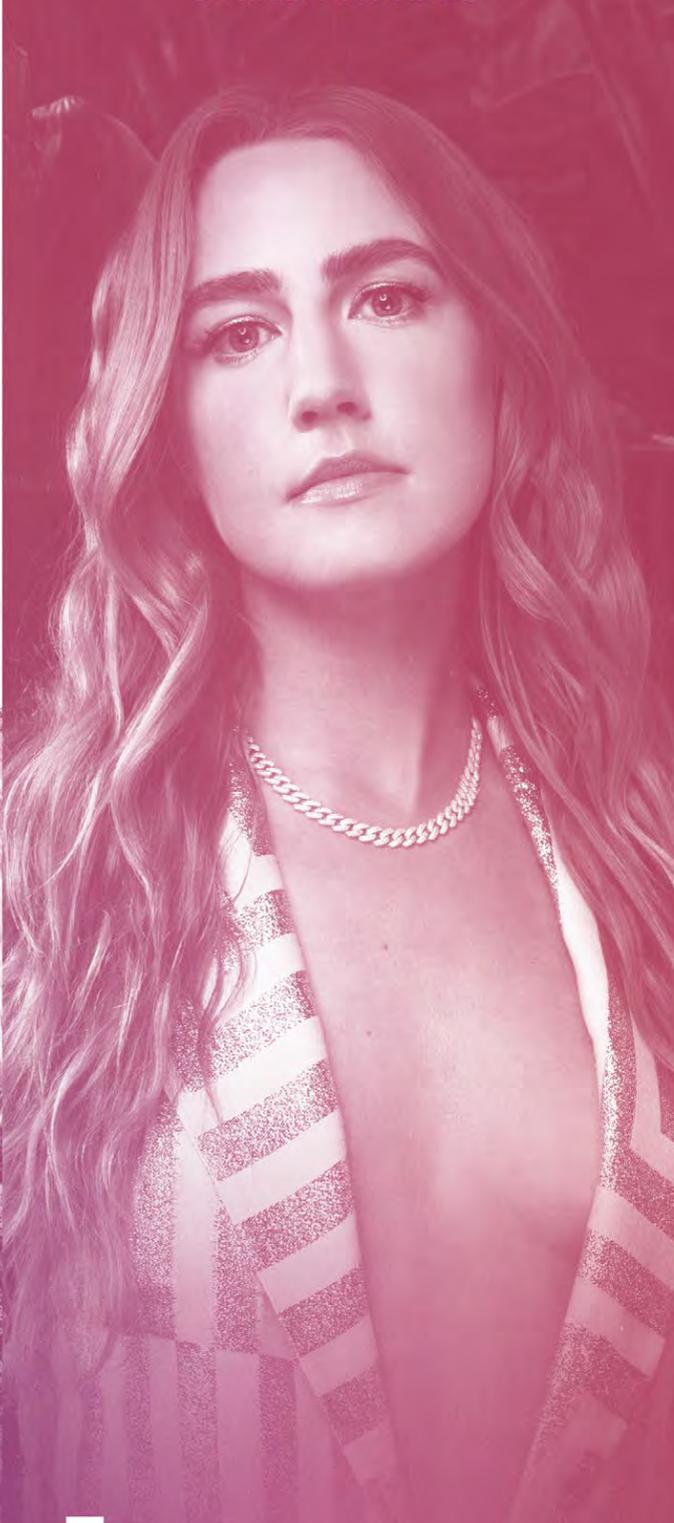


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