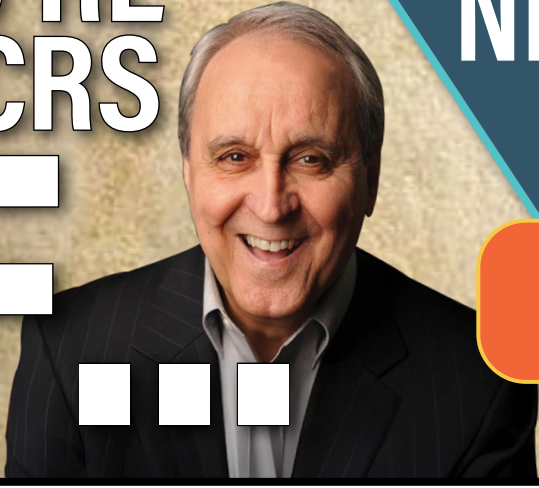


YOU'RE
SO CRS
IF...



NEW FACES
SPEAK

LABEL
CONTACTS
INSIDE!

TAYLOR
LINDSEY
& KEN
ROBOLD
THE INTERVIEW



COUNTRY AIRCHECK

FEBRUARY
2025



TUCKER WETMORE

3, 2, 1

THE FOLLOW UP TO THE #1 DEBUT FROM
ONE OF THE BIGGEST DEVELOPING ARTIST
STORIES OF THE PAST 12 MONTHS

ADDS 3/10



Wish You Well

VINCENT MASON

THE RADIO DEBUT FROM ONE OF AMAZON
MUSIC & PANDORA'S 2025 ARTISTS TO WATCH

ADDS 2/24

© 2025 UMG RECORDINGS, INC.



DIERKS BENTLEY SHE HATES ME

HIS DEBUT SINGLE FROM A
FORTHCOMING NEW ALBUM

OUT NOW



**PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE
BBR MUSIC GROUP/BMG NASHVILLE**

2025
DECADES
PARTY

**YOUR FAVORITE ARTISTS SINGING HITS
FROM THE '70S, '80S, '90S AND BEYOND!**

THURSDAY, FEB. 20TH

OMNI HOTEL NASHVILLE // BROADWAY BALLROOM

9:00PM

**THE OFFICIAL CRS THURSDAY NIGHT EVENT!
INCLUDING A DECADES COSTUME CONTEST WITH A GRAND PRIZE
OF A WEEKEND AT THE HARD ROCK IN HOLLYWOOD, FL!**

CONTACT YOUR BBR MUSIC GROUP/BMG NASHVILLE RADIO REPRESENTATIVE TO OBTAIN ENTRY





YOU'RE SO CRS IF...

Riverboat Rides, Disco Dancing, The 'Plague' ... And That Bridge Bar Incident, Seminar Regulars Share Their Memories

Whether you've been to one *Country Radio Seminar* or dozens, chances are you've made some lasting memories and friendships, seen great performances, learned a lot ... and perhaps witnessed a few moments that will live forever in CRS lore. If you know, you know.

Inspired by the *Nashville Scene's* annual "You are so Nashville If ..." list, Country Aircheck asked CRS regulars to finish the phrase, with hilarious results. From hundreds of submissions, here are the best ...

You're so CRS if...

- You go the whole week without once buying your own drink. –Brent Michaels, KUZZ & KRJK/Bakersfield
- You don't know what day of the week it is when you wake up. –Jude Walker, KMDL/Lafayette, LA
- You've ever had to commandeer a luggage cart to get a "friend" back to their room. –Suzanne Durham, Quartz Hill Records
- You've ever gotten an email from a record rep saying, "Dude, *please* don't post that photo!" –Fletcher Brown, WXFL/Florence, AL
- You groaned whenever an unsigned artist grabbed the mic at the Arbitron panel. –Ken Tucker, Wheelhouse Records
- You're walking around with a CD an indie artist pitched you in the lobby. –Chris Huff, *Country Aircheck*
- You live in town but stay in a hotel all week. –Royce Risser, The Familie



- You've heard B-Dub before you've seen him. –Miranda McDonald, MCA
- You see everyone you've ever worked with in the hallways. –Michael J., WPOC Baltimore and WMZQ Washington, DC
- You secretly have a CRS bingo card with your friends. –Brook Stephens, formerly with KZPK/St. Cloud
- You've dodged the gherms in the lobby. –Scott Gaines, Local Radio Networks
- You've wondered how that same group of fans have the time or money to sit in the lobby for three days straight, hoping to catch a glimpse of the next big thing. –Miranda McDonald
- You have ever partied down in '70s costumes at the *After MidNite* Disco Party. –Shelley Hargis, BBR Music Group
- You still have a wig and outfit in your closet from Blair Garner's disco party, and you swear it's just waiting for the correct invite to come back out. –Raffaella Braun, Triple Tigers

- You've lied about what time something started to make sure programmers showed up on time. –Miranda McDonald
- You have to be at three different places at the same time. –Scott Gaines
- You can do a spot on impression of CRS Exec. Dir. RJ Curtis frantically speed walking with a concerned look on his face. –Gator Harrison, iHeartMedia
- You've ever been kidnapped by the Eli Young Band. –Vicki Pepper, KFRG/Riverside
- You've memorized the menu at Roberts Western World. –Tim Roberts, Audacy
- You're in the buffet line and hear WKDF's Amy Paige rip a perfect, PPM-ready break about the green bean casserole. –Chuck Aly, *Country Aircheck*
- Your friend is receiving The Tom Rivers Humanitarian award and you're at The Palm having lunch. –Gator Harrison
- You've seen Tanya Tucker flash her assets in Printers Alley. –Phyllis Stark, *Country Aircheck*
- You mysteriously lost all itemized receipts for your expense report. –Brook Stephens,
- You have to remember to bring a checked bag just to have space for your *Country Aircheck* magazine on the way home. –Monta Vaden, Sevens Radio Network
- You'd rather hang out with Anne Helton than Lon. –Marci Braun, WUSN/Chicago
- You can't remember the *last* CRS. –Ashley Bourque, CRS



BIG MACHINES

LABEL GROUP

BE REMARKABLE



BRANTLEY GILBERT

"Over When We're Sober" featuring 2025 New Faces artist **ASHLEY COOKE** from his current album **TATTOOS**



RILEY GREEN

New single *"Worst Way"* Over 200 Million Streams!
ADD/CONVERT TODAY!
Damn Country Music Tour 2025



BRETT YOUNG

NEW ALBUM SPRING 2025!
Back to Basics World Tour



JUSTIN MOORE

"Time's Ticking" the follow up to **13 #1 SINGLES**
ONE OF THE FORMAT'S MOST CONSISTENT HITMAKERS



MACKENZIE CARPENTER

Debut album **HEY COUNTRY QUEEN** **AVAILABLE 3/7** Including *"Wish You Would"* featuring **MIDLAND**



MUSCADINE BLOODLINE

"10-90" **ADD/CONVERT NOW!**



CAROLINE JONES

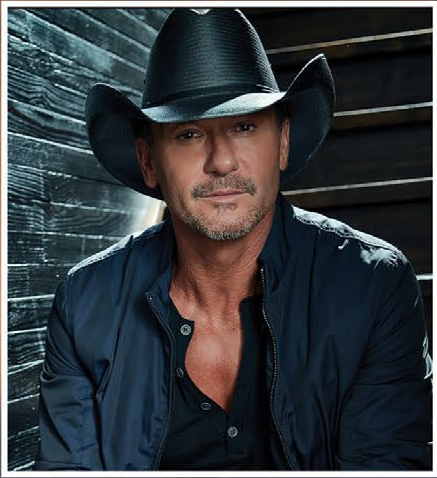
COMING SOON! Debut single *"No Tellin"* on Nashville Harbor Records & Entertainment! On tour with Zac Brown Band 2025!



GREYLAN JAMES

New Single *"Wait Til You Have Kids"* **OUT NOW!**





**TIM
MCGRAW**

**NEW MUSIC
COMING!**

48 #1 SINGLES



**CARLY
PEARCE**

"truck on fire"
**TOP 30
& CLIMBING!**

*hummingbird world tour
continues through
spring of 2025*



**THOMAS
RHETT**

*"After All The Bars
Are Closed"*

From his current album
ABOUT A WOMAN
IMPACTING NOW!



**RASCAL
FLATTS**

*"I Dare You" with
JONAS
BROTHERS*
**ADD/CONVERT
NOW!**



**JACKSON
DEAN**

"Heavens to Betsy"
**TOP 30
& CLIMBING!**
Over 600 million
streams to date!



**CONNER
SMITH**

**NEW MUSIC
COMING!**



**CHRIS
JANSON**

**NEW MUSIC
COMING SOON!**



**AARON
LEWIS**

**NEW MUSIC
COMING!**

INTRODUCING



**CHASE
MCDANIEL**



**MAE
ESTES**



**JACK WHARFF
& THE TOBACCO
FLATTS**



**NOAH
HICKS**



SHAYLEN



**PRESTON
COOPER**



**BRAEDON
BARNHILL**

YOU'RE SO CRS IF...

THE SUITE LIFE

- You've been told to "keep it down" in a hotel hallway next to a label suite. –**Joel Raab**, Joel Raab Country Radio & Media
- You've asked to have your room moved when you're next to any of the suites. –**Miranda McDonald**
- You've enjoyed a drink from the UMG suite tub. –**Alek Halverson**, KAJA/San Antonio
- Your company hosted a suite party and you didn't know any of the people that showed up. –**Royce Risser**
- You've been the last one standing in a record label suite, and you're just not getting the hint. –**Raffaella Braun**
- You've fallen asleep in a label suite. –**Monta Vaden**
- You are still in the suite when the sun rises. –**John Trapane**, EMI Nashville
- You've worn a toga made out of Opryland Hotel curtains. –**Phyllis Stark**
- You called the front desk at Opryland to ask how to get back to your room (and you weren't even drunk). –**Ken Tucker**
- You remember getting lost trying to go to panels or just to your room at Opryland. –**Shelley Hargis**
- You can remember the days we hung out and maybe hungover at the Pickin' Parlor at the Opryland Hotel. –**Jim West**, Local Radio Networks

OMNIPRESENT

- You've spent your evening sitting at the circle couch in the lobby waiting for someone you know to walk by. –**Nick Steele**, KWJJ/Portland
- You had four consecutive meetings without leaving your booth at Kitchen Notes. –**Ken Tucker**
- You're waiting in the lobby of the Omni for someone you recognize who might have a room key to get you access to the elevator so you don't miss that suite performance. –**"Jared Marshall" Goldberg**, KNCI/Sacramento
- You're staying in a room on floors 5-12 at the Omni, but keep getting on the 6-21 elevator. –**RJ Curtis**, CRS
- You figured out how the elevators work at the Omni. –**John Shomby**, Country's Radio Coach

I WAS ON A BOAT THAT DAY

- You've been stuck on the General Jackson, yards away from the dock. –**Dale Carter**, KFKF/Kansas City
- You remember the time the RCA Boat didn't leave the dock, and you still weren't allowed to get off. –**Ken Tucker**
- You are still wondering what happened to the boat. –**Nancy Tunick**, GrassRoots Promotion



- You've gotten a contact high from riding an elevator with Jelly Roll at the Omni. –**Brook Stephens**
- After a night out on Broadway you went to the Renaissance instead of the Omni, forgetting CRS had moved. –**Rosey Fitchpatrick**, RF Promotions, Streaming & Branding
- You wait, and wait, and wait, and wait, and wait for your car at Omni valet. –**RJ Curtis**
- You ask for two room keys knowing you're going to lose at least one. –**Kevin Callahan**, Pamal
- You believe Omni level four is haunted. –**RJ Curtis**

A BRIDGE BAR TOO FAR

- You can tell the Bridge Bar story. –**Kurt Johnson**, Townsquare Media
- You were in the Bridge Bar when the Canadian played his flute solo. –**Ken Tucker**
- You remember the old Bridge Bar, and why it's so infamous with CRS. –**Josh Easler**, Records Nashville
- You're afraid to look up at the Bridge Bar. –**Gator Harrison**
- You remember the night at the Renaissance Hotel when the legendary Bridge Bar became an "Exhibition Hall," thanks to a guy on the eighth floor leaving his drapes open. And his pants! –**Michael J.**
- You've heard about that guy doing that thing in the window overlooking the Bridge Bar, but never actually saw it. –**Dale Desmond**, KUTQ/St. George, UT
- You bring up the story of the guy, in the window, above the Renaissance Bridge Bar. –**Tyler Waugh**, Big Loud



LUNCHBOX LOVE

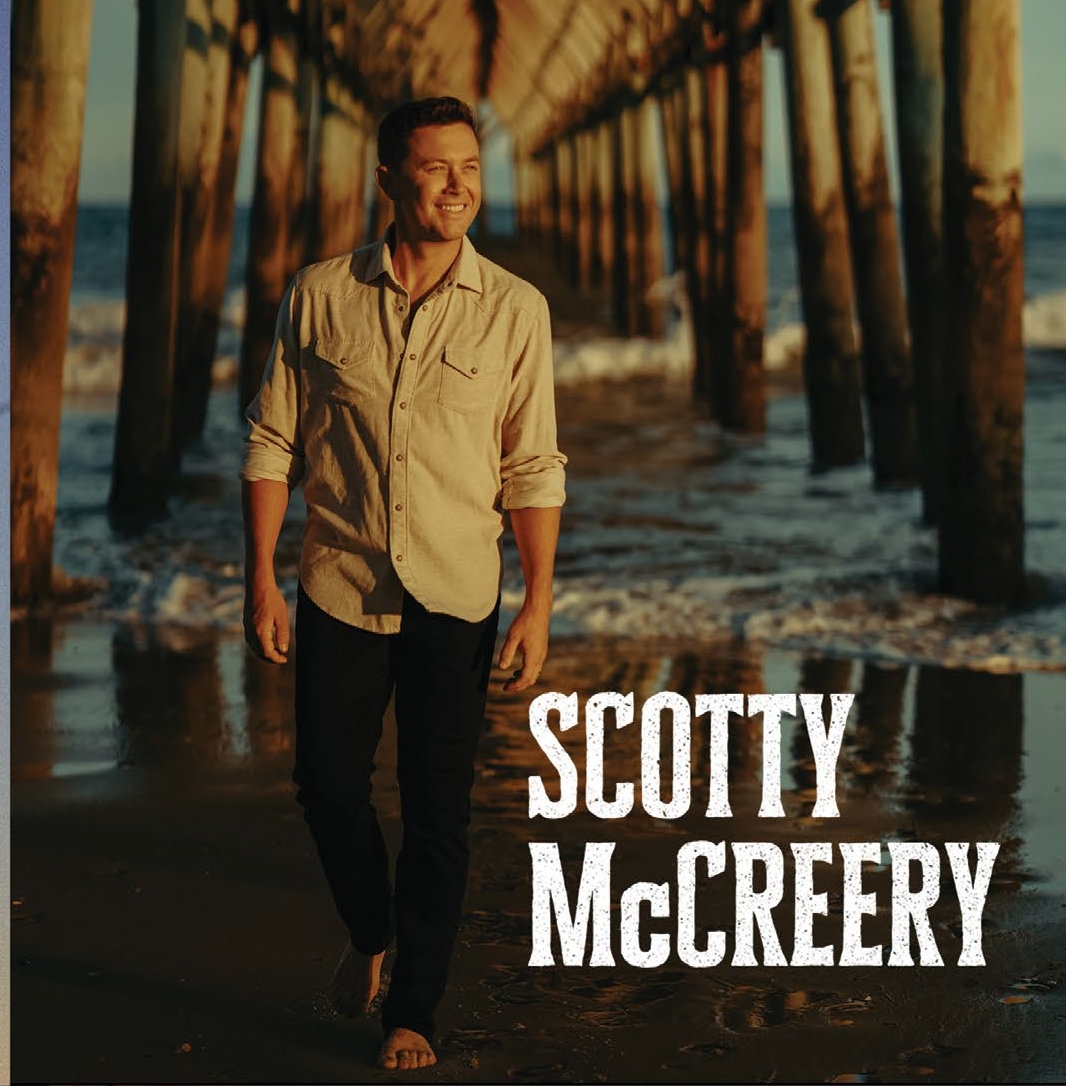
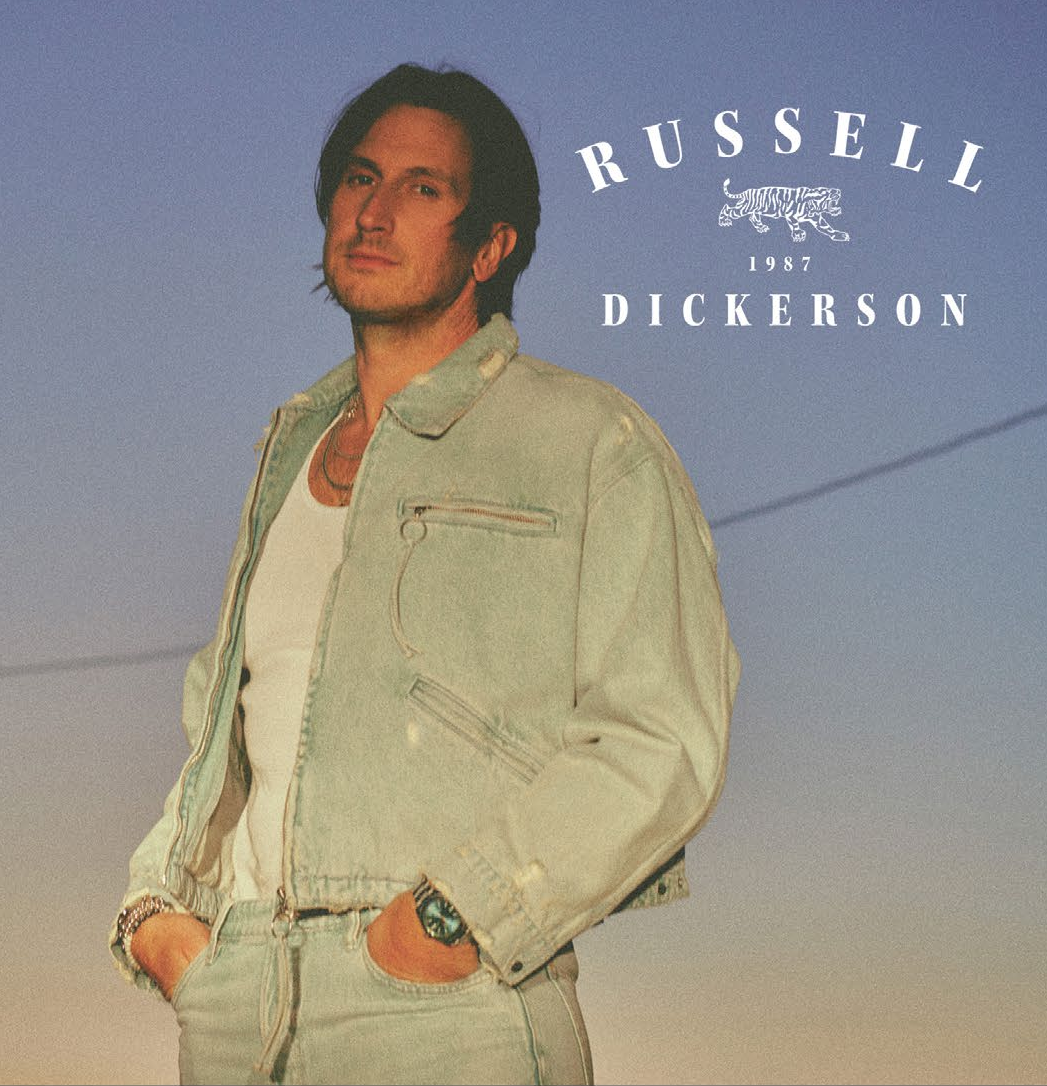
- You already know which sandwich you hope to get at UMG at the Ryman. –**Brent Michaels**
- You've witnessed people sprinting to the front of the Ryman carrying boxed lunches. –**Miranda McDonald**
- You got frostbite outside the Ryman waiting for the UMG lunch. –**Dale Desmond**

CROSSING BARLINES

- The last thing you say to someone is "I'm getting to bed early tonight so I'm fresh for the 8:30 session tomorrow" before running into that same person in Barlines at 2am. –**RJ Meacham**, Curb Records
- You consider your first trip to Barlines the official roll call of who's arrived. –**Brook Stephens**
- You still call Barlines the Bridge Bar at least once during the week. –**Andy Elliott**, Red Street Records
- You've put a drink on someone else's tab at Barlines. –**Miranda McDonald**
- You've been asked to leave Barlines for passing out free tacos. –**Monta Vaden**
- You wish someone would book the Barlines stage ... and leave it empty. –**Chuck Aly**

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

- Two words: Over. Served. –**RJ Curtis**
- You won the triple crown: passed out at the Opryland, Renaissance and Omni hotels (hopefully not in one day). –**Tim Roberts**
- You've gotten rolled out of a bar in a wheelchair. –**Royce Risser**
- You know who serves the best Bushwacker on Broadway. –**Tim Roberts**
- You run into Gator Harrison in the lobby at 6 am after a Broadway overnighter and he falsely assumes you're headed to Believers. –**Gator Harrison**
- You're just getting back to the Omni after a night out, when people are getting downstairs to go on a morning run. –**Alek Halverson**
- No one sees you until the lunch shows start and you're wearing sunglasses. –**Rosey Fitchpatrick**
- You wake up in your hotel room still wearing your seminar badge, after being a little over-served the night before and realize you were at a CRS-only hang with Keith or Lainey or Luke and your first thought is, "Did that really happen?" –**Michael J.**



YOU'RE SO CRS IF...

- You have sung in your best Lady A voice, "It's a quarter after one, I'm a little drunk and I need a pizza now." –**John Trapani**
- You've eaten room service pizza ... from box left in the hallway. –**Chuck Aly**
- You remember someone's drink order before their call letters. –**Brook Stephens**

PANEL PROTOCOLS

- It is after 1pm when you're walking into your first session of the day. –**Lance Houston**, River House Artists
- You line up for the label lunches before 10 am. –**Brooke Sanders**, CRS

- You run to get a front seat at the lunches. –**Sheree Latham**, CRS
- You've timed out an entire music log while watching a panel in the grand ballroom. –**Jesse Tack**, WUBE/Cincinnati
- You've had to bust out your laptop in the middle of a session to handle music scheduling or other work duties. –**Monta Vaden**
- You pop in for the last 20 minutes of a panel you're not really invested in to get a great seat for the artist interview immediately following it. –**Brent Michaels**

FLU THE COOP

- Your bedtime and wakeup time are only a couple hours apart. –**Anna Cage**, Warner Music Nashville
- You flash back to your first CRS and the faces of the industry colleagues who reminded you of the expression "It's a marathon, not a sprint." –**Michael J.**
- The first things you pack are Advil, Tums, Emergen-C, orthopedic shoe inserts and something sequined. –**Brook Stephens**

- You've worn the wrong shoes and suffered ... All. Day. Long. –**RJ Curtis**
- In four nights you've gotten 10 hours of sleep. Total. –**Dale Desmond**
- You have said, "I'm just going to the bathroom," and gone directly to your room and tucked yourself in. –**Miranda McDonald**
- At morning sessions, 15 people ask, "So, how you feelin'?" –**Alek Halverson**
- It's a non-negotiable to schedule a power nap in your hotel room to make it the rest of the day into the night. –**Krista Hayes-Pruitt**, BBR Music Group
- You remember the Opryland Hotel flu. –**Dale Carter**
- Night one you closed down Barlines and the rest of the week you spent in bed. The CRS plague is real, y'all! –**JoJo Turnbeaugh**, iHeartMedia
- You take the week after CRS off because you know you are going to be sick! –**Nancy Tunick**

CONVERSATIONAL ETIQUETTE

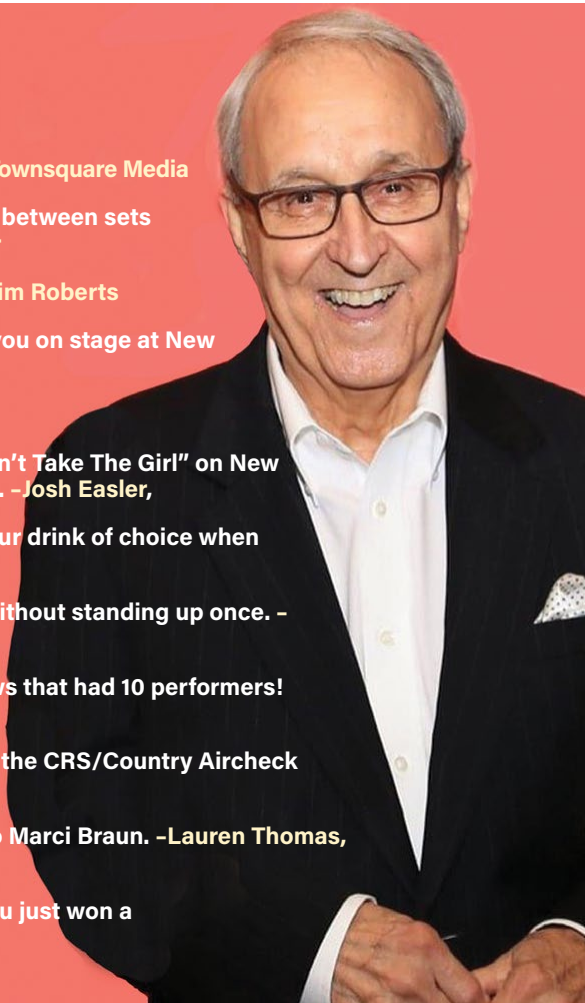
- You can speak the official language of CRS: "Whenjageddin?" –**Kurt Johnson**
- You've turned people asking "When did you get in" into a drinking game. –**Kevin Callahan**
- You see the same random person 14 times, but 409 other friends you know you missed somehow. –**Tim Roberts**
- Your No. 1 used phrase is "Good to see you" when it's not always good to see them. –**Miranda McDonald**
- Your partner in conversation is looking over your shoulder to see if there's someone more important they could be talking to. –**Beverlee Brannigan**, Beverlee Brannigan LLC Creative Coaching
- You sneak a peek at the badge because you're four Titos & sodas deep and are second guessing the name you know you should know. –**Miranda McDonald**
- You pretend to smoke a cig so you can look down at people's badges without it being obvious. –**Royce Risser**
- You've mastered the undetected quick glance to read someone's name on their badge. –**Andy Elliott**
- You make sure that when you walk through the Omni lobby, you do so with your head down and at a good, fast pace. –**Lance Houston**

THE WARM & FUZZIES

- You try and imitate Bob Kingsley every year (unsuccessfully). –**Tim Roberts**
- Something major happens in your life and your phone and email light up with all the friends and support you've gained through trips to CRS. –**Brook Stephens**
- You have ever found yourself at the end of a session in a conversation with eight of your favorite people in the business, and happy that we all have the chance to get together again. –**Sean Ross**, Edison Research **CAC**

'LET US PRAY'

- You have prayed with a Monk. –**Kurt Johnson**, Townsquare Media
- You remember Charlie Monk roasting people between sets at New Faces, may he rest in peace. –**Josh Easler**
- The Mayor of Music Row knew your name. –**Tim Roberts**
- You are still proud that Charlie Monk ripped you on stage at New Faces. –**Royce Risser**
- You miss Charlie Monk. –**Raffaella Braun**
- You've heard about Tim McGraw singing "Don't Take The Girl" on New Faces every year you've ever been at New Faces. –**Josh Easler**
- The bartender at New Faces starts mixing your drink of choice when you get in line. –**Ken Tucker**
- You sit through the entire New Faces show without standing up once. –**Lance Houston**
- You remember the pre-2000 New Faces shows that had 10 performers! –**Phyllis Stark**
- You are excited for New Faces... but more for the CRS/Country Aircheck Awards than the performances. –**Brent Michaels**
- You've lost a CRS/Country Aircheck award to Marci Braun. –**Lauren Thomas**, Sony/Nashville
- You get a text at Tootsies letting you know you just won a CRS/Country Aircheck Award. –**Gator Harrison**



Volume 20, Issue 1, February 2025
COUNTRYAIRCHECK
 914 18th Avenue South
 Nashville, TN 37212
 615-320-1450

Publisher/CEO
Lon Helton
 lon@countryaircheck.com

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

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

Exec. Managing Editor
Caitlin DeForest
 caitlin@countryaircheck.com

Sr. Radio Analyst
Chris Huff
 chris@countryaircheck.com

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

Exec. Radio Editor
Phyllis Stark
 phyllis@countryaircheck.com

Art Direction
Jerry Holthouse
 jerry@countryaircheck.com

President/COO
Chuck Aly
 chuck@countryaircheck.com





THE
**BOBBY
BONES**
SHOW



**AFTER
MIDNITE**
WITH GRANGER
SMITH

THERE'S NO BETTER COUNTRY



THE
**CROOK AND
CHASE**
COUNTDOWN

premiere
NETWORKS

For the Best in Country, email
Affiliates@PremiereNetworks.com

Kelsea Ballerini

“COWBOYS CRY TOO
(WITH NOAH KAHAN)”
GRAMMY NOMINATED &
CERTIFIED GOLD
WITH 140+ MILLION
GLOBAL STREAMS

THE NEWEST COACH ON NBC'S
THE VOICE

HEADLINING FIRST ARENA TOUR
**KELSEA BALLERINI
LIVE ON TOUR 2025**

Black River Entertainment
is proud to welcome
CHRIS YOUNG
to the family

9+ Billion
Global Streams

Fourteen #1s
and counting

New Music
Coming Soon





WELCOME TO CRS 2025

STOP BY AND SEE US
IN MUSIC ROW ROOM #2

BIG LOUD

And The Nominees Are...

LARGE MARKET STATION

(metros 1-25)

- KSON/San Diego
- KYGO/Denver
- WUSN/Chicago
- WXTU/Philadelphia
- WYCD/Detroit

MEDIUM MARKET STATION

(metros 26-75)

- KFRG/Riverside
- KWNR/Las Vegas
- WDSY/Pittsburgh
- WKDF/Nashville
- WUBE/Cincinnati

SMALL MARKET STATION

(metros 76+)

- KSSN/Little Rock
- WGGY/Wilkes Barre, PA
- WGSQ/Cookeville, TN
- WKSF/Asheville, NC
- WUSY/Chattanooga

PLATINUM LABEL

- Big Loud
- Big Machine
- Columbia
- Stoney Creek
- Valory

GOLD LABEL

- Capitol
- Curb
- Leo33
- Mercury
- Triple Tigers

LARGE MARKET OM/PD

(metros 1-25)

- Drew Bland, KMLE/Phoenix & KKWF/Seattle
- Travis Moon, KKBQ/Houston
- Ashley Morrison, WFUS/Tampa
- Mark Razz, WXTU/Philadelphia
- Ashley Wilson, WKKT/Charlotte

MEDIUM MARKET OM/PD (tie)

(metros 26-75)

- Mark Anderson, WDSY/Pittsburgh
- Casey Carter, WNOE/New Orleans
- Shanna "Quinn" Cudeck, WMIL/Milwaukee
- Travis Daily, WKDF & WSM/Nashville
- Heather Froglear, KFRG/Riverside
- MoJoe Roberts, KWNR/Las Vegas

SMALL MARKET OM/PD

(metros 76+)

- Ginny Brophey, WOKQ/Portsmouth, NH
- Justin Cole, WUSY/Chattanooga
- Sarah Kay, WQMX/Akron, OH
- Kix Layton, WKSF/Asheville, NC
- Brent Michaels, KUZZ/Bakersfield

LARGE MARKET APD/MD

(metros 1-25)

- Marty Brooks, WIL/St. Louis
- Holly Hutton, WYCD/Detroit
- Lois Lewis, KNIX/Phoenix
- Dawn Santolucito, WKLB/Boston
- Lauren "Lo" Sessions, KKBQ/Houston

MEDIUM MARKET APD/MD

(metros 26-75)

- Billy Kidd, WBEE/Rochester
- Jenny Law, KWEN/Tulsa
- Bob Pickett, KVET/Austin
- Tyler Reese, WKDF/Nashville
- Jesse Tack, WUBE/Cincinnati

SMALL MARKET APD/MD

(metros 76+)

- Ben Brophey, WPOR/Portland, ME
- Kristi Kelly, WWQM/Madison, WI
- Charli McKenzie, WNCY/Appleton, WI
- Chris O'Kelley, WKXC/Augusta, GA
- Melissa "Mo" Wagner, WUSY/Chattanooga

SVP-VP/NATIONAL PROMOTION

- Stacy Blythe, Big Loud
- Miranda McDonald, MCA
- Scotty O'Brien, BMG/BBRMG
- Lauren Thomas, Columbia
- Tyler Waugh, Big Loud

LABEL STREAMING SPECIALIST

- Andi Brooks, Valory
- Jen Danielson, Big Loud
- Laura Hostelley, Triple Tigers
- Brooke Nixon, New West
- Andrew Thoen, Nashville Harbor

DIR./NATIONAL PROMOTION

- Brooke Diaz, Big Machine
- Jamice Jennings, Records Nashville
- Lou Ramirez, Warner
- Jennifer Shaffer, Wheelhouse
- Lisa Smoot, Big Loud

MARKET MANAGER/GM

- Nichole Hartman, WUSY/Chattanooga
- Randy Hawke, WWQM/Madison
- Mary Menna, WKLB/Boston
- Mel Owens, KUZZ/Bakersfield
- Allison Warren, WKDF & WSM-FM/Nashville

LARGE MARKET PERSONALITY/SHOW

(metros 1-25)

- Andie Summers, Jeff Kurkjian, Donnie Black & Shannon Boyle, *The Andie Summers Show*, WXTU/Philadelphia
- Angie Ward, WUBL/Atlanta
- Lois Lewis, *Double L*, KNIX/Phoenix
- Nicole Michalik, WXTU/Philadelphia
- Scotty Kay, WUSN/Chicago

MEDIUM MARKET PERSONALITY/SHOW

(metros 26-75)

- Amy Paige, WKDF/Nashville
- Heather Froglear, KFRG/Riverside
- Jesse Tack & Anna Marie, *Jesse & Anna*, WUBE/Cincinnati
- Marty McFly, WSM-FM/Nashville
- MoJoe Roberts, KWNR/Las Vegas

SMALL MARKET PERSONALITY/SHOW

(metros 76+)

- Brent Michaels, KUZZ/Bakersfield
- Eddie Foxx & Amanda Foxx, *The Eddie Foxx Show*, WKSF/Asheville, NC
- Melissa "Mo" Wagner & Greg "StyckMan" Owens, *Mo & Styckman*
- Philip Gibbons, WGSQ/Cookeville, TN
- Tim Cotter, *TC On The Radio*, KDRK/Spokane, WA

NATIONAL DAILY PERSONALITY/SHOW

- Angie Ward, iHeartMedia
- Bobby Bones, *The Bobby Bones Show*, Premiere
- Granger Smith, *After MidNite*, Premiere
- Katie Neal, *Katie & Company*, Audacy
- Rob Stone & Holly Hutton, *The Rob & Holly Show*, Audacy

NATIONAL WEEKLY PERSONALITY/SHOW

- Bryan "B Dub" Washington, *B-Dub Radio Saturday Night*, Skyview
- Heather Froglear, *90s Country*, Audacy
- Kix Brooks, *American Country Countdown With Kix Brooks*, Westwood One
- Lon Helton, *Country Countdown USA*, Compass
- "Wayne D" Danielson & Tay Hamilton, *iHeartCountry House Party*, iHeartMedia

NATIONAL PROGRAMMER/CURATOR

- Johnny Chiang, SiriusXM/Pandora
- Travis Daily, Cumulus
- Rod Phillips, iHeartCountry
- Tim Roberts, Audacy
- Bree Wagner, Apple Music Country

REGIONAL PROMOTION

- Kelley Bradshaw, Big Loud
- Katie Bright, Capitol
- John D'Amico, Big Loud
- Jane Staszak, Big Machine
- Anna Widmer, Columbia

INDEPENDENT PROMOTION EXECUTIVE

- Ryan Barnstead, 16camino
- John Ettinger, 16camino
- RJ Jordan, GrassRoots Promotion
- Jeff Solima, New Revolution
- Jody Van-Alin, JVA Promotion

NEW FACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC

- Victoria Alfonso, SiriusXM/Pandora
- Kevin Cassidy, WUSN/Chicago
- Kenzie Couch, MCA
- Rachel Elliot, iHeart/Kentucky
- Hannah Lane, WUSJ/Jackson, MS



INTRODUCING THE CLASS OF '25

OPRY NEXTSTAGE

PRESENTED BY TECOVAS



DASHA



TUCKER
WETMORE

AVERY
ANNA



KAITLIN
BUTTS



CHAYCE
BECKHAM



TIGIRLILY
GOLD



KASHUS
CULPEPPER



COUNTRY'S
RISING SOUND

VISIT [OPRY.COM](https://www.opry.com)

ALGORHYTHM

Look no further than this year's class of **New Faces** for evidence of TikTok's impact on the music industry. Here they are, in their own words:



DREW BALDRIDGE

Lyric Ridge/BMG/Stoney Creek

New Faces was something I didn't think I'd ever be a part of, since I had a couple singles that didn't work out. Now I feel like I'm getting a second chance. It doesn't bother me that I've been in Nashville for 13 years and being called "new." I'm new to a lot of people listening to radio. I had to start my own label and create my own record staff. All I wanted was to get into the top 40. Getting further would be amazing, but I had four failed singles that didn't even get that far, mind you. If someone said, "Hey, man, you're going to be on the *New Faces* show," I would have replied, "You've gone crazy."

But here we are – on tour with Cody Johnson, just announced a Bailey Zimmerman tour and we had our first No. 1. That all seemed unattainable a year ago. This shouldn't have worked. That it did is mind-blowing.

Having had a record deal from 2015 to 2019, I learned a lot and met a lot of radio friends. I still had a lot more to learn. I had to hire and fund my own staff while wearing all the hats – manager, booking agent and label. I spent Mondays trying to get adds, then we had a radio call. I'd book my own shows and come up with strategies to get my music heard. Being at the forefront of all those conversations was a lot of weight.

Being a new dad and only married for a couple years added even more stress. I'm on the road; when I'm home, I'm on the phone trying to work the song. It tested our marriage and bond. So yeah, there were a lot of challenges, but more reward when it worked. My wife and I did this together. And our little team carried it across the finish line.

That's hard to sustain on your own. It's expensive. And I wanted to be considered for awards and playlisting. Being with a major can help with that. I don't think I'd have signed [to BMG] if they hadn't let me become an actual partner. I have two people from my old promo staff still on the team; they help us every day. And I get to bring in the music. [The label] isn't telling me how it needs to sound. They're like, "Whatever you bring us, we want to champion and help you get across the finish line." That was a no-brainer to have a real team in BMG and Stoney Creek who trust me creatively.

Social media is what sparked this. My wife and I got married in 2021, and this was the song she danced to on our wedding night. The next week, we went on our honeymoon and I posted the song on TikTok. The first post got almost 10 million views. The next post got 12 million. All these people started to post, saying, "Boys, listen up." And it just wrecked me; their videos would bring me to tears. I started dueting them, and it exploded. Next thing I knew, there were hundreds of thousands of videos made with our song.

People ask, "How did you do to pull that off? How'd you manipulate that?" But I didn't. It just happened. The song resonated, fans of it started this trend and then the song started streaming. That allowed me to fund a label team.

By the time "She's Somebody's Daughter" went No. 1, it was five years old. Some radio folks were like, "This is old." But it was still being discovered on radio. We would test top five every time, and it's because people heard it on social media. They recognized it and were able to hear the full song, not just the clips.

"Tough People" has also had quite the journey. When I wrote it, I was fighting to get "Daughter" out of the 50s on the chart, so it became my fight song. Part of me wanted to give up and part of me wanted to keep going. This was my keep-going song.

I hear every day from people who say, "Hey, I'm struggling, but I listen to this song and it helps me keep fighting." I've had kids and families reach out who were fighting cancer. I've had families who lost everything in Hurricane Helene or the California wildfires reach out about how much this song means to them. That's why we make music. My songwriter buddy says, "Yeah, we like climbing the charts and all that stuff, but at the end of the day, we don't make music for Nashville. We make it for people's hearts and souls." That's what this song is doing. It's special.

“ I've had families who lost everything in Hurricane Helene or the California wildfires reach out about how much this song means to them. That's why we make music. ”

NEW FACES

ASHLEY COOKE

Back Blocks/Big Loud

The roster of people who have been a part of *New Faces* through the years – what it meant for their career and where they are now – it’s absolutely massive and a huge honor. Performing in front of people I’ve gotten to know on radio tour – not just a room full of people who work in the industry, but full of friends who voted for me – reiterates my love for Country radio. And, I guess, their love for me, which is huge.

I was sitting in a car in South Florida, which is where I’m from, and we had gotten word that Bobby Bones was going to play my first release as a solo artist, “Jealous Of The Sky,” on *Women of iHeartCountry*. The song is about my friend passing away from cancer when I was 18. My friends in my car knew that friend, too, so when it came on, we sobbed. Literally sobbed. It wasn’t a typical radio single, but it meant a lot for it to make it on the radio. A reminder that songs are not only meant to be a “radio smash.” Write what’s meaningful to you and, if people connect to it, that’s a radio smash.

Out of all the platforms I posted on, TikTok was the one that algorithmically helped me find my fan base. When that took off, I started to get more recognition in the country space and was labeled a “TikTok artist.” People asked if that was offensive, but I just said, “I’m going to make music I believe in. If it happens to do well on TikTok still, that’s amazing.” My goal was to consistently make music that not only translated on TikTok, but also translated past TikTok. That’s exactly what it’s done.

Speaking of, “Your Place” was a song I didn’t know was meant to be a radio song. I wasn’t chasing a radio single, I just walked into a room with my amazing friends and co-writers [Jordan Minton and Mark Trussell]. Having recently been cheated on in a relationship, I was *so sick* of being treated terribly – something we’ve all experienced in some way, shape or form, unfortunately.

My team didn’t react like, “This is it! The next single.” But I started playing it live and fans lost their minds. It became the one song in the set everybody was excited about, and it grew organically from there. I kept sending videos of crowds freaking out. The day we released it, we played a festival and the entire crowd knew every single word. So it became my first radio single, was *On The Verge* and my first No. 1.

I’ve been a die-hard Brantley Gilbert fan for a long time. I know all his deep cuts. My ex-boyfriend in college bought me tickets to see Brantley in Atlanta as a Christmas gift. Later, I met Brantley at a radio show and we got to know each other for a minute. Not much to it. A couple months went by and my phone rang. The display said, “Could be Brantley Gi.” I was like, “There’s no way Brantley Gilbert is calling me right now. He doesn’t have my number.” So, I didn’t answer ... like an idiot. Then I got a text: “Hey, it’s Brantley Gilbert. I have an opportunity I’d love to talk to you about.” I called and we ended up on the phone for over an hour. He told me he loves my album – listened to all of it the night before. I was like, “Is this really happening?”

He said, “So I have this song that Jelly Roll and I wrote as a duet, but it’s kind of a toxic love song situation that I feel would be ... weird ... if me and Jelly Roll sang together. Jelly and I both love you so much and thought you’d be a really great person to have on it.” He sent it, I fell in love with it and now it’s a radio single.



DASHA

Warner

I moved to Nashville in 2018 because of Belmont University. I loved it and learned so much in the songwriting program. When COVID hit, I moved back to California because we literally were not allowed to stay on campus. After about nine months, I came back to Nashville thinking I’d restart at Belmont. This was January of 2021 and I thought classes would be in person again. Of course, that is not how it worked out.

Learning about songwriting on Zoom even though I was in the same city as all those people was pretty disappointing. After that semester, I had my first mini-moment on TikTok and I was like, “Fuck it. I’m moving back to L.A.” My brother and a bunch of my friends were there, and I was kind of falling out of love with Nashville. For two-and-a-half years I lived in Beverly Hills with three boys in this small apartment. It was like *New Girl* – the best.

I moved back to Nashville in September of 2023, because I had written and was sitting on this whole album – *What Happens Now*. I had fired everybody on my team and put it together myself. I had a hunch that my time in Nashville was not even close to being over. I found a random guy on Facebook and, once again, moved in with two guys. That’s when “Austin” blew up. I just kind of somehow knew it in my gut before it even happened.

I’m a California girl with a southern heart. My mom’s whole family is from the deep south of North Carolina. My dad’s a total redneck from Northern California, and I grew up in the central coast, which is a very different vibe. I’m very drawn to both cultures and the way I write fits in the middle of them. Spending time in LA helped me learn how to run a business, and being around so many people who were hustling was the best education I could have gotten.

“TikTok artist Dasha” in headlines and before any of my accolades was frustrating for a while. You only see me as a TikTok artist? The only reason this is happening is I went viral? Not because I’m a good songwriter? Not because I successfully executed a really great marketing plan? People say that to take away some of your light, but also ... it’s true. I *did* blow up on TikTok, so I can’t really fight with that one.

“Austin” being insanely viral was an anomaly, so I don’t feel pressure to repeat it. I don’t think that will ever happen again, and that’s okay. But now that I have all those eyes on me, there’s pressure to follow it up musically. I actually thrive on that because I believe in the artistry around my music. Prove yourself? Perfect. Let me get to work. That’s a pressure I feel, but in a really good way.

I’ve always had the attitude of, “If you don’t like me, then fuck you. Peace out.” But when everything was happening, I was a little bit sheepish in my personality because I didn’t want to be too much. “She’s so loud and opinionated!” I bit my tongue, but now I realize who I am; my opinions and my confidence are my superpower. The right people will be on board ... and the others aren’t my problem.

Songwriting uses a different part of my brain than the visual arts around it. I have these two modes I click into – one is the actual music-making inspired, emotional side. The other is like, “Okay, how can we market this? What are these visuals going to look like? Who do I want to be to millions of people?” I click back and forth. I spent last year in marketing mode – visuals and performing, which I love. Right now, I’m in my music-making mode. It’s been a great brain and heart break to have time to create music and be just a songwriter again.

ZACH TOP I NEVER LIE

7 MILLION STREAMS PER WEEK

TOP 15 AND CLIMBING IN 10 WEEKS

TOP 10 HOT COUNTRY SONGS

TOP 5 ALBUM - *COLD BEER & COUNTRY MUSIC*

SEE ZACH ON CRS NEW FACES
FRIDAY NIGHT



St. Jude patient
Cypress



Music saves lives. So does St. Jude.

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

Become a Partner in Hope
musicgives.org



AMERICAN BLANDE

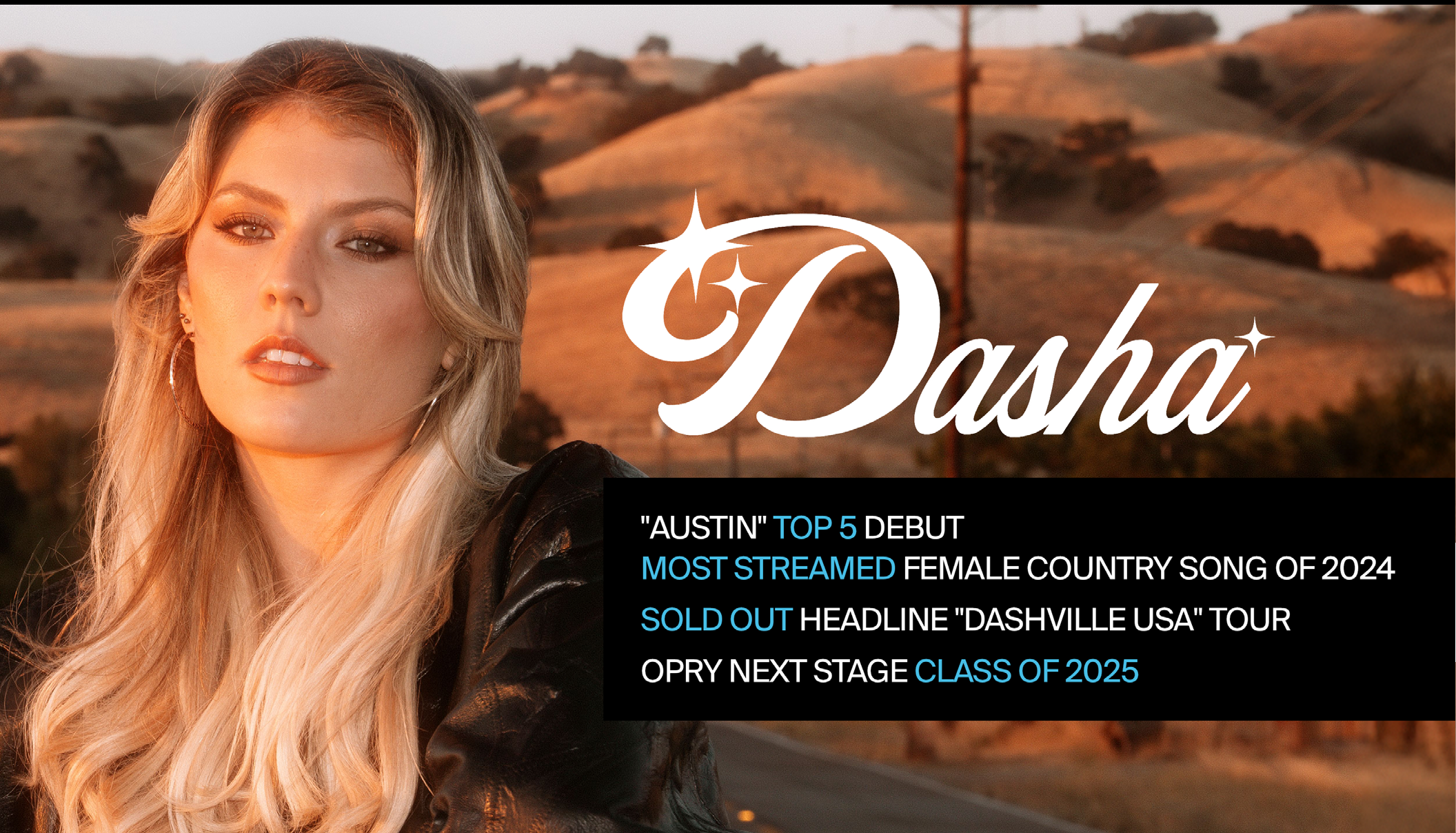
NEW MUSIC
COMING SOON

WARREN ZEIDERS

"PRETTY LITTLE POISON" DEBUT RADIO #1
2ND MOST PLAYED SONG OF 2024
OVER 3 BILLION CAREER STREAMS
"RELAPSE" AT COUNTRY RADIO NOW



NEW FACES CLASS OF 2025



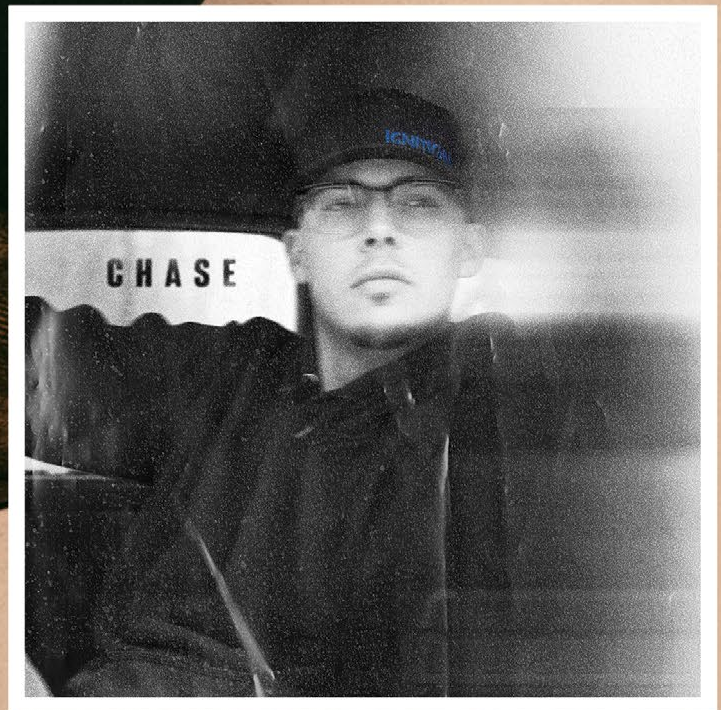
Dasha

"AUSTIN" TOP 5 DEBUT
MOST STREAMED FEMALE COUNTRY SONG OF 2024
SOLD OUT HEADLINE "DASHVILLE USA" TOUR
OPRY NEXT STAGE CLASS OF 2025

CHASE MATTHEW



**CURRENTLY AT
COUNTRY RADIO**



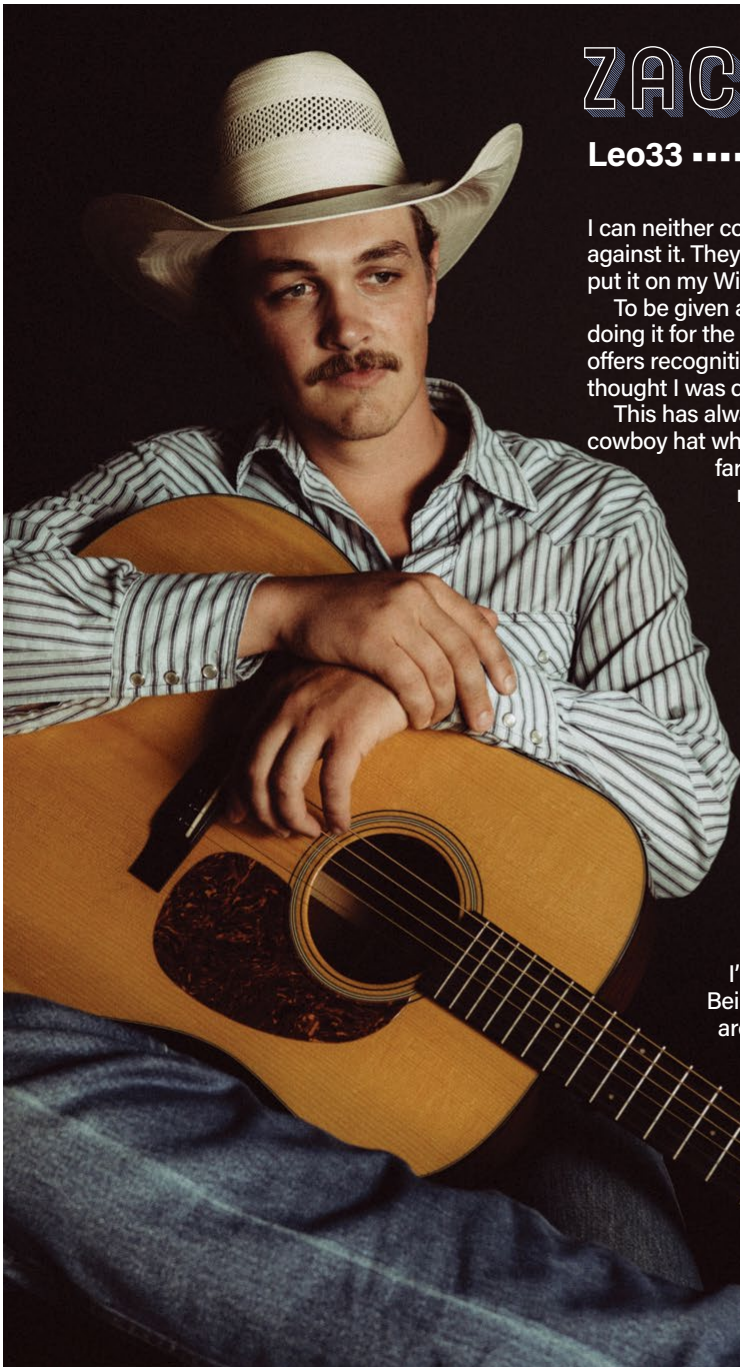
**NEW ALBUM *CHASE*
COMING 2/21**

SOLD OUT HOMETOWN SHOW AT THE RYMAN ON 2/21

NEW FACES

ZACH TOP

Leo33



I can neither confirm nor deny Alan Jackson is my father, but my parents aren't putting up much of an argument against it. They're being pretty non-committal, pretty shady about it. So I don't know what to think. Somebody put it on my Wikipedia. Maybe somebody knows something I don't.

To be given a pat on the back by your peers – people you're in the industry with – that always feels good. We're doing it for the fans, for sure, and that's who we've got to keep happy at the end of the day. But when the industry offers recognition for someone having a pretty cool year, that's something. I'm very excited and thankful that folks thought I was deserving.

This has always been my thing. You can find a picture back when I was five years old wearing Wranglers and a cowboy hat while beating around on my little Walmart First Act guitar. I haven't really changed it up too much as far as the appearance, and certainly not the music. If you like it, great. If you don't, I'm afraid you're not getting much different.

My folks had George Strait playing a lot around the house. He was their favorite. When I started wanting to take my singing and playing more seriously, I started going back deeper – '50s and whatnot. Lefty Frizzell, George Jones, Merle Haggard, Vern Gosdin, Hank Sr., the same music guys like George Strait or Alan Jackson would've been coming up on. I came to it the same way those guys did, so it's no surprise that what I end up putting out is sonically similar to a lot of those guys out of the '90s.

Was I surprised a traditional sound went viral? Yes and no. It's easy to get excited about new trends or fads, but people also have a tendency to come back to roots and traditions. Stuff that's familiar. Not older or worn out, but with a familiar feel, which is what my music has ended up being. It's fresh, new and today, but it feels like an old boot you've worn a thousand times.

We get TikTok-scrolling kids all the way to 75-year-olds who grew up on the same music. [My music and look] stick out from the other stuff on TikTok, for sure. I'm thankful it connects with folks because I couldn't figure out how to make myself do a TikTok dance or do a trend.

People have used "There's The Sun" as first dances, in engagement videos and all kinds of stuff. I love seeing those. I've gotten sent a ton of wedding invitations: "Hey, we're using your song. You can come by. We'd love to see you." I haven't gone to any strangers' weddings yet, but I'm always tickled when I get one of those or see a wedding video with that song in it.

Being [Leo33's] first artist was a really cool position to be in. They've got just as much to prove and are going all-in the same way I am, where a major label might have 30 other artists who are already making them a bunch of money. It's easy to get shelved in that scenario. But with this thing, they really needed to believe in me to make this bet. So it felt like I could trust them and it's been an awesome partnership and very fun. They have absolutely killed it as far as the radio game goes.

In 2025, Country radio can expect more country music. I'm going to keep it coming just as fast as they can keep it running up and down the charts.

Very grateful for the love and support we've gotten from radio so far. Hopefully we can keep everybody happy and keep the hit songs coming. We hope all the folks in radio-land feel the love from us as much as we feel the love and support from them.

WARREN ZEIDERS

Warner

I played CRS for the first time last year the week "Pretty Little Poison" went No. 1. *New Faces* is such an honor, and this year is a stacked lineup. It's a sign of hard work paying off. It's rewarding not just for me, but for my team, who have believed in me for the last three or four years of making music – from TikTok and Instagram to my first single going No. 1. I'm flattered to share the stage with a bunch of great artists who deserve the recognition. We worked hard for it.

During the radio tour, we tried to hear "Pretty Little Poison" on the radio. The first time was in Pennsylvania, where I'm from. It was such a fun, wholesome moment being in the place my story began. I wave that Pennsylvania flag with a lot of pride.

Athletics were the biggest influence on my life. That and my faith. In college, I had to give up lacrosse after reaching seven concussions over 12 years of playing. Music had always been a part of my life – whether I was in the locker room, on the field, at home or messing around on my guitar. In a million years, I wouldn't have thought was worth pursuing. It wasn't until hopping on social media during the pandemic that things started to snowball.

I didn't post thinking, "This is something I'm going to pursue" or "This is going to be a career." It was to pass the time during COVID, and things continued to compound. I took a second and realized I should pay attention to this. It went from covers to writing to coming to Nashville. In a matter of six months, I was signing a record deal and releasing "Ride The Lightning." It's crazy how fast life can dramatically change.

Athletics turned me into what I am. People like to call me calculated. I'm very thorough and disciplined in my regimen and how I approach what I do. Making music is not the same as being an athlete – it's art and the good Lord gave me the gift of being emotionally intelligent and connected to my feelings. But there is an analytical standpoint I look at as a former athlete – streams, Country radio, ticket sales. How can I improve or what can I do differently? My business, marketing and sales background has also helped a lot.

Had I not posted on social media, I don't think we'd be here right now, because I wasn't doing the local dive bar scene. I wasn't playing for people. Social media has completely changed the course of my life forever, and it's continuously changing other artists' lives day in and day out. From me to Bailey [Zimmerman], Dasha to Zach Top, a lot of us younger artists are definitely getting our buzz, awareness and optics from social media.

The reality is it's such a competitive market. You can have success on social media, but the real test is seeing how it translates to a live setting, ticket sales, streams and No. 1s on Country radio. It's one thing to have success on social media, but you've got to be able to back it up.

What I've really seen over the last two years is people not viewing me as just a TikTok artist anymore. I've laid the foundation. I'm an artist. I happened to get my start on TikTok and Instagram, but I'm an artist. I have the catalog, the numbers, the touring and all the rest to solidify that. Just because I got my start on TikTok and Instagram doesn't make me any less of an artist than anyone else.

CAC





PORTER'S CALL

A PLACE TO BE REAL. A GUIDE WHO UNDERSTANDS. A STORY TO BE TOLD.

WHAT IS PORTER'S CALL?

A place where touring recording artists can receive mental and emotional health guidance and support specifically attuned to their unique profession.

A safe and confidential refuge where artists and their partners can process the issues and stressors they face both on and off the stage.

WHY PORTER'S CALL?

2x higher likelihood of developing addiction issues among artists/musicians

50% of musicians reported battling symptoms of depression
(as compared to 25% of the general US population)

73% of independent artists/musicians reported struggling with mental illness

80% of artists experience chronic sleep problems

Founded in 2001, Porter's Call has provided more than 70,000 hours of specialized services to thousands of artists FREE of charge. We offer a tailored approach to artist care through guidance, encouragement, mentorship, and advocacy in support of music entertainment artists and their significant others. With both in-person and virtual options, Porter's Call is equipped to offer support local to Nashville, TN and around the globe.



PORTER'S CALL

FRANKLIN, TN

SCAN CODE TO LEARN MORE ➔

✉ OPENDOOR@PORTERSCALL.COM

📞 615-591-6622





RISER HOUSE

WELCOMES COUNTRY RADIO TO

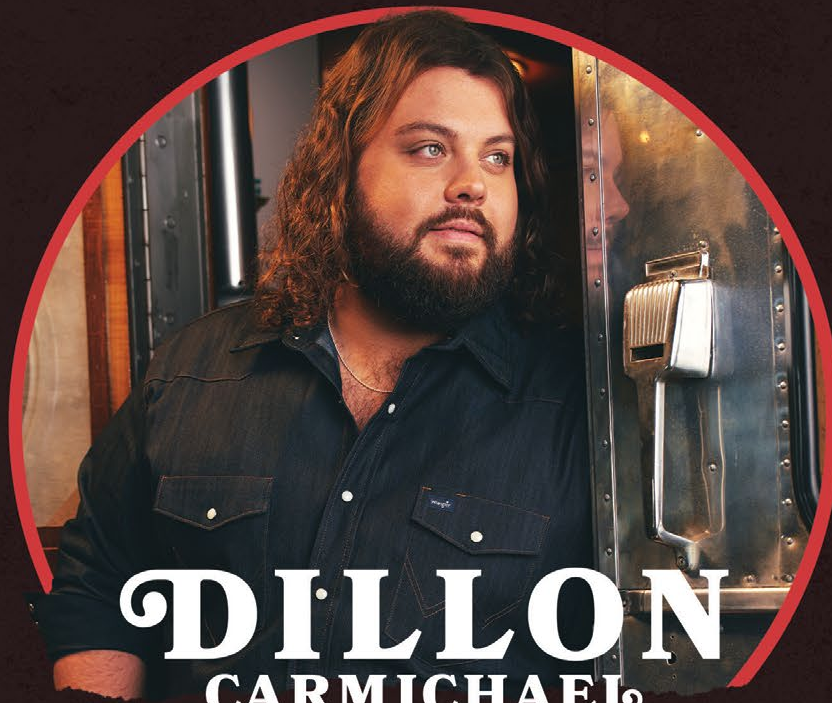
CRS 2025!



MEGHAN PATRICK



LANCO



DILLON
CARMICHAEL

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME IN OUR
RISER HOUSE LIVING ROOM

AT THE TOP OF THE ESCALATORS

ALSO, STOP BY AND VISIT OUR SUITE!

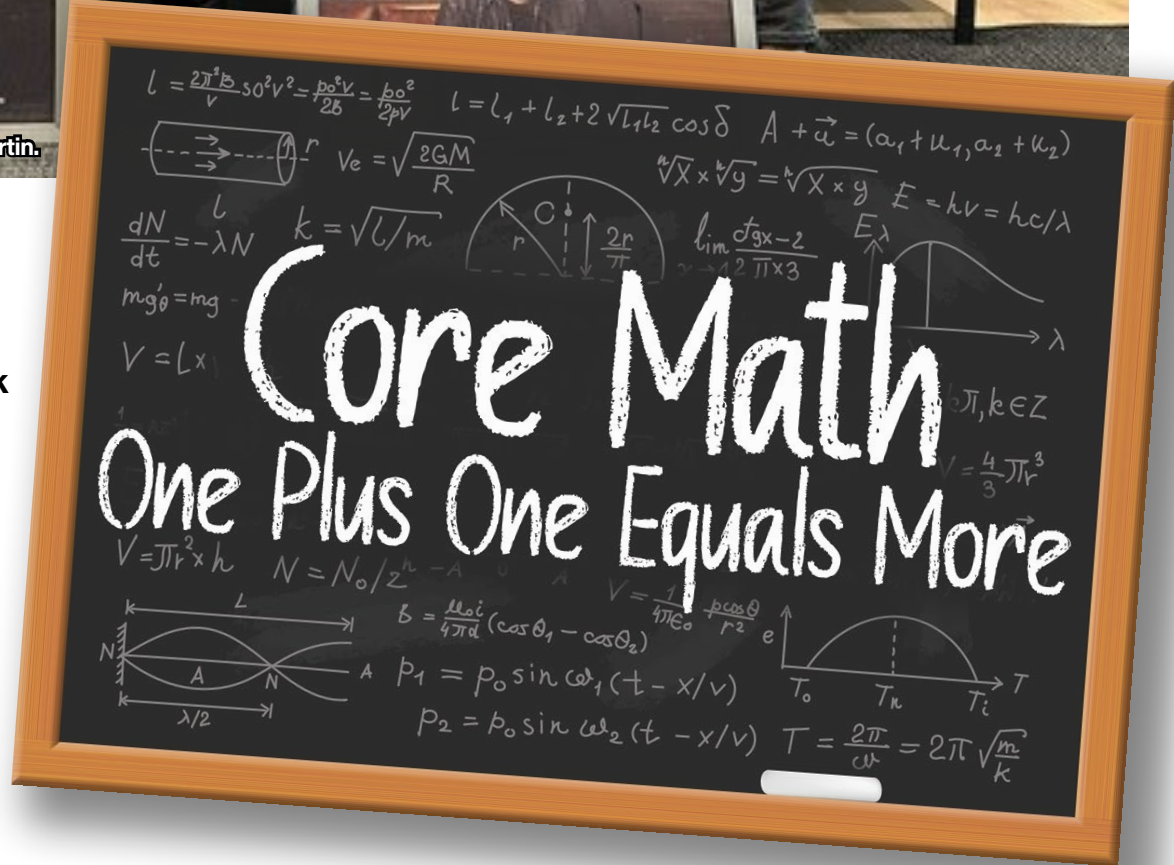
CONNECT WITH YOUR REGIONAL FOR THE LOCATION





Whiskey Business: The Core's Taylor Manns and Simon Tikhman, Nate Smith, and TCE's Chief Zaruk and Tracy Martin.

From artist management and a producers division to their new Universal-backed record label, The Core Entertainment Co-Founders Simon Tikhman and Kevin "Chief" Zaruk have a lot on their plate. Notching the No. 1 airplay song two years running - Bailey Zimmerman's "Rock And A Hard Place" (2023) and Nate Smith's "World On Fire" (2024) - is a gratifying marker of their early successes, but has also raised expectations. Balancing gut and analytics, as well as industriousness and mental health, they are committed to doing good work with good people ... and trusting that the results will speak for themselves.



The pair were introduced in 2019 by a shared attorney. "We joke with our wives that we were set up on a blind date and knew very quickly this was it for us ... on the business side," Tikhman says. At the time, Zaruk was still a principal at Big Loud and Tikhman was Managing Partner at First Access Entertainment.

The setup was fairly simple. "You guys look at the world the same way, you do business the right way and you should think about working together in some capacity," Tikhman recalls of the attorney's pitch. Joined by strategic partner Live Nation, the company launched later that year. "It was just Chief and I with a chair and a desk," Tikhman says. "Then COVID hit. We were lucky to have [CEO] Michael Rapino and Live Nation as a partner; they really believed in us before we had an artist or anything."

With Zaruk in Vancouver and Tikhman in L.A. during lockdown, they scheduled daily calls to walk and talk, literally, through their ideas and plans. As restrictions eased, they began traveling to Nashville, taking meetings and signing artists. TCE now has 22 employees across offices in Nashville and L.A. Between management and the 2023 launch of The Core Records, they're involved in the careers of 18 artists.

As for the philosophical alignment that brought them together, Zaruk says, "When you've been doing this for a minute, you get to work with a lot of great people and artists, but unfortunately you also experience working with people who aren't always straight with you or honest. Simon and I didn't know each other well, but when we talked about a partnership it was about making the best decisions for our artists."

"Of course everybody wants to make money and has bills to pay, but we don't focus on short term, easy money," Zaruk continues. "We think big picture about developing careers, not about grabbing something that's making money right now, squeezing it dry and kicking it to the curb. Every artist we have signed has been because we believed they are career artists. We tell them all the same thing: 'We can't guarantee you're going to be in stadiums one day, but if we do it right, treat people the right way, work with great partners

and make great music, we'll be successful.' That could eventually mean sold-out stadiums, but certain things are out of our hands because it is up to the fans to decide how popular you're going to be."

The duo's internal dynamic is echoed in their signing decisions. "We're just not interested in doing business with difficult artists who don't want to work," Zaruk says. "We both came from situations where you'd get phone calls and think, 'I don't want to take this,' or waking up in the morning and not being excited about work. Life is too short, and we're not in the business of saving lives. We love music, the business, songs, live shows and developing artists. We love working with great people, so let's do it the right way and have fun. If it's not that, we're not going to do it. We are a hundred percent aligned on that, which is ultimately how we came up with the name."

"We overlap in many things, particularly in putting our heads down and working," Tikhman says. "We don't cut corners. We're transparent. We don't lie. We tell the artist the truth even if it's going to hurt. That was never in question."

Where It Starts

The aforementioned record label was preceded by a producer-management division as well as a new

ventures/investing arm. "When we started, our vision was all over the place; we wanted to touch everything," Tikhman says. "We have so many similarities, but we also have different skill sets that complement each other."

When TCE began working with Zimmerman, they connected him to producer Austin Shawn. "They made magic happen," Tikhman says. "We were like, 'Wait. We want to work with Austin, too. We should work with the producer as well.' We love connecting dots, and that's what management does. We built an internal culture we're really proud of, but it also extends to our artists, their families and the people who work for them. We are constantly spreading this spiderweb so all the divisions touch each other."

While producers were a late addition to the plan, having a record company wasn't. Zaruk calls forming a label "one of our big goals," but says the timeline shifted. "We had to build a management company and figured it would take time to get there," he explains. "Then the phone rings and it's [UMG CEO] Lucian Grainge. He's like, 'I need you guys to come to L.A. and talk about a label.' That's ahead of any schedule we planned or even hoped for, and it comes with a whole new level of goals."

The Core Records was announced in July, 2023. Last fall, Republic SVP/Top 40 & Adult Promotion Jon Borris joined as GM and Warner Music Nashville VP/Artist Development Jamie Younger was hired in that same capacity. The label's first artist is Hannah McFarland, whose first two songs for the label were released to DSPs in October. A half-dozen artists will be introduced in the first half of 2025. "We were going to debut a lot of them at our second annual Grammy party, which we sadly postponed, for obvious reasons," Tikhman says.

Radio promotion will be handled in-house at some point. "For now, it'll be whoever our label partner is per act, or it'll be independent," Zaruk says. "You're not going to radio unless you know you're ready since it's a bit of an easier play when a song is blowing up on streaming, digital and socials. That's when you go to a label partner or independent, show them the analytics and go to radio. We will have a couple different options, but the end goal is to keep building out all parts of our label."

Topping the year-end airplay chart in consecutive years is reflective of the significance TCE places on the medium for and with its artists. "Two years in a row is a



Simon Tikhman



Kevin "Chief" Zaruk



All In Love: Martin, Bailey Zimmerman, Tikhman and Zaruk.

THE CORE

big deal,” Tikhman says. “Radio is so important for us as a company, it’s important for our label partners and our artists prioritize it. The artist has to care, and hearing a song on the radio still feels new for them. If we’re driving and a song comes on, Bailey gets excited even though he’s had several No. 1s. Nate’s a 13-year-old stuck in the body of a 39-year-old man, so he definitely gets excited. So it’s a priority for us and them, and we are fortunate to work with the best radio teams in Nashville.”

More broadly, TCE embraces music and artists with unbounded appeal. “Some people shy away from saying they write commercial music – pop music, radio music – whatever you want to call it,” Zaruk says. “But nobody did it better than Chad Kroeger and Nickelback, and he’ll tell anyone that he wanted his songs to be heard by everybody in the world, even if it meant being played on the radio until people got sick of it. We work with a lot of artists who have that mentality. They want to write music that everybody in the world can love and sing along with – hopefully when they’re playing it in a stadium.”

Mingle Again

That said, Tikhman and Zaruk aren’t basing their signing decisions on numbers. Tikhman says, “Do we care about analytics? Yes. Do we sign artists based off of analytics? No. We sign off gut. When we signed Bailey, he had some TikTok stuff, but he had been singing for four months. Nate came to Nashville, failed and moved back to California. So he really had nothing going on. For us, it has to be that the talent is undeniable. We listen to demos. It doesn’t even matter what you look like. The songs, the writing, the voice – that’s our bread and butter. Analytics come later. We start with the music.”

If anything, the proliferation of platforms for engaging fans can complicate artist development. “Maybe getting seen, heard and recognized is easier, but developing that into being a career artist is harder than ever,” Zaruk says. “It’s about the songs and the voice. We don’t care if you’re 15 or 40. Do you have the work ethic? How bad do you want it? Are you willing to do the work in the business – publishing, radio, digital and socials. Are you good live? Are you a good person to work with?”

“You can tell when an artist just hangs out in the office,” he continues. “Do we like being around them? Do they have good energy? Or do they walk out the door and we all go, ‘Whoa. That’s going to be difficult?’ Do they already know it all? If they pass all those tests, then we can develop something. Help them improve as a songwriter. Help them find better songs. Once music is out, that’s when the analytics come in. Is it reacting? Lean forward or lean back? Are people saving it, commenting and sharing? Analytics tell us that if we push a song at radio, it’s probably going to react.”

Another qualification TCE looks for is business acumen. “From day one, we’ve told our artists, ‘You’re the CEO of your career,’” Tikhman says. “If you expect us to make the magic happen, good luck. But if you’re going to work really hard and drive the ship, Chief and I will help you along that path. If you expect us to work harder than you, you’re in the wrong industry. We’ve met with artists who said, ‘Here you go. Make me a star.’ No. If it was that easy, we’d be flying in our private 747 already. It’s brick by brick. Nate and Bailey are perfect examples, but are doing it with different audiences and in different ways, even though it’s the same genre. The artist has to outwork everyone.” Zaruk adds, “We know, because we’ve tried it the other way. It just doesn’t work.”

Fix What You Did Break

Artists are also encouraged to engage audiences across all media. “To really build those diehard fans who will stay with you for a career, it has to start out of the box,” Zaruk says. “Fans want to believe they discovered the artist and were there in the beginning. No one has done it better than Taylor Swift, which is why she is where she’s at. So it’s about educating our young acts ... and they all don’t like social media or TikTok. But when you look at the positive of building deep connections with fans beyond anything previously possible – and you can do it from your living room, car or studio – that’s how you develop a career. The days of being on the radio, playing a show and leaving ... that barrier that sometimes kept artists mysterious in a good way has been lifted.”

“We have weekly report cards for each artist,” Tikhman says. “You have to post a certain amount of times on various platforms. The blessing is that there’s less barriers to entry. The curse is you have to keep going or you’re going to be forgotten. It’s much easier for Bailey Zimmerman, who grew up on social media, than for someone who’s coming to social media late in the game. But it is how you stay relevant, tease and promote songs and tours. Radio is important, but you have to have both in 2025.”



Uncomplicated: Mackenzie Woodsen, Chief Zaruk, Josh Ross, Simon Tikhman and Tracy Martin.

“We really harp on that with our artists,” he continues. “They know they can spend one day a week in the office, sit with our social team and can as much content as they want. Your fans want to feel a direct connection – like they know you. It’s the new norm: 24-7 consumption. And I understand that’s hard. I get the struggle of posting something that goes viral and posting the next day only to find no one cares about it. That’s a mental thing for our artists, and we have open dialogues with them about it. We understand it’s not easy, but it is a muscle they need to work consistently. And it might be as important as the songs themselves.”

Rock & A Soft Space

Responding to those adaptations and the pace of change goes beyond the operational mechanics for TCE. “Chief and I prioritize mental health for our artists and employees,” Tikhman says. “We live in such a fast-paced world, especially the music industry. Swipe, swipe, swipe. We have a half-second to get someone’s attention, which can take a real toll. You’re in a van or on a tour bus, playing shows every night and still expected to post to socials. We tell artists, ‘Monday is your off day. You’re not picking up the phone. We’re not going to contact you. You’re not contacting us. You need a day for yourself.’”

“Also, therapy is very important for our artists, especially our young artists who can end up under a lot of pressure very quickly,” he says. “No one is built to be famous and rich overnight. There is no school where you can learn to do that. And whether it’s therapy or business coaching, we offer that free to our employees, as well. If you are not in the right mental health state, nothing else matters. The wins don’t feel as good and the lows feel even lower.”

The co-founders conduct regular mental-health check-ins with their artists and employees, and encourage them to go quiet on all platforms during the winter break. “There’s no show guarantee, dollar amount or opportunity that’s bigger than having that balance,” Zaruk says. “Most people understand if you call and say, ‘Our guy needs a break. He’s going home.’ If you see somebody starting a struggle, you have to stop the machine. At that point, you’re no good to anybody. Looking back at decades of rock and roll ... it’s not a bright history. It should be okay to admit you’re struggling with addiction, relationships or whatever. We try to instill confidence in our artists and employees that they can put up their hand and, whatever they need, we’ll figure it out.”

World On Higher

As TCE rolls into 2025, those early conversations have materialized. “Knock on wood, it’s all exceeding where we thought we would be,” Zaruk says. “That’s not an ego thing, just the reality of how hard it is to start a company, build it during COVID, find and sign multiple acts and then break them. Even though we’re a four-year-old company, nothing happened during the pandemic, so it feels really fast.”

“The pressure is on,” Tikhman admits. “As entrepreneurs you’re excited to get started and there’s pressure to succeed, but there’s less expectations, right? We didn’t know that ‘Fall In Love’ would be Bailey’s first No. 1. Sure, we thought it was a big song, but then you see it happen and ... success is a lot of luck, too. Now, people see what we’ve done on the management side and think we’re going to replicate that on the record side. We want to do that, but those expectations are elevated. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves, and the fact that Mike Rapino and Lucian Grange believe is really important to us. We take pride in proving our partners right.”

Likening their next phase to an artist’s sophomore album, they are also taking time to relish the wins. “The fun part is seeing these artists who were living in their parents’ basements two years ago now buying their first homes and creating albums,” Tikhman says. “For Chief and I, the high is seeing the personal and professional growth of both our employees and our artists.”

“Artists are always going to be wanting more. If they’re playing an amphitheater, they want to play an arena. If they’re playing an arena, they’re hoping to play a stadium. There’s always going to be that bottomless pit of wanting. But the excitement of the early days – that’s the juice. Playing *The Tonight Show* for the first time, seeing someone get nominated for an ACM or a CMA – Chief and I are loving that part the most.” **CAC**



That’s a sad reality, but it’s where we’re at in the music industry.”

Tikhman and Zaruk also point out that the on-the-road grind of radio tours and small shows in less-than-luxurious accommodations was once the norm. “How it works today can be mentally exhausting, but the old way was equally challenging,” Zaruk says. “Unfortunately, you’re going to be judged. Fans are going to love you and others are going to hate you. There’s no more polarizing act in that sense than Nickelback. You either accept that you’re signing up for this or – and we tell all our artists this – you do not have to do this. You can quit.” Tikhman adds, “We ask them, ‘Are you going to be Blockbuster or are you going to be Netflix?’ Don’t make the mistake of thinking people will walk in every Friday night for a rental. Adapt to the times.”

★ INTRODUCING ★

CeCe



★ ALL BOOTS ★

50M SOCIAL VIEWS + 2M SOCIAL LIKES
250% STREAMING GROWTH IN THE LAST 30 DAYS

EARLY SUPPORTERS
KSON, KWJJ, KFRG, WDAF, KUPL



Records Nashville / Columbia congratulate

TY MYERS

on his debut album

"THE SELECT"

AVAILABLE NOW

OVER 250 MILLION STREAMS
AND GROWING.



TY MYERS
THE SELECT



LABEL PROMOTION

CONTACTS



Bradseth, Dylan Taylor, Flynnville Train, Kickstand Jenny, Klaudia Magica, Troy Kidder, Vacationland

P	Larry Pareigis	615-332-5511	larry@ninenorthmail.com
EVP/GM	Kevin Mason	615-974-1999	kevin@edgehillmusic.com
VP/PRM	Greg Stevens	214-287-6606	greg@ninenorthmail.com
D/PRM	Tim Smith	928-848-9271	tim@ninenorthmail.com



Bradley Gaskin, Jake Slay, Matt Cosgrove, Timmy McKeever

PA	John Ettinger	615-438-7667	john@16camino.com
PA	Ryan Barnstead	615-414-7665	ryan@16camino.com



Austin Tolliver, Bryan Martin, Charlie Farley, Colt Ford, Eddie Montgomery & Montgomery Gentry, Josh Mirenda, Kayla Ray, Sam Grow, Steven Champion

CEO	Shannon Houchins	615-733-9983	shannon@averagejoesent.com
P	Forrest Latta	615-733-9983	forrest@averagejoesent.com
SVP/BA	Doug Kaye	615-733-9983	doug@averagejoesent.com
SVP/M	Andrew Davis	615-733-9983	andrew@averagejoesent.com
D/CR	Bryn Person	615-733-9983	bryn@averagejoesent.com
D/M	Madison Finn	615-733-9983	madison@averagejoesent.com
DM/CO	Garret Schmidt	615-733-9983	garret@averagejoesent.com
PUB/A&R/CO	Mike Wadsworth	615-733-9983	mike@averagejoesent.com
MG/C	Julian Mendoza	615-733-9983	julian@averagejoesent.com
D/OP/M/AC	Emma Wood	615-733-9983	emma@averagejoesent.com



P	Dale Cannone	917-379-6900	dale.cannone@in2unemusic.com
VP/PR	Stefani Waters	562-334-7330	stefani.waters@in2unemusic.com



Jason Aldean, Dustin Lynch, Lainey Wilson, Craig Morgan, John Morgan

VP/PR	Lee Adams	615-500-2961	ladams@brokenbowrecords.com
ND/SW	Dawn Ferris	214-924-1020	dawn@brokenbowrecords.com
RP/WC	Layna Bunt	615-473-9010	layna@brokenbowrecords.com
RP/NE/MW	Misti Douglas	850-218-7699	misti@brokenbowrecords.com
CO	Regan Donato	717-254-7144	regan@bbmusicgroup.com



Parmalee, Jelly Roll, Frank Ray, Drake Milligan, Madeline Merlo, Lanie Gardner, Drew Baldrige

VP/PR	Adrian Michaels	615-477-0545	adrian@stoneycreekrecords.com
ND, MW	Stan Marczewski	615-610-2122	stan@stoneycreekrecords.com
RP/WC	Matt Vieira	916-844-7821	matv@stoneycreekrecords.com
RP/NE	Lexi Willson	707-410-6617	lexi@stoneycreekrecords.com
RP/SE	Diane Monk	310-663-4151	diane@stoneycreekrecords.com
CO	Regan Donato	717-254-7144	regan@bbmusicgroup.com



Blake Shelton, Chayce Beckham, Kolby Cooper, Blanco Brown, HunterGirl, Dylan Schneider, The Frontmen, Alexandra Kay

VP/PR	Ken Tucker	615-584-7100	ken.tucker@wheelhousebbmrg.com
ND/MW/SE	Jennifer Shaffer	904-386-5050	jennifer@wheelhousebbmrg.com
RP/NE	Brittany Pellegino-Pitman	248-420-1125	brittanyp@wheelhousebbmrg.com
RP/WC	Steve Pleshe	559-307-8148	steve@wheelhousebbmrg.com
RP/MW/SE	Lisa Mastrianni	415-902-9400	lisa@wheelhousebbmrg.com
CO	Regan Donato	717-254-7144	regan@bbmusicgroup.com



Eric Chesser, Johnny Rogers

GM	JD Chesser	800-227-7765	bigbigentertainment@gmail.com
PR	Russ Ruhnke	800-227-7766	bigbigentertainment@gmail.com
RP/MW	Clay Hennenan	800-227-7767	bigbigentertainment@gmail.com
RP/WC	Sarah Burza	800-227-7768	bigbigentertainment@gmail.com
RP/NE	Jonathan Sharp	800-227-7769	bigbigentertainment@gmail.com



Aaron Watson

EVP/PR	Tony Morreale	615-260-6853	tony@morrealeentertainment.com
RP/LC	Greg McCann	615-243-1276	greg@roundhouseent.com
TX/PR	Tami Millspaugh	214-697-8954	texasrecordchick@gmail.com
RP/LC	JR Hughes	931-728-0071	jpromoman@aol.com



Morgan Wallen, Miranda Lambert, Hardy, Ernest, Ashley Cooke, Dylan Gossett, Lauren Alaina, Hailey Whitters, Kashus Culpepper, Mackenzie Porter, Charles Wesley Godwin, Dallas Smith, Thelma & James, Lauren Watkins, Jake Worthington, Stephen Wilson Jr, Zandi Holup, Hailey Benedict

EVP/PR	Stacy Blythe	615-887-9860	stacy@bigloud.com
VP/PR	Tyler Waugh	615-870-2040	tyler@bigloud.com
VP Multi-Format	Shari Roth	312-590-3229	shari@bigloud.com
W/PR	Dave Kirth	831-915-7617	dave@bigloud.com
MW/PR	John D'Amico	412-862-6539	john@bigloud.com
SW/PR	Kelley Bradshaw	423-802-4987	kelley@bigloud.com
SE/PR	Sarah Headley	704-475-2194	sarah@bigloud.com
NE/PR	Nikki Wood	901-378-2346	nikki@bigloud.com
S/PR	Lisa Smoot	615-483-8097	lisa@bigloud.com
PR/CO	Taylor Benson	256-417-0193	taylorbenson@bigloud.com
EA (S. Blythe)	Eliza Charette	860-614-8800	eliza@bigloud.com



Stephanie Quayle

VP	Carli McLaughlin Kane	516-314-6145	carli@bigskymusicgroup.com
D/A&R/AD	Christine D'Ancona	619-851-6711	christine@bigskymusicgroup.com



Brian Kelley, Carly Pearce, Chase McDaniel, Dolly Parton, Garth Brooks, Gary Levox, Jack Wharff And The Tobacco Flatts, Jackson Dean, Lecade, Mae Estes, Midland, Muscadine Bloodline, Rascal Flatts, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Ryan Hurd, Something Out West, The Cadillac Three, Tim McGraw



EVP/GM	Kris Lamb	615-418-0580	kris.lamb@bmlg.net
VP/PR//M	Erik Powell	615-972-0026	erik.powell@bmlg.net
ND/PR/M	Brooke Diaz	956-240-3657	brooke.diaz@bmlg.net
SD/WC/PR/NS	Bill Lubitz	702-580-6886	bill.lubitz@bmlg.net
D/PR/MW	Jane Staszak	412-480-4871	jane.staszak@bmlg.net
D/SW/PR	Jay Cruze	423-580-3549	jay.cruze@bmlg.net
D/SR	Rachel Burleson	254-855-7617	rachel.burleson@bmlg.net
PTM	Sara Benz	908-455-0098	sara.benz@bmlg.net



Brett Young, Riley Green, Chris Janson, Lady A, Greytan James, Noah Hicks, Shaylen

P/CEO	Jimmy Harnen	615-815-5780	jimmy.harnen@nashvilleharbor.com
SVP	Ryan Dokke	360-580-0250	ryan.dokke@nashvilleharbor.com
SD/SE/PR	Liz Santana	772-473-8116	liz.santana@nashvilleharbor.com
SD/WC/PR	Stella Prado	818-854-0283	stella.prado@nashvilleharbor.com
D/SR&DP/R/PR	Andrew Thoen	571-247-1851	andrew.thoen@nashvilleharbor.com
ST/LO	Emily Haupt	615-478-3465	emily.haupt@nashvilleharbor.com
EA (J. Harnen)	Alannah Watson	615-587-7480	alannah.watson@nashvilleharbor.com



Thomas Rhett, Justin Moore, Brantley Gilbert, Aaron Lewis, Sheryl Crow, Conner Smith, Mackenzie Carpenter, Preston Cooper, Braedon Barnhill

P	George Briner	615-324-7782	george.briner@valorymail.com
VP/PR/DG	Ashley Sidoti	615-574-7827	ashley.sidoti@valorymail.com
VP/PR	Chris Palmer	615-846-7748	chris.palmer@valorymail.com
D/SR	Andi Brooks	815-621-1155	andi.brooks@bmlg.net
RP/MW	Adam Burnes	615-324-7901	adam.burnes@valorymail.com
RP/WC	Amy Staley	615-513-6009	amy.staley@valorymail.com
RP/SE	Chris Waters	615-300-1590	chris.waters@valorymail.com
RP/NE	Don Gosselin	615-846-7676	don.gosselin@valorymail.com
CO	Claire Compton	630-800-0914	claire.compton@valorymail.com



Kelsea Ballerini, Chris Young, MaRynn Taylor, Scotty Hasting, Pryor Baird

CEO	Gordon Kerr	615-780-3070	gkerr@blackriverent.com
EVP	Rick Froio	615-780-3070	rfroio@blackriverent.com
SVP/PR	Bill Macky	615-202-8135	bmacky@blackriverent.com
D/PR	Kellie Lalack	937-232-0574	klalack@blackriverent.com
RP/WC	Jim Malito	480-203-4808	jmalito@blackriverent.com
RP/MW	Joe Carroll	615-779-8382	jcarroll@blackriverent.com
RP/SE	Theresa Ford	615-504-4865	tford@blackriverent.com
CO	Ashley Wojcinski	615-969-6998	awojcinski@blackriverent.com



Lee Brice, Dylan Scott, Rodney Atkins, Hannah Ellis, Kelsey Hart, Harper Grace, Tim Dugger, Pitney Meyer

SVP/PR	RJ Meacham	615-715-2764	rmeacham@curb.com
D/PR	Samantha DePrez	260-715-1226	sdeprez@curb.com
D/PR	Bailey White	623-693-3656	bwhite@curb.com
D/PR	Todd Thomas	530-306-3391	tthomas@curb.com
D/PR	Allyson Gelnett	484-888-1181	agelnett@curb.com
D/PR	Rusty Sherrill	615-744-9615	rsherrill@curb.com
CO	Brian Day	860-707-9709	bday@curb.com



Lucas Hoge

P	Laura Lynn	818-429-3655	laura@forceentgroup.com
---	------------	--------------	-------------------------



LoCash

EXT	Chris Lucas		
EXT	Preston Brust		
EXT	Skip Bishop		skip@galaxylabelgroup.net
EXT	Butch Waugh		
EXT/ND	Kerry Wolfe	414-788-3764	kerry@galaxylabelgroup.net
FP	Cheryl Broz	615-293-9867	cheryl@galaxylabelgroup.net
FP/PRS	Kristen Brust	629-215-4351	kristen@galaxylabelgroup.net
FP	Ray Vaughn	214-683-7298	ray@galaxylabelgroup.net
FP/T	John Lessard	774-836-8303	john@galaxylabelgroup.net
VP/M	Jenn Littleton	301-428-7956	jenn.littleton@gmail.com
ND/DMS	Diana Garcia		diana.garcia7@gmail.com
EXCO & GRD	Canon Henderson		



Jake Owen, Styles, Dave's Highway

MP	Keith Gale	615-727-4590	keith@goodcompany.com
ASM	Parker Fowler	256-630-1821	parker@goodcompanyent.com



Major label and leading independent artists

O/MP/CSO	Nancy Tunick	615-403-6121	nancy@grassrootspromotion.com
O/AP/MR/PR	Teresa Johnston	615-456-0187	teresa@grassrootspromotion.com
D/PR/MR	RJ Jordan	615-335-0718	rij@grassrootspromotion.com
D/Streaming	John Griffin	615-268-9876	john@grassrootspromotion.com
M/B	Chris Allums	615-300-5321	chrisa@grassrootspromotion.com
D/AMG	Nancy Johnson	615-480-6013	njohnson@grassrootspromotion.com
PR/CO/RT	Shannon Sutton	615-557-8630	shannon@grassrootspromotion.com
MG/PR/NR	Ashlee Wall	931-436-4989	ashlee@grassrootspromotion.com
D/PR/CA	Tera Lee Flaman	780-977-6789	ggs@sakamotoagency.com
MG/SM	Janet Hudson Hagan	917-531-4147	janet@grassrootspromotion.com
MR/PR/MG	Dan Hagar	615-430-2560	dan@grapevinepromotion.com
PR/CO	Rebekah Clements	615-415-7210	rebekah@grassrootspromotion.com



Zach Top, Jenna Paulette, Ashland Craft, Jason Scott & The High Heat

P	Katie Dean	615-406-7776	katie@leo33.com
VP/PRM	Chris Fabiani	859-466-3097	chris@leo33.com
D/PRM	Tracy Gibson	828-244-2827	tracy@leo33.com



Randy Houser, Shaboozey, Max McNown, Sam Barber, CoCe

Co-VP/RA/PR	Heather Propper	602-317-0551	heather@magnoliamusicgroup.com
D/ADP	JC Coffey	269-806-6865	jc@magnoliamusicgroup.com
D/PR	Jamie Hartley	805-889-3244	Jamie@magnoliamusicgroup.com



Jackson Michelson, American Young, Nessa Lea

SVP	Craig Powers	928-201-8040	cpowers@curb.com
-----	--------------	--------------	------------------



Walker Hayes, Tigirlily Gold, Brandon Ratcliff, Alex Hall, Shelby Lynne

GM	Katie McCartney	615-995-4614	katie.mccartney@sonymusic.com
VP/PR	Luke Jensen	615-743-5222	luke.jensen@sonymusic.com
D/PR	Glenn Noblit	214-282-6092	glenn.noblit@sonymusic.com
D/PR	Megan McCaffrey	720-320-2053	megan.mccaffrey@sonymusic.com
VP/M/CMP	Casey Thomas	339-225-1337	casey.thomas@sonymusic.com
MG/DM/SR	Claire Karliak	440-525-6161	claire.karliak@sonymusic.com
MG/M/CR	Ansley Neeley	205-908-6899	ansley.neeley@sonymusic.com
CO/M/PR	Hannah Loomis	978-302-7587	hannah.loomis@sonymusic.com



O	Jeff Solima	615-294-4787	jeffsolima@newrevenue.com
VP	Joe Schuld	913-579-9385	joeschuld@newrevenue.com
D/WC	Jon Conlon	818-399-1885	jonconlon@newrevenue.com



Mark Leach, Anita Cochran, Lefroy

P Chris Allums 615-300-5321 allums@quarterbackrecords.com



Joe Nichols, Runaway June, 2 Lane Summer

SVP April Rider 615-714-1749 april@brown sellersbrown.com
 VP Will Robinson 813-205-3355 will@quartzhillrecords.com
 D/PR Suzanne Durham 615-828-9493 suzanne@quartzhillrecords.com
 D/PR Maurisa Pasick 615-428-9708 maurisa@quartzhillrecords.com
 D/PR Traci Hite 256-338-1484 traci@quartzhillrecords.com
 D/PR Tara Shayne 818-573-7134 tara@quartzhillrecords.com



Ben Gallaher, Annie Bosko, Dusty Black, Spencer Hatcher

SVP April Rider 615-714-1749 april@brown sellersbrown.com
 VP Will Robinson 813-205-3355 will@stonecountryrecords.com
 D/PR Suzanne Durham 615-828-9493 suzanne@stonecountryrecords.com
 D/PR Maurisa Pasick 615-428-9708 maurisa@stonecountryrecords.com
 D/PR Traci Hite 256-338-1484 traci@stonecountryrecords.com
 D/PR Tara Shayne 818-573-7134 tara@stonecountryrecords.com



George Birge, Ty Myers, Drew Green, Austin Williams, Cole Phillips

EVP/PR&CMS Josh Easler 615-969-7262 josh.easler@recordsco.com
 SD/N/PR&CMS Jamice Jennings 615-243-6779 jamice.jennings@recordsco.com
 SD/N/PR David "Bubba" Berry 214-695-9777 david.berry@recordsco.com
 MG/CD&PR Helena Akhar 603-703-2967 helena.akhar@recordsco.com
 EVP/A&R Joe Fisher 615-400-1521 joe.fisher@recordsco.com
 ST Ryan McKelligon 971-266-9060 ryan.mckelligon@recordsco.com



Ryan Griffin, Chris Lane, Ryan Larkins, Neon Union

O/CEO Joy DeMarcus
 CFO Mike Craft mike.c@redstreetrecords.com
 GM Alex Valentine 260-466-2253 alex.v@redstreetrecords.com
 SVP/PR Andy Elliott 615-585-4101 andy.e@redstreetrecords.com
 ND/PR Sally Allgeier 260-466-2253 sally.a@redstreetrecords.com
 RD/PR Bridget Herrmann bridget.h@redstreetrecords.com
 VP/SR/PS Michael Steele michael.s@redstreetrecords.com
 VP/AD/M Ronn Tabb ronn.t@redstreetrecords.com
 SD/A&R Kelly King kelly.k@redstreetrecords.com
 M/PUB/A&R Amanda Roach amanda.r@redstreetrecords.com
 JD/CR Cambria Sojka cambria.s@redstreetrecords.com
 JD/PU/COM Brooklynn Gould-Bradbury brooklynn.g@redstreetrecords.com
 CO/DC Gianna Robinson gianna.r@redstreetrecords.com
 EA/OPM Dottie Chamberlain dottie.c@redstreetrecords.com

RISERHOUSE Dillon Carmichael, Meghan Patrick, Lanco, Mitchell Tenpenny (JV - Riser House/Columbia)

P Jennifer Johnson 615-415-2000 jennifer@riserhouse.com
 VP/E Jeff Davis 615-260-4975 jeff@riserhouse.com
 N/W Roger Fregoso 760-532-8521 roger@riserhouse.com
 SD/CT Nathan Cruise 615-496-6356 nathan@riserhouse.com
 CO Ashley Mascraft 413-455-9232 ashley@riserhouse.com



Austin Snell, Brother Elsey, Grant Gilbert, Hays, Reid Haughton, Hudson Westbrook, The Kentucky Gentlemen, Julia Minichiello, Old Hickory, Ryan Charles, Zach Seabaugh

GM & VP/SR&RA Lance Houston 404-862-9608 lance@riverhouseartists.com



SVP/PR Lauren Thomas 615-260-2500 lauren.thomas@sonymusic.com
 SD/PR/AD Bo Martinovich 615-300-5955 bo.martinovich@sonymusic.com
 ASD/NPR Paul Grosser 859-757-8602 paul.grosser@sonymusic.com
 ST/NPR/C Jansen Morgan 520-559-5963 jansen.morgan@sonymusic.com



Luke Combs, Old Dominion, Megan Moroney, Mitchell Tenpenny, Kameron Marlowe, Dylan Marlowe

SD/PR/AD Lauren Bartlett 620-341-0573 lauren.bartlett@sonymusic.com
 D/PR/AD Paige Elliott 703-346-5233 paige.elliott@sonymusic.com
 D/PR/AD Lisa Owen 310-614-2325 lisa.owen@sonymusic.com
 D/PR/AD Anna Widmer 615-983-0610 anna.widmer@sonymusic.com
 ST/PR/AD Christy Garbinski 615-301-4426 christy.garbnski@sonymusic.com



Kane Brown, Nate Smith, Corey Kent, Morgan Wade, Alana Springsteen, Brooks & Dunn

SD/PR/AD Mallory Michaels 615-815-5478 mallory.michaels@sonymusic.com
 D/PR/AD Dan Nelson 615-497-4000 dan.nelson@sonymusic.com
 D/PR/AD Ali O'Connell 404-861-5757 ali.oconnell@sonymusic.com
 D/PR/AD Larry Santiago 818-294-0035 larry.santiago@sonymusic.com
 ST/PR/AD Nicole Walden 615-301-4417 nicole.walden@sonymusic.com



Branch & Dean, Chad Brock, Jarrod Turner, Kylie Ryan, Tamoon, Jeff Bates, Cynthia Renee

CEO/AR Dean Scallan 615-254-2053 dean@ssmnashville.com
 P Patti Olsen-Garofala 615-254-2053 patti@ssmnashville.com
 D/PR/LO Cailsey Scott 615-254-2053 info@ssmnashville.com
 D/SM/M Ryan Pence 615-254-2053 promotion@ssmnashville.com
 CO Caroline Mitchell 615-254-2053 admin@ssmnashville.com



Locash, Ian Flanagan, Island Time Music Festival, MMI Publications

Co-CEO Skip Bishop skip@studio1bee.com
 Co-CEO Butch Waugh
 SVP/AD/M Jenn Littleton 301-428-7956 jenn@studio2bee.com
 VP/OPM Canon Henderson canon@studio2bee.com



Russell Dickerson, Scotty McCreery, Jordan Fletcher

Co-P Kevin Herring 615-308-1103 kevin@triple tigers.com
 Co-P Annie Ortmeier annie@triple tigers.com
 MP George Couri 512-422-2959 george@triple8gmt.com
 VP/PR Raffaella Braun 973-930-9118 raffaella@triple tigers.com
 SD/PR/NE Diane Lockner 443-253-9194 diane@triple tigers.com
 D/PR/WC Dave Collins 480-223-8337 dave@triple tigers.com
 D/PR/SW Julianna Vaughn 615-545-4164 julianna@triple tigers.com
 D/PR/SE Blake Nixon 615-498-0988 blake@triple tigers.com
 CO/PR Mackenzie Cooper 404-408-5059 kenzie@triple tigers.com
 VP/M Laura Hostelley 216-952-2495 laura@triple tigers.com
 MG/M Hope Garrison 207-776-0031 hope@triple tigers.com
 CO/M Liz Scherff 321-750-4168 liz@triple tigers.com



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP NASHVILLE

SVP/PR Damon Moberly 615-438-6633 damon.moberly@umusic.com
 VP/PR David Friedman 615-484-6866 david.friedman@umusic.com
 D/PR/RM Nick Kaper 513-207-3280 nick.kaper@umusic.com
 D/RM Houston Gaither 918-381-0063 houston.gaither@umusic.com



Carrie Underwood, Carter Faith, Caylee Hammock, Darius Rucker, Dierks Bentley, Jon Pardi, Keith Urban, Little Big Town, Luke Bryan, Mickey Guyton, Timothy Wayne

VP/PR Chris Schuler 859-250-0107 chris.schuler@umusic.com
 D/PR Annie Sandor 954-529-3380 annie.sandor@umusic.com
 D/PR Ashley Knight 615-524-7592 ashley.knight@umusic.com
 D/PR Mara Sidweber 469-231-6302 mara.sidweber@umusic.com
 D/PR Katie Bright 615 788-2203 katie.bright@umusic.com
 CO Christopher Raphael-Reily 413-387-3980 christopher.raphaelreily@umusic.com



Alan Jackson, Brothers Osborne, Eric Church, Tyler Hubbard, Tucker Wetmore, Brad Paisley, Anne Wilson, Crowe Boys

VP/PR Jimmy Rector 615-293-6669 jimmy.rector@umusic.com
 D/PR Trudie Daniell 770-253-1784 trudie.daniell@umusic.com
 D/PR Briarman Whitfield 615-524-7688 briarman.whitfield@umusic.com
 D/PR John Trapani 281-702-9989 john.trapani@umusic.com
 D/PR Mike Krinik 615-524-7590 mike.krinik@umusic.com
 CO Joslyn Richardson 775-771-8803 joslyn.richardson@umusic.com



Reba, Vince Gill, Josh Turner, George Strait, Sam Hunt, Jordan Davis, Kassi Ashton, Catie Offerman, Kacey Musgraves, Parker McCollum, Vincent Mason

VP/PR Miranda McDonald 615-866-7910 miranda.mcdonald@umusic.com
 D/PR Donna Passantino 847-531-6164 donna.passantino@umusic.com
 D/PR Katelyn Lester 443-244-1126 katelyn.lester@umusic.com
 D/PR Megan Youngblood 310-926-8114 megan.youngblood@umusic.com
 D/PR Shannon Hogan 585-369-3132 shannon.hogan@umusic.com
 CO Kenzie Couch 615-971-6760 kenzie.couch@umusic.com



Chris Stapleton, Maddie & Tae, Billy Currington, Sam Williams, Priscilla Block, Dalton Dover, The War and Treaty, Josh Ross, Bryce Leatherwood, Luke Grimes

SVP/PR Damon Moberly 615-438-6633 damon.moberly@umusic.com
 D/PR Sally Green 615-337-1411 sally.green@umusic.com
 D/PR Jack Christopher 412-916-9314 jack.christopher@umusic.com
 D/PR Jill Brunett 615-351-8273 jill.brunett@umusic.com
 D/PR Summer Harlow 931-638-3954 summer.harlow@umusic.com
 CO Sean Dolan 901-317-8875 sean.dolan@umusic.com



WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE

SVP Kristen Williams 615-214-1563 kristen.williams@wmg.com
 VP Anna Cage 317-730-7671 anna.cage@wmg.com
 EA/CO Marie Chailosky 614-477-1655 marie.chailosky@wmg.com

Radio Accounts

VP Tom Martens 615-214-1417 tom.martens@wmg.com
 D/RAC Lou Ramirez 210-240-4001 lou.ramirez@wmg.com
 D/RAC James Marsh 713-927-6302 james.marsh@wmg.com



Chase Matthew, Dan + Shay, Gabby Barrett, Randall King

ND Michael Chase 404-388-1715 michael.chase@wmg.com
 MG/R/West Jenna Johnson 626-484-3382 jenna.johnson@wmg.com
 MG/R/East Connor Brock 479-366-7306 connor.brock@wmg.com
 CO Kayla Burnett 707-580-2259 kayla.burnett@wmg.com



Bailey Zimmerman, Devin Dawson, Ian Munsick, Ingrid Andress, Kenny Chesney, Warren Zeiders

MG/R/East Ray Mariner 770-298-7365 ray.mariner@wmg.com
 MG/R/West Brooke Meris 713-598-9355 brooke.meris@wmg.com
 CO Ella Murray 440-384-5906 ella.murray@wmg.com



Ashley McBryde, Cody Johnson, Cole Swindell, Dasha, Avery Anna

ND Andy Flick 614-940-9348 andy.flick@wmg.com
 MG/R/West Mark Niederhauer 214-914-6550 markn@wmg.com
 MG/R/East Justin Newell 304-580-1133 justin.newell@wmg.com
 CO Marie Chailosky 614-477-1655 marie.chailosky@wmg.com

ABBREVIATION KEY:

A Assistant	LH Label Head
AC Account Manager	LC Label Consultant
ACO Account Coordinator	LO Label Operations
AD Artist Development	LR Label Resources
ADP Audience Platforms	M Marketing
AE Artist Engagement	MAS Marketing & Artist Strategy
AIP Activator & Indicator Promotion	ME Media & Publishing
AM Administration	MF Multi-Format
AMG Artist Management	MG Manager
AP Audio Production	MP Managing Partner
AS Associate	MR Music Row
ASM Associate Manager	MW Midwest
ASD Associate Director	N National
AV Advertising	ND National Director
B Business	NE Northeast
BA Business Affairs	NPR National Promotion
BO Booking	NS National Strategy
BR Brand Strategy	O Owner
C Content	OC Original Content
CA Canada	OP Operations
CD Content Development	OPM Operations Manager
CE Central	P President
CMS Commercial Strategy	PD Production
CMP Commercial Partnerships	PR Promotion
CO Coordinator	PRM Promotion & Mktg.
COM Communications	PRNS Promotion & National Strategy
CR Creative	PRS Promotion Strategy
CS Chart Strategy	PS Playlist Strategy
CSI Content Strategy & Innovation	PTM Project Manager
CSO Content Strategy Officer	PU Publicity
CT Central	PUB Publishing
D Director	R Regional
DE Development	RA Radio
DC Digital Content	RC Radio Consultant
DG Digital	RD Regional Director
DI Digital Initiatives	RI Radio Initiatives
DM Digital Marketing	RM Radio Marketing
DP Digital Partners	RP Regional Promotion
DMS Digital Media Strategy	RS Radio & Streaming
DS Digital Streaming	RSGS Radio Syndication & Group Strategy
DSM Digital Sales & Marketing	RT Radio Tour
E East	S Secondary
EA Executive Assistant	SC Senior Coord.
EXC Executive Consultant	SD Senior Director
EXCO Executive Coordinator	SND Senior National Dir.
EXT Executive Team	SE Southeast
EVP Executive Vice President	SM Social Media
FP Field Promotion	SR Streaming
GM General Manager	ST Specialist
GRD Graphic Design	SW Southwest
IM Integrated Marketing	SXM SXM Radio
JD Junior Director	SY Radio Syndication
	T Touring
	TX Texas
	W West
	WC West Coast

RED STREET



RECORDS

ARTIST DRIVEN



**SCAN TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT OUR ARTISTS!**

SAME MISSION.

SAME FOCUS.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

NEW OUTCOMES.

We're focused on your future — your success, your opportunities, and your ability to thrive in a changing industry.



TAYLOR LINDSEY & KEN ROBOLD

THE
INTERVIEW

Creators First

The new year brought new leadership at Sony Music Nashville, with Taylor Lindsey rising to Chair/CEO and Ken Robold named President/COO. Over more than nine years working together under former label head Randy Goodman, Lindsey and Robold discovered they have much in common. And those similarities are central to the vision they have for the company.

You're coming up on a month in the new chairs. How's it going?

TL: The energy is really good. Ken and I have been aligned for a very long time on what we think a culture and system surrounding a major label could be. Coming into this together, the transition has felt relatively easy and very smooth. We've stayed focused on the team, the energy and the new year of it all – really leaning into that. We've connected with a lot to our artists and managers to talk to them about our vision, set some expectations and let them set some as well. We're still in a bit of a honeymoon phase, but it is, in fact, a honeymoon. It feels great.

KR: We've been working together for more than nine-and-a-half years and have built up a relationship over that time. Obviously, the relationship changed a bit when Taylor became head of A&R, and as the years have gone on, we've realized just how aligned we are. First, as people in the kinds of things we value, but also what we bring to work every day. We believe strongly in a creator-first mentality. Our vision is built around that, so that has felt natural.

We come at it from different angles – she being a pure creative and me being more on the business side, though I have been heavily involved in creative throughout my time at Sony. We had a town hall our second day back from the break – not to make specific changes, but to set the stage for our vision and the culture we want to revolve around that. The next day we had a smaller meeting with the artist-facing staff to get into more detail. So far, the feedback has been positive.

Did you know each other before working here?

TL: No. I was already here in A&R when Randy, Ken and Steve [Hodges] came on board. As a team building exercise, senior leadership went on an overnight retreat. We were all on a bus for what was probably an hour or more, seated beside someone who wasn't in our department. Ken and I were put beside each other and had a list of questions to ask the other person and present to the group at the end of the retreat. The last question was something to the effect of, "What's the one thing you should know about me?" And Ken said, "I don't fuck around."

KR: (Laughs) For the record, I do not remember saying this.

TL: You can ask the A&R team, because I went back and told them immediately.

KR: I believe you, I just don't remember it.

TL: He was like, "I don't fuck around when it comes to my family or my job. I like to have fun, but I don't fuck around." And that's proven to be a true statement to the kind of person he is. He's had a front row seat to my growth at Sony, and through all those phases we've become closer. From a human standpoint, the respect we have for each other extends beyond just doing the job. There's definitely a foundation that has made this feel really natural.

KR: I'm pretty plainspoken. Also, I worked for [former UMGN head] Luke Lewis for 18 years, which was f-bombs left and right. And by the way, Taylor and I curse a lot, which anyone in this company can attest to. Not in a derogatory way, of course.

How did each of you get here?

KR: Growing up on Long Island, I had two older sisters and got into music at a really early age. My dad was a soulful, blues-rock guy; my mom liked big band, so there was always music in our house. My sisters and I had 45s of everything in the top 40, and my first concert was KISS in sixth grade. Music and sports were my passions, but I never associated music with being a business or thought it could be a career. So when I got to college, I went for a degree in accounting. After working at a CPA firm, I figured out pretty quickly that's not what I wanted to do with my life. I had the good fortune of meeting a recruiter who asked me about my interests



and found a senior accountant opening at PolyGram Records. That was the light bulb moment. And it led to nearly 22 years with PolyGram, then Universal. When the EMI merger happened I got let go, joined Zac Brown at Southern Ground and then moved on to Sony. **TL:** I come from a very musical family. One of my two older sisters is Hillary, who is a Hall of Fame songwriter. I won't say the exact number, but she is a good bit older, so I grew up around the business in that regard. A lot of writers and publishers have known me since I was very, very young. Our dad was the drummer for a band called The Lucky Charms, who had a top 40 hit with "Tied To Your Heart" in the '60s. All the band's mothers got together and decided they were playing the devil's music and the band broke up. It was a very southern vibe.

My parents threw dinner parties every week and music was always playing. We would dance in the kitchen with all their friends. We sang in church choirs and all that stuff. But I didn't think I'd be anything like my sisters, who were both very musically inclined, so I was a pre-med biology major at Georgia. As a sophomore, I literally bumped into Bruce Birch, who used to run EMI Publishing/Nashville. He'd started UGA's music business program the year before and recognized me from being around Hillary. I needed some electives and he encouraged me, so I figured I'd sit in the back of a music business class and study organic chemistry. Which is, in fact, what I did.

That turned into a paid summer internship with ASCAP, being a college rep for them in Athens and getting involved in the music scene. At a college NSAI meeting, I met my now husband, songwriter Derrick Southerland, who was also enrolled at UGA. We were friends at first and just started throwing artists back and forth. I'd say, "Hey, have you met this girl on campus that I just saw?" He'd record a couple songs of hers that wound up on local radio stations. I was doing that kind of stuff just for fun. Then the end of school came and I needed one more class to graduate,

but said screw it and moved here instead. Technically, I finished the music business program and have that certificate, but I never got a college degree. My dad won't let me live it down.

Hillary and I started a company called Raylene Music, where I was literally doing everything from pitching songs and running the calendar stuff – pure publishing – to negotiating sync licenses. I was thrown in, which taught me so much. Then we were acquired by BMG, where I got a call from [then-Sony exec] Jim Catino,

sure there's a creative in place to help run the company from that view, with very strong support on the business side. When Randy announced his retirement in September, we had a pretty good idea where things were headed, but there was still a lot to be sorted. When our announcement came out in mid-November, that's really when the transition began. Randy was still here, involved and very much continued within his role, but we had the opportunity to start thinking out loud, dreaming and having

The nucleus of all of it is the art and the artist. Our job is to be a partner to the artist and help them figure out how to reach the masses while honoring the art in a respectful way.

-Taylor Lindsey

We can get too reliant on data – not just Sony/Nashville, but the industry – and lose the heart and soul of it all. There has to be balance.

-Ken Robold

who wanted me to consider an A&R opening he had. Both my husband and my sister were writers at BMG and they had an internal advocate in me, so those were tough conversations. Plus, I loved publishing and being a part of the journey of song. But I prayed about it and knew the two-year contract would go by in a blink, and I'd be a much better publisher on the other side for having label experience. I started in September of 2013 and clearly loved it enough to not go back to publishing.

How did this structure for leading Sony and the transition come together?

TL: A lot of it is [Sony Chairman/CEO] Rob Stringer's vision, not just for Nashville, but for how he runs every recording center across the world – making

open discussions about where we wanted to take the company. Back to what Ken said, it has been smooth, but there are and will be bumps in the road. We're not ignoring things. It's an exciting challenge.

KR: The time between Randy's announcement and ours was tough on us and the staff. As you know, the rumor mill in this town is crazy. Having it happen the Monday of CMA Week was good timing in terms of being in front of the entire industry. But at Sunday night's SESAC Awards, all these people were like, "What's going on? Are you guys taking over?" And of course we couldn't say anything.

TL: I was like, "This night can't end quick enough. I need to get away from all these people or I'm going to accidentally say something."

KR: Ultimately, the timing worked out and we got a lot of immediate, positive feedback. And from that point forward, Taylor and I have been living in each other's offices. We already knew there's no daylight between our philosophies, so it's been a matter of scheduling meetings with managers, staff and all that.

Can you elaborate on exactly what that philosophical alignment looks like?

TL: Simply put, we are creator first. That is the essence of everything we do here at Sony – what the team acts on and how we make decisions. The nucleus of all of it is the art and the artist. We wouldn't be here without that. Our job is to be a partner to the artist and help them figure out how to reach the masses while honoring the art in a respectful way. Yes, some songs are fun and make you want to dance, but sometimes songs we're asked to market are the deepest, darkest feelings of an artist's life. We want to hold that reverently and create a safe environment for the artist's vision. If the nucleus of everything we do has creator-first energy, then we're set up to win.

KR: That's the kind culture I was in at UMG working for Luke, who mentored me. Everything revolves around the artists. If everyone understands that and you're marching in the same direction, you almost can't lose. Obviously it's on us to sign the best and most talented artists, but our vision is really a reflection of Sony's newly launched creative vision around artists and artist development. Sony has always been about the creator, but Rob has stated that explicitly for the global company. Bringing resources around the artist to elevate them is really the entirety of it.

What does that mean, operationally, in an era of increasingly fragmented marketing channels?

KR: Almost every artist and song needs to be treated differently. There is no formula anymore. We can get too reliant on data – not just Sony/Nashville, but the industry – and lose the heart and soul of it all. There has to be balance. At the end of the day, we're part of a corporation and we're responsible for making our numbers. To the extent we can, Taylor and I want to be transparent while shielding everyone from those pressures so they can focus on being creative. All the data points are a great resource for learning and education. We will absolutely be paying attention to them, but it's more about allowing data to guide decisions around music, rather than data being the decision.

Where does radio fit in Sony's new vision relative to DSPs and other platforms? And do you have the appetite to continue pushing artists and singles that don't quickly offer positive metrics?

KR: That's a great and very difficult question. One thing Sony is focused on is getting first-party data so we can speak directly to fans. Much like TikTok's algorithm change, some playlists are not having the same impact they were a couple of years ago. You can't just rely on playlisting. The way to grow artists is by creating super fans, and they aren't easy to get. The more we can have direct contact with a fan base, the more we and artists can reach them about what's coming next.

Radio is still number one. We want to touch every demographic because there are rabid country fans everywhere – a lot of them are still listening to radio. So that remains a very important part of our philosophy and what we will be doing going forward. When and how an artist gets to radio goes back to the discussion of every song being treated differently.

THE INTERVIEW



MEDIABASE[®]

WE
KNOW
MUSIC

Spins, Streams & Scores

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

MEDIABASE.COM

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

The cadence of releases is tied to streaming. There are artists who want to put out a song every six weeks. Clearly, that's not the radio strategy. How we align the best plan for an artist at a particular time regarding DSPs and radio is a massive challenge. The only time you're really ever aligned is starting a new project. But do you go to radio without data? Those are questions that come down to finding the best way to serve the artist.

Is part of the consideration how important radio is to the publishing community?

TL: And it's very important to our artists. There are very few artists on our label who aren't interested in being on the radio. That's at the core of being creator-first. Radio is valuable to us, to the narrative and to the arc of an artist's career. And we absolutely want to do our part for publishers in keeping the ecosystem healthy. Without the songs, we don't exist and you're going to have an entire group of very talented people without jobs. I don't want to be responsible for that.

THE INTERVIEW

How will staff, managers and artists most directly feel this new approach?

TL: Where we are today and in six months will inevitably evolve again. Some of it is a different style of leadership, which is natural because every human being is different. The approach will change as the marketplace continues to evolve.

KR: It's harder than ever to connect with fans. TikTok is not what it was two years ago. We need to structure ourselves around what the data tells us is working. That gets back to the pressure of being in a large corporation, and discussions with Rob around what the label of the future looks like. It's a constant cycle of change.

Is there an element here of rallying around the team's passion for music?

TL: We want this to be a place where music is always playing, and brainstorming and innovation are happening. Somewhere people are having fun. If you walk in every day loving what you're doing, you'll perform better while pushing yourself and others more.

Beyond Sony/Nashville how are we doing as a genre and format?

TL: We are in wild times, but it's good. There's been such a spotlight on country music the last couple of years, and it's opened a lot of doors for a lot of artists. Obviously, people outside of the genre are looking in. At first, it may have been a little scary for our community to see pop labels and artists coming in, but I hope we see it as opportunity for additional resources or adding the reach of another artist in a collaboration to further expose our music. A really exciting time.

KR: Beyoncé and Post Malone came at it differently. Beyoncé used outside writers to make what is ultimately a Beyoncé record. And it had massive impact. Post came to town for five months, rented out Blackbird [studio], wrote with Nashville writers and really ingrained himself in the community to have an equally, if not more successful, record. The broadening of the tent and the exposure that it brings to the genre is great. There may have been some resistance, as Taylor said. "Hey, this is our turf." But you can't control that.

It's also a good thing in heightening our focus on making sure we have the best people. If we're going to be in competition with east or west coast labels who may be perceived to have more global reach, then we have to prove ourselves. We have to say, "This is why we think you should sign here and not there."

TL: Internal to Sony, we've been doing JVs with our pop partners for quite some time. Long before pop labels were trying to wholly sign country artists. To us, that's old hat. Before we signed Maren Morris, she was taking meetings with Columbia/New York. We had already established that partnership as part of signing her. Same with Kane Brown. Maybe other pop labels are just catching up.

Is there any short-term focus as far as roster priorities you'd like to highlight?

TL: That goes back to what Ken said earlier about every artist deserving their own unique plan. They are all priorities. All hands on deck for every single one.

KR: From the outside, this can look like the label of Luke Combs and Kane Brown, but we need to be about more than that at scale. The good news is, we've made great headway the last couple of years across the roster, and there are others we've signed recently who we have big belief in. That gets back to the artist development discussion. Not every artist explodes on their first or second record. As long as we, as a company, believe in that artist and their talent, we're going to continue to partner in developing their lane at whatever stage they're at in their career.

If having the best staff is important – and likely more difficult as more labels means a thinning of the talent pool – is the focus on creators a point of differentiation from analytics-driven competitors who seem to want to "moneyball" the music business?

TL: We hope so, but that's not the reason we want to be a creator-first company. We are creator first because it's the right kind of culture and vision for our artist and manager partners and for our team. If



the byproduct of that is getting better internal talent as employees, obviously that's amazing. Of course we want to be the label where every artist wants to be and every label staffer wants to work. But we have to prove it. We have to roll up our sleeves, dig our heels in and create that environment.

As comes with a position at the top of one of Nashville's majors, has the sense of being a captain of industry hit yet?

TL: This chair was never on my vision board. That's not to say that I'm not grateful for it. Obviously I took

type of people we are. Despite all our swearing.

TL: But again, never at anyone.

The only ones who get told they're obsolete more than labels might be radio, but there is still a sense in this town that everything funnels through the label system. That's a big deal, right?

TL: Of course. There are very few artists who have been able to scale in a massive way without a major label involved. All eyes are on us right now. We feel that, but we're looking at it all as opportunity. It's not about ego. How do we move the artists and staff forward? How can we

Not every artist explodes on their first or second record. As long as we believe in that artist and their talent, we're going to continue to partner in developing their lane.

-Ken Robold

We are creator first because it's the right kind of culture and vision for our artist and manager partners and for our team.

-Taylor Lindsey

the position, but I didn't aspire to having people think I have all the answers. It's more about leading with empathy and helping people solve problems. What is best for the artist? What is best for the company? What's the best overall solution? I guess it's a little daunting, but it's also not. Things feel really good. I'm not focused on the title. I don't walk in going, "I'm the CEO." Until this moment, I haven't actually said that phrase out loud.

KR: I'd like to think we're both humble people who come at it from a place of just do great work. I would say that to an intern, coordinator or anyone. Make yourself indispensable and treat people well. That's part of the reason she and I are so aligned in terms of the

be more innovative, challenge each other, hold each other accountable, respectfully, and have a lot of fun doing it?

KR: We don't have all the answers, so it's about making people feel comfortable that no ideas are stupid. One might not work, but it might be a nugget that spurs something else. That's a "we" thing that isn't about me or Taylor.

Will you be joining the various industry boards?

TL: Ken is on all the boards (laughs).

KR: We'll talk about that.

TL: I haven't even gotten that far because it's not where our focus needs to be right now. We need to lean in here.

CAC

LEE BRICE

GRAY



IMPACTING NOW

CURB
RECORDS

SEE YOU AT CRS!

