

ACM WINNERS!

LAINIEY WILSON'S MOMENT

HOF!

COUNTRY MUSIC! COUNTRY RADIO!

THE INTERVIEW ** SPOTIFY'S ** BRITTANY SCHAFFER & RACHEL WHITNEY

COUNTRY AIRCHECK

JUNE 2022



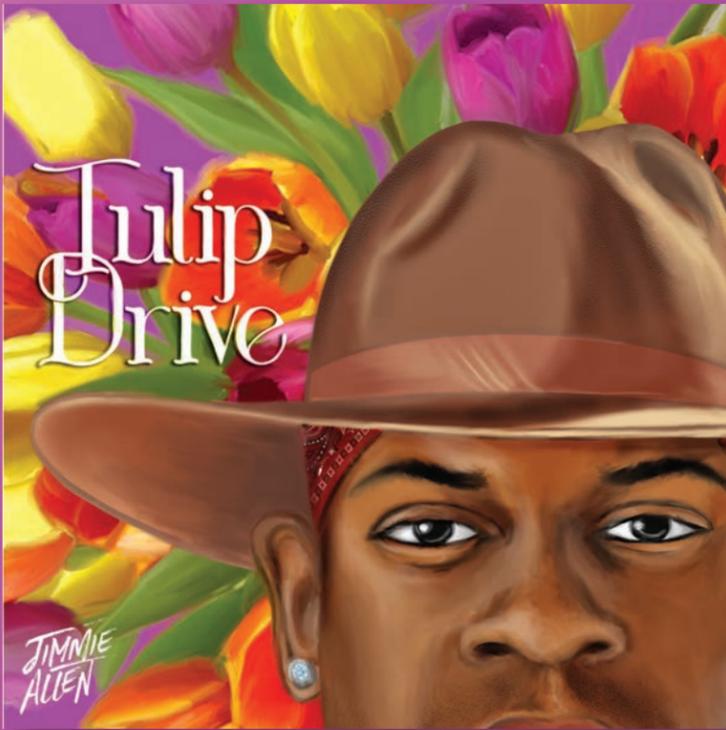
UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP NASHVILLE

HOT SINGLE SUMMER

KASSI ASHTON "DATES IN PICKUP TRUCKS" PRISCILLA BLOCK "MY BAR" ERIC CHURCH "DOING LIFE WITH ME" JORDAN DAVIS "WHAT MY WORLD SPINS AROUND"
TYLER HUBBARD "5 FOOT 9" SAM HUNT "WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE" KIP MOORE "CRAZY ONE MORE TIME" JON LANGSTON "BACK WORDS"
LITTLE BIG TOWN "HELL YEAH" JON PARDI "LAST NIGHT LONELY" CHRIS STAPLETON "JOY OF MY LIFE" CARRIE UNDERWOOD "GHOST STORY"



JIMMIE ALLEN



Tulip Drive

AVAILABLE NOW

FEATURED ARTISTS INCLUDE:
JENNIFER LOPEZ, CELO GREEN,
T-PAIN AND KATIE OHH

CURRENT SINGLE “DOWN HOME”

2022 ACM

MALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR NOMINEE

2022 ACM AWARDS

CO-HOST

2022 GRAMMY®

BEST NEW ARTIST NOMINEE

2022 NAACP

OUTSTANDING NEW ARTIST NOMINEE

2021 CMA

NEW ARTIST OF THE YEAR

2021 ACM

NEW MALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR

OVER 1 BILLION
TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS

3 #1 SINGLES AT COUNTRY RADIO

“JIMMIE ALLEN IS A HIT-MAKING
COUNTRY ARTIST”

- npr

“ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING
RISING ARTISTS IN THE GENRE”

- billboard

“JIMMIE ALLEN: A RISING
NASHVILLE STAR FOR EVERYONE”

- POLLSTAR

OVER 70 NATIONAL TV APPEARANCES





Everybody Wins!

ACM Week With Lainey Wilson

What leaving Las Vegas with three trophies means for Lainey Wilson's career isn't the toughest thing for her to comprehend. Being named New Female Artist and, especially, earning Song of the Year (artist and songwriter for "Things A Man Oughta Know") are certainly huge milestones. But for Wilson, there's a deeper and harder-to-define implication about the broader community. Add to that the industry's return to an in-person Academy of Country Music Awards weekend after an unwelcome two-year hiatus, and it all feels like a victory for country music.

Winning in Vegas "seems like everything I've been working for over the past 10-and-a-half years," Wilson explains. "I moved to Nashville August 1, 2011 and lived in a camper trailer for three years. Watching these dreams come to life before your eyes? People ask if I can believe it, and the truth is, yeah. I believed from the very beginning, including lots of times I shouldn't have. Nothing in me wanted to do anything else. I never had a plan B."

The industry's embrace, however, has been an adjustment. "Holy moly, that in itself is unreal," she says. "The community has truly wrapped its arms around me, loved me as a person, and loved my music. They really seem to want to help me any way they can, and I don't take it lightly at all. Not after so many years crossing my fingers and hoping things would turn out."

Finding out about her nominations was overwhelming. "I was headed to a co-write when I got the call we had both nominations. It would have been incredible just to be up for New Female, but Song? I pulled over in a church parking lot in Green Hills and lost it."

Because the New Male and New Female honorees get performances on the show, they're announced ahead of time. Wilson was surprised. "I sat down in front of a computer for a Zoom interview with a TV station in Las Vegas, and the next thing I knew, my friend Miranda Lambert was on the screen," she says. "I thought I might have clicked on the wrong link."

She gathered herself ... for a moment. "I knew something was up and was hoping to hear good news. Then I got super emotional. Hearing it from her – I don't think any girl singing in country music today can say Miranda didn't influence them in some way. She paved the way for me to do what I do and understands the blood, sweat and tears. And she was so happy for me she started crying, too!"

Her first call was to her family in Northeast Louisiana. "When I tell you they've been supportive,

well, from the beginning it was small singing competitions and talent searches. Mama would sign me up, and Daddy would pay for us to get there. They helped me with my camper and told me I could do it from the beginning. But as soon as I got off that call, I thought, 'I better get planning.'"

Chase Forever

"We did the happy hour for SiriusXM Friday right when we got off the airplane," Wilson says. "I got to play a few songs live on-air and talk to Buzz Brainard."

After a short break back at the Park MGM hotel, it's off to rehearsal at Allegiant Stadium. Along with New Male Artist Parker McCollum and several others, Wilson's performance is on the elevated promenade stage opposite the main floor stage.

"Normally onstage you're looking up at people," she says. "There, I was looking down or eye-level with the top of the stadium. It was awesome. And the stadium is huge – biggest place I've ever played." Equally impressive is the house band. "The band leader for that stage is Derek Wells. He texted me the other day, 'I can't wait to play for you.' I knew if he had anything to do with it, it was going to sound great. They had us run through it several times. Parker leaves, I come on – there's a certain timing to it that's a little different. I'm used to just walking up and singing."

There's a New Artist kinship with McCollum. "I got to hug him when we crossed paths at rehearsal and also at the remotes. I am such a huge fan of his. He's a good dude – a gentleman. Took his hat off when he met [my manager] Mandelyn [Monchick]. Couldn't have happened to a better dude."

Saturday is focused on renewing or extending relationships, starting with several hours at the radio remotes. "I got to see a lot of people that I have only seen on Zoom for the past two years," Wilson says. "Everybody was just as excited as me about the New Female award. I'm feeling the love deep."

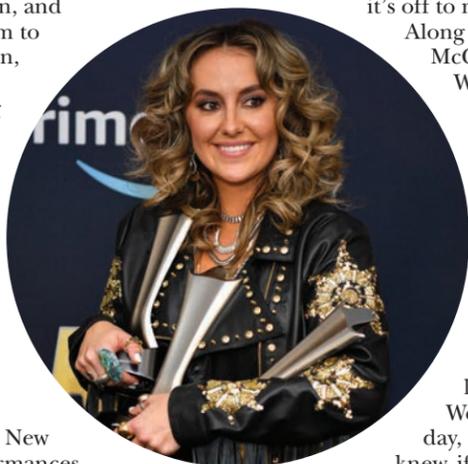
At dinner that evening, she is able to reflect with her team. "I got to actually sit down with a lot of the label folks and celebrate for a minute. There's been so much going on, and we hadn't even stopped to have a meal together. These folks have become my family. We've all been working so hard and catching each other on the fly. So, we ate way too much, hung out, and then I crawled up in the bed and did a gel face mask. I threw it on the ground in the middle of the night, then stepped on it on my way back from the bathroom. You can put that in the story."

Stay When It's Tough

Sitting in the green room at TopGolf ahead of Sunday's performance for ACM Lifting Lives, she's calm, but aware of how big the next day will be. "I'm having waves of it about every hour," she says. "Kind of like my heart skips a beat."

After her set, she again marvels at the talent found in the country community. "That backing band, Sixwire? Those guys were incredible. I told them I was going home to tell my band they better step it up. They sounded just like the record!"

Wilson's parents, sister and brother-in-law arrive later that day. "They are on cloud nine," she says. "Once I get



Title Bout: First-ever performance of the 2022 ACM Song of the Year.



ACM Week With Lainey Wilson

through the performance tomorrow, then I can kind of let my hair down and celebrate with them. Until then, I'll probably let them do their own thing. Hopefully they can figure out how to work Uber."

Hangover Fest at the Hard Rock is the only evening activity. "I did a few of my own and joined Hardy for 'One Beer.' But I made it an early night, because the next day was the biggest of my entire life.

"No gambling yet. I'm going to see how my luck is on Song of the Year. And if it's good, I'm going to put \$100 down." That's a big bet for Wilson.

"I'm a tightwad. Normally I'll go play a penny slot or something – put \$10 in. My daddy loves the slot machine. My thing is only bringing a certain amount, because it's easy for me to go, 'Okay, \$10 more.' The first time I went gambling, I came home with like 500 bucks. After that, it's been shit."

On show day, Wilson is eager. "I'm ready to put on that Manuel coat," she says. "He didn't make it specifically for me, but when I put it on, it feels like he did. Terry de Havilland – the guy who pretty much invented platform shoes and dressed Bowie and Zeppelin – is giving me my shoes.

"We started at 8am when my hair and makeup girl, Jess, came over. We took it easy – drinking coffee and doing some meditation. It's important to stay as grounded as possible when you're in the whirlwind – remember who I am, where I came from and how I got here. We were primping all day, then went to the stadium. I did the run-through with curlers in my hair and pajamas on, basically."

Know When It's Love

Hearing her name called for Song of the Year is stunning. "I was completely not expecting that," she says. "The nominees were huge songs this year and to even be recognized among them – of course I had my fingers crossed, but I kind of blacked out. When I went up, I pulled out my cheat-sheet. The last thing I want to do is forget to recognize people who've helped me; it's taken an army. I figured if I did win, I'd be flustered, and I was. I actually had to go back and watch to remember what I said."

After winning, she plays the 2022 ACM Song of the Year for the first time. "I was nervous for the

performance, but I was more nervous to be in the same building as Dolly. I didn't get to meet her since she was running around like crazy hosting. Winning Song actually calmed my nerves for the performance. It was like, 'Let's show them why this is the Song of the Year.'"

Wilson and her team celebrate at the BMG after-party, but the reality doesn't begin to set in right away. "The next day, I sat in the hotel bathtub and cried and cried and cried. It all seemed so surreal, but it gives me more wind to keep going. This is hard. If it was easy, everyone and their memaw would be doing it. But I've accepted how hard it is and that it's in my soul. It's who I am. Country music is my life; always has been, and always will be.

"It didn't happen overnight, but I want to be someone people look at as having never given up," she says. "So many people have been that for me. Tim McGraw grew up right down the road, and my sister and I used to fight over his CD. I was like, 'If someone from this same Louisiana dirt can do it ...' It put a pep in my step."

The aspect of her success that has been buoyed by the greater country music community is on her mind in the days that follow. "It felt like a win for everyone. I can't explain that, but all my prayers have been for people who have loved me, helped me and been part of seeing this through. The whole community has been excited for me – so it's theirs as much as it is mine.

"Since I was a little girl, my mama has told me to believe it and receive it," she continues. "These are the moments I'm so grateful for, and I want to hold on to them. I'm so appreciative that the industry and fans around the world have seen something in me they can connect to. And people love me for who I am on top of it all."

CAC



All Ears: Celebrating at the BMG after-party with Jason Aldean, WGT/York's Scott Donato, and label staffers (l-r) Layna Bunt, Lee Adams, Dawn Ferris, Shelly Hargis Gaines and JoJamie Hahr.



Volume 17, Issue 2, June 2022

COUNTRY AIRCHECK

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

Publisher/CEO
Lon Helton
lon@countryaircheck.com

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

Sr. Radio Editor
Monta Vaden
monta@countryaircheck.com

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

Coord./Graphics & Circulation
Addie Morton
addie@countryaircheck.com

Managing Editor
Caitlin DeForest
caitlin@countryaircheck.com

Sr. Radio Analyst
Chris Huff
chris@countryaircheck.com

VP/GM
Chuck Aly
chuck@countryaircheck.com

Art Direction
Jerry Holthouse
jerry_holthouse@comcast.net

COUNTRY RADIO



Hall of Fame

EST. 1975

2022 INDUCTEES CONGRATULATIONS

**YOU'VE IMPACTED MORE
THAN AN INDUSTRY...**

YOU'VE CHANGED LIVES.

FROM ALL OF US AT



PICKLEJAR™

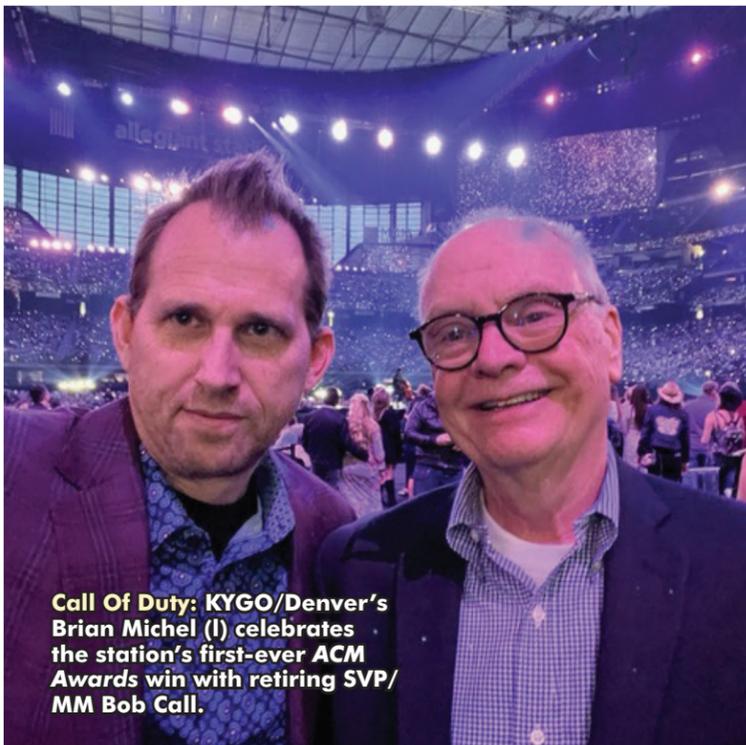


EXCLUSIVE 2022 CRHOF CONTENT

#ARTISTFIRST

Luck What You Made Me Do

As the ACM Awards returned to Las Vegas for a post-COVID reboot, the 2022 ACM Radio Award winners found ways to celebrate at home and in Sin City.



Call Of Duty: KYGO/Denver's Brian Michel (l) celebrates the station's first-ever ACM Awards win with retiring SVP/MM Bob Call.

First Case Scenario

MAJOR MARKET STATION

KYGO/Denver

Bonneville KYGO/Denver PD Brian Michel credits teamwork and tenacity for the station's first-ever ACM win.

I hope our community work stands out, specifically our yearlong mental health campaign. We have an incredible live and local airstaff, including Tracy Dixon (see page 7), but the rest of the team including Fizz, Sheena, Paul and Alicia deserve a lot of credit, too. That's why this trophy lives in the KYGO lounge adjacent to the studios.

During COVID, we curated live on-air concerts from the biggest artists when our listeners couldn't attend shows. Most importantly, our team stayed committed to being in the building, doing it live every day, and creating the best local content possible. They were fantastic at monitoring their health and making sure the station was a safe place.

A group of us traveled to Las Vegas. I was able to convince [Bonneville/Denver SVP/MM and Country Radio Hall of Famer] Bob Call to put his retirement on hold for a special weekend of talking radio and seeing the sights around Vegas.

The ACM Awards show itself was amazing, from the production to the stadium. We also had a great time seeing Hardy at the winners' brunch that Big Loud held for everyone. I'm not much of a gambler, but I played Buffalo Gold once and hit the jackpot! Too bad I only selected the two-cent denomination, but it was still a couple hundred bucks. And yes, I walked away right then and there!

Y'all In The Family

LARGE MARKET STATION

WUBE/Cincinnati

Hubbard WUBE/Cincinnati PD/midday host Grover Collins believes it takes a village.

My wife, Holly, and I went to Las Vegas and had the honor to accept on behalf of the station. Our Dir./Production, Joe Mason, and I have worked hand-in-hand on the editing process for our submission throughout the years, and it's to the point that Joe knows what I'm looking for. I'm convinced that has a lot to do with securing the win.

Adapt and innovate – that's what WUBE did in recent years. We invented Virtual Field Trips, and *The Big Dave Show* morning team went places ranging from the zoo to the place where they make footballs for the Super Bowl to help teach kids schooling at home. We still did our 10,000 Toys For Girls & Boys with the Marines and Toys For Tots, but we also created the Virtual Toy Trooper website where people could easily pick a toy and use a Venmo page to raise thousands of dollars.

Aside from the ACM Awards show itself, the best thing I saw in Las Vegas was the Silk Sonic concert – Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak. Definitely a hot ticket – in our audience alone we saw Dustin Lynch, TJ Osborne and Chris Stapleton. I also got to spend quality time with the Parmalee boys, who I've known for years, without being rushed. We had lunch, talked about the format and our families, but mostly geeked out about Stevie Ray Vaughn while sipping cocktails! A major shout-out also goes to Big Loud, who had a wonderful brunch and awards service just for the radio winners. That was very thoughtful.



Must B Present: WUBE/Cincinnati's Grover Collins represents the station staff at the ACM Awards show.



Pros And Confetti: The WHKO staff celebrates its ACM win. Pictured (l-r) are Larry Hansgen, Aaron "Woody" Woods, Nancy Wilson, Chris "Kato" Hartley, Niki Mayakova, Jake "Jesse Lee" Magnotta and Ron "Nate Daniels" Otto.

May The Fourth Be With You

MEDIUM MARKET STATION

WHKO/Dayton

After several nominations over the past decade, Cox WHKO/Dayton PD Nancy Wilson found the fourth time was finally the charm.

I was sitting in our studio getting ready for our daily team call when the news came over on my email, and I was like, "Holy sh— you guys, we won!" It is nice to be nominated, but we were feeling a little bit like Susan Lucci with lots of nominations but never winning. The entire team was thrilled.

We didn't get to go to Vegas, but we had kind of a progressive celebration. We have a new GM who's from the TV side, but he loves radio and is making sure we are cheering the win. It's also been cool to hear from a lot of artists who have recognized us for this.

We didn't do anything differently this year. I think our consistency was finally enough for the committee. We never do things thinking, "Let's make sure this is aimed at being an award winner." We just try to do our best work, always. I could not be prouder of the entire staff, because this is truly a labor of love. We don't have the luxury of a full-time airstaff all day, but the staff we have is dedicated.

Twenty Share Trophy

SMALL MARKET STATION

WXBQ/Johnson City, TN

Despite its long reign as one of the highest-rated stations in the country in any format and No. 1 books dating back more than 30 years, Bristol WXBQ/Johnson City, TN had never won a Station Of The Year trophy ... until now. PD Nikki Thomas doesn't take it for granted.

We were all excited we were nominated, but we hadn't heard anything, so I'd pretty much given up hope. All the other stations in our category do such great work, so we thought, "Oh well, we'll just keep trying." The morning I was leaving for *CRS*, I was about to step out the door when I got the email from **Country Aircheck** announcing the ACM winners. Unfortunately, I didn't get to stick around while everybody at the station celebrated.

We didn't go to the show, but ACM Medium Market winners **Mo & StyckMan**, who are some of my favorite people in the world, FaceTimed me from the party so I could be there virtually. They were carrying me around and showing me to people on their phone. It was so random.

The whole WXBQ team has been working hard, so getting to see this staff win and know they are part of this for the rest of their lives – that's a really big deal. I've been fortunate to be a part of four ACM Station of the Year wins. Each is special, but seeing what this win means to this staff, to retired PD **Bill Hagy** and even for the Tri-Cities is awesome.



Virtually Vegas: WXBQ's Nikki Thomas attends the ACM celebrations via FaceTime.



Desert Menu: Wall, English, Broadway and Walls (l-r) walking to pick up their ACM Awards tickets.

Being Is Believing

NATIONAL DAILY PERSONALITY

Jerry Broadway, Tim Wall, Mitch English and Becca Walls;
The Bud And Broadway Show

The crew share how teamwork translates from the on-air product to their trip to Las Vegas.

JB: The last two years can only be described as a series of unfortunate events for us, but this made it all worthwhile. We are an independent show up against some big names from big companies who work in studios that cost more than my house. Our show originates from my basement. For the industry to recognize our work as the best in the business under those circumstances is a feeling that can't be described.

ME: My girlfriend insisted on making dinner plans that night to celebrate. I told her, "Let's just wait until I am absolutely, positively, 100% sure that we won!" I was still a little skeptical when I was eating my Big Mac.

TW: First, I cried a little knowing how much work went into this, then I told everyone I've known since grade school hoping someone would buy me a beer.

JB: The craziest thing I saw in Las Vegas was the inside of the Cosmopolitan. What is up with all the naked people trapped in the columns?!

ME: We all decided to do a version of a Vegas scavenger hunt and take pictures of things we spotted. The winner was an Elvis impersonator on a Rascal, dodging kids coming off an escalator. That was the trifecta.

JB: Carly Pearce, Scotty McCreery and Mark [Wystrach] from Midland were all kind enough to take time out of an insanely busy weekend to hang out with us. Catching up with Elvie Shane in the parking lot of the MGM Grand was also great.

ME: T. Wall gave me \$20, because I got Peter Brady (a.k.a. Christopher Knight) to say "Pork chops and applesauce" on my television show. Wall said I had to use the money to gamble, so my girlfriend and I put it on black. We lost, and my total time spent gambling was less than it took you to read this answer.

When Dubs Try

NATIONAL WEEKLY PERSONALITY

Bryan "B-Dub" Washington; B-Dub Radio

Skyview Networks B-Dub Radio host Bryan "B-Dub" Washington will never forget where he was when he learned he'd won his first ACM.

I had just gotten out of the shower when I got a text from **KUZZ/Bakersfield PD Brent Michaels** saying "Congrats, so proud of you." I asked, "What for?" He replied, "You just won the freaking ACM!" It was so funny; I found out from Brent before I even saw the press release. This was my first time submitting as a personality, so it was surprising. I did not expect to win in a category that included Country legends, but obviously I'm not going to turn it down.

The ACMs were a great weekend, and it was cool having it at Allegiant Stadium. They didn't do anything dedicated for winners, but Big Loud did a brunch and arranged to bring a trophy to pose with. I don't know where I'm going to put mine yet. Maybe I'll replace my wedding photo on the mantle. Just kidding! It will probably go in my studio.



B-Hold! Bryan "B-Dub" Washington gets a good arm workout holding his ACM hardware.



Parent Clap: KYGO's Tracy Dixon (c) is joined by her parents in Las Vegas.

Rocky Mountain Hi

MAJOR MARKET PERSONALITY

Tracy Dixon, KYGO/Denver

Bonneville KYGO/Denver morning host Tracy Dixon credits her community for helping her win her first ACM Award.

When winners were announced, I was on vacation and woke up to the sweetest messages. My family and I celebrated all day, and my best friends came over that night. I don't think I got out of my pajamas until 2pm!

PD Brian Michel empowered our entire staff to build up our community and stay focused on being leaders in Denver during an incredibly challenging time. We had to adjust the ways we reached our listeners. I used my voice on the show to shout-out our frontline workers and share their stories, give struggling restaurants an opportunity to thank their employees and loyal customers and, when we were met with tragic moments, I connected one-on-one with people. My parents came to Las Vegas to celebrate and attend the awards and after party. When I introduced them to Jason Aldean, he immediately started talking to my dad about baseball. They got going about the Twins vs. Braves 1991 World Series. I'm pretty sure my parents invited him to every family holiday.

The Big Loud brunch was such a good time my morning show partner Fizz fell asleep in his chair at the gate and missed his flight! I was at the *ACM Awards*, and he was at the airport. We still die laughing about our texts from that night!

Winning will always represent perseverance to me. I'm so fortunate to have a career that is also my passion. It's not always an easy path, but to be recognized validates so many moments in my career in which I stayed true to who I am and what I love to do.



WFMS-capade: The station's Jim Denny (l), Kevin Freeman (c) and Deborah Hunnycutt ready for the ACM Awards.

Three's Company

LARGE MARKET PERSONALITY

Jim Denny, Deborah Hunnycutt and Kevin Freeman; Jim, Deb And Kevin In The Morning; WFMS/Indianapolis

Cumulus WFMS/Indianapolis morning personalities reflect on their third ACM trophy and the special bond they share.

DH: We never assume anything; the competition is always very tough, so we enter just like we did the very first time around. Just to be nominated is great.

KF: But to win is better.

JD: To be picked by our peers really makes you feel like you are somebody.

DH: Our success is built off chemistry, and that's hard to do when you're working from home for 14 months, so getting to come back into the studio has been a real highlight. We'd never been separated for more than two weeks in 20 years. I was nervous the night before we went back into the studio.

KF: And I had to find pants to wear. But seriously, isn't it something to think that we've been together in our hometown for 20 years? We are dinosaurs, in radio terms.

JD: I don't think I'd say dinosaurs.

KF: Jim and I joke that Deb is the kid sister we never had, and she jokes we're the big brothers she never wanted, which is probably pretty accurate. We're not working with coworkers; we're working with family.

DH: We enjoy each other's company. I've had listeners tell me it's like eavesdropping on friends. This is going to sound weird, but I miss them when they're on vacation. It's like being paid to hang out with my buddies.

A Whole Slot Of Love

MEDIUM MARKET PERSONALITY

Melissa "Mo" Wagner and Greg "StyckMan" Owens, Mo & StyckMan, WUSY/Chattanooga, TN

The Audacy WUSY/Chattanooga afternoon teamers bet on each other when the chips are down.

GO: The last couple of years made us get creative. Trying to find the balance between "stay away from folks" and "get out in your community" has been tough. We think we've walked that tightrope well. If you listen closely, you may be able to tell that a measurable percentage of our audio submission was done separately. Mo was at home, and I was in the studio. Also, Mo's rendition of "Laryngitis Fancy Like" was a pretty strong showing.

MW: It's amazing that, on a whim, if we need to, we can still connect with our listeners either fully remotely or with one of us at home and the other in the control room.

GO: Mo sitting at home with a sick kid or without childcare probably relates to a lot of folks these days. Her son, Jackson, has made several surprise appearances!

MW: StyckMan is heaven-sent. The amount of love and attention he puts toward making our show sound great is always above and beyond. Being a working mom, my life is always chaotic, but StyckMan always helps us find our center and produce a great show. He deserves an award just for dealing with me and my crazy life!

GO: We also want to throw some love to our bossman, [PD] Justin Cole. He is always encouraging us and willing to help comb through our submissions so we are turning in the best representation of the show.

MW: I'm still pretty pumped we got to celebrate in Las Vegas – with no children!

GO: Oh, yes, we got to see "Vegas Mo." Vegas Mo is very different from Everyday Mo!

MW: I'm not much for gambling, but I randomly sat down at a nickel slot and hit a jackpot worth \$1,166.13! I still have it sitting in the safe at home. My husband said I had to keep it in there until I spend it on myself.

GO: I joined LoCash again in Vegas. Every time I get to see those guys, we take a new "promo picture," but they never tell me when or where to meet them so I can get on the bus for the tour!



Band New Man: StyckMan (c) pops in on LoCash's Chris Lucas (l) and Preston Brust for a photoshoot, and Mo hits fit big.

Beam Me Up, (Liz And) Scotty

SMALL MARKET PERSONALITY

Liz DelGrosso and Scotty Cox; Liz And Scotty In The Morning; KCLR/Columbia, MO

Zimmer KCLR/Columbia, MO morning host Scotty Cox is no stranger to the ACMs, having won in 2017, but it was a totally new experience for Liz DelGrosso, who joined the morning show in 2020.



Clear Winners: KCLR's Liz DelGrosso and Scotty Cox inside Allegiant Stadium before the ACM Awards.

SC: This never gets old. Liz and I have been together for a couple of years, and this the first big award for us together, so it was very exciting.

LD: We were in the studio, and I saw that my personal Instagram got tagged. I checked it and said, "Scotty, did you see this?" Then he went to Twitter and that's where we saw the official announcement. The ACM show was my first time in Vegas, which was pretty cool.

SC: You've seen a million awards show on TV, but actually being behind the scenes to see how it all works is a lot of fun.

LD: KCLR has been so welcoming to me. Just being able to sit with Scotty, who's been here a couple of decades and is such a staple in this community is a thrill. I'm so thankful for

the ability to talk with him every single morning.

SC: I'm a lifelong small town radio guy, so I feel very proud to represent the hundreds and thousands of guys and girls who are sitting in little radio stations in little hometowns doing the hard work every day. I know there are thousands of people out there who do it all the time and don't get the recognition.

CAC

Congratulations

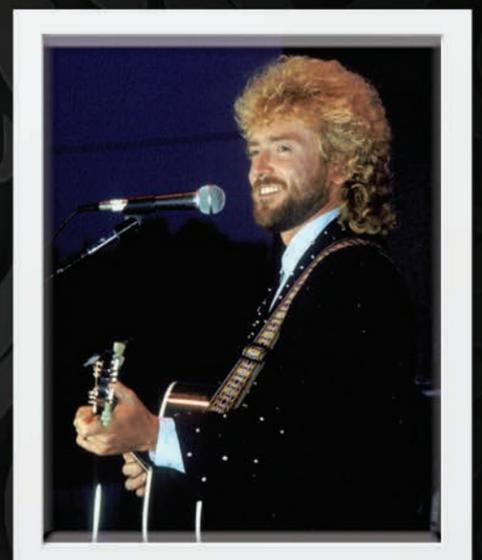
to the 2022 Country Music Hall of Fame inductees



JERRY LEE LEWIS



JOE GALANTE



KEITH WHITLEY

"THIS IS THE
SONG OF THE SUMMER"

ASHLEY WILSON, PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
WBUL/LEXINGTON

"THIS IS THE SONG OF
THE SUMMER"

CARLETTA BLAKE, PROGRAM
DIRECTOR, WGAR/CLEVELAND

"THIS IS THE SONG
OF THE SUMMER"

TODD NIXON, PROGRAM
DIRECTOR, KBEQ/KANSAS CITY

"THIS IS THE SONG
OF THE SUMMER"

TRAVIS MOON, DIRECTOR OF
OPERATIONS, KKBQ/HOUSTON

"THIS IS THE SONG
OF THE SUMMER"

NATE DEATON, GENERAL
MANAGER, KRTY/SAN JOSE

"THIS IS THE SONG
OF THE SUMMER"

MARTY BROOKS, MUSIC
DIRECTOR, WIL/ST. LOUIS

"THIS IS THE SONG
OF THE SUMMER"

JOHNNY CHIANG, AMERICA'S
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

"THIS IS THE SONG
OF THE SUMMER"

JENNY LAW, ASSISTANT PROGRAM
DIRECTOR, KWEN/TULSA



RYAN GRIFFIN

Salt, Lime & Tequila

TASTE THE SONG OF THE SUMMER IN OVER
50 MARKETS ALREADY!

**2022
COUNTRY
RADIO HALL
OF FAME
INDUCTEE**



**CONGRATS TO
WHITNEY ALLEN**



Whitney Allen

Finding The Open Doors

Weaving in and out of multiple formats, **Whitney Allen** found a home in Country without ever leaving her California roots. Now a fixture in the syndication game, Allen shares how radio continued to call to her and why she feels she's exactly where she's meant to be.

I slept with a transistor radio under my pillow when I was four. The Beatles were just hitting, and a family friend introduced me to their music. If someone asked all the neighborhood kids what their favorite song was, the other kids would've said "Mary Had A Little Lamb" or "America The Beautiful," but I was jamming to Sonny and Cher. My parents bought a lot of compilation albums, but two full albums my mom owned were from Glen Campbell and Johnny Cash. "Wichita Lineman" is still one of my all-time favorite songs. I was a rock and Top 40 chick growing up, but country was always right there knocking on my door.

There was a broadcast workshop at KIIS/Los Angeles that you had to be 18 to attend, but my dad fought for me to be accepted at 16. He told them radio was the only thing I wanted to do, and they let me in. My first paid on-air shift started at six minutes after midnight on Black Friday. Coming out of a song called "Disco Lady," I made a joke about leftover turkey sandwiches, and the guy who was on-air before me poked his head in and said, "If all of your breaks are like that, you're going to do just fine."

I quit radio a few times and tried working in a gift shop and at a jewelry store. At one point, I got a space in a beauty salon and sold Herbalife. That experience taught me I was better with people when there was a microphone between us, so I knew I had to go back to radio. Overnights could kill your social life, and it wasn't uncommon to work six or seven days a week, but at least you had fun while you were working. So, I went back to work at a station in Fallbrook, CA. Sonny West worked there part-time but also ran Country outlet KCBQ/San Diego. He asked me to come do weekends, and I couldn't pass up the opportunity to be on-air in San Diego.

When I took the Pirate Radio [KQLZ/Los Angeles] job, I didn't know what I was getting into. Scott Shannon wouldn't even tell me what the format was going to be! I had one weekend to get up to speed on the "Rock 40" format he was pitching and all things hair band and commercial rock. I studied the difference between Def Leppard and Van Halen and got pretty familiar with those bands before going over to KIIS/Los Angeles to do Top 40.

We did bathtub races at Pirate Radio, which were just ridiculous. I was out in a harbor with an outboard motor attached to an old bathtub. Afterwards, though, I was allowed to step on to the station owner's yacht. Someone grabbed my hand to help me up, and when I looked up, it was Don Johnson. I was like, "Get the fuck outta here!" Also on the boat were Melanie Griffith, Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell. They had all watched me come in third place in that stupid race.

I worked with Blair Garner at KIIS, and when he left to start his syndicated Country show, he asked me to come with him. I told him I'd wanted to work at KIIS since I was a kid, and I couldn't walk away from my dream job just yet. Six months later, I got canned, and the first person I called was Blair. He created a weekend show for me, and I started on-air with *After MidNite* in 1995. I never looked back.

The first artist I interviewed when I got to *After MidNite* was John Berry. I over-prepared, because I hadn't had the opportunity to do many interviews. Once, I spent an entire weekend reading a book about Trisha Yearwood just to prep for a quick interview about her new song. I still tend to over-prepare, because I'm never fully confident in my ability to walk in without reading as much as possible about an artist before we talk.

My first meeting with Keith Urban was in Dec. 1999, and I had done all my research and prepared to



interview him. We talked about the brand-new album he had out, and when we went to commercial break, we started chatting about Glen Campbell. After the commercial break, we had one song before the interview came back live, and I asked if he'd like to play anything else from the new album. He said, "Actually, I'd like to play something else for you," and proceeded to perform "Wichita Lineman."

When I was done at *After MidNite*, RJ Curtis hired me at Country KZLA/Los Angeles – he had tried to hire me for years! – and I realized I couldn't do six shifts per week anymore. I told RJ I wanted to put my own show together and asked if he would carry it. He was kind enough to say yes without hearing anything and gave me a great flagship to launch *America's Hot List*. It started as a one-hour show that jocks who were tired of doing that sixth shift per week could plug in on the weekends. That got us in the syndication arena.



Dream Team: A hug from hall pass John Corbett.



Mic Upped: Allen helms the board at *After MidNite*.

John Corbett is my ... uhm ... "hall pass." I've loved him since he was on *Northern Exposure*. I was working at KZLA when RJ Curtis brought his song into the studio and asked if I thought we should play it. He was *the* guy on *Sex And The City* at the time, and nothing rang more true with women. He was playing at the Whisky, and his manager called and asked if I'd like to be John's guest at the show that night. He and I met and just hit it off! Later that year, KZLA brought John in for an event, and I told RJ the only thing I wanted was to bring John onstage. I did, and as I was getting ready to walk away, John Corbett hugged me. Right there in front of everyone!

We started the Saturday night show – now known as *The Big Time With Whitney Allen* – by offering the show free for six months. We started with 12 affiliates in January, and by December, the syndicators were willing to write us a contract. I also had PDs asking if we could do a night show, because they were losing their budgets to hire a full-time 7pm to midnight jock. I was still with KZLA and didn't have the bandwidth to add a nightly show. But a year later, KZLA flipped formats and I suddenly had time to put together more shows for syndication.

One of my favorite memories was being at Luke Bryan's house for a Super Bowl party a few years back. Luke was at the top of the stairs and yelled down to me, "Whit! Come here." I went upstairs and got to hold his kangaroo babies! I called [my significant other] Garrett at home and said, "Dude, I'm in Luke Bryan's house holding his kangaroo. Who would ever think that sentence would come out of my mouth?"

It wasn't until the Country Radio Hall of Fame class was announced at *CRS 2022* that I started having other women coming up to me to say I had inspired them. Someone said, "You changed everything for us." I still don't get it. I just go in there and do my show, and I'm so thankful, but I've never considered myself a trailblazer. Maybe it's because I own the show that other women feel that way, but it's an honor to hear those things in this phase in my career. I've never won a CMA Award or an ACM Award, so I certainly didn't expect this.

I've always been myself on the radio, which was scary when I first came to Country. I'm a smart-ass, you know? I hope that has helped others feel like they could be themselves on-air, too. I wish I could've been the standard-issue female sidekick who laughs along with the commanding morning man, but that was never a role I would have been able to play. And that's okay! More women need to know that it's okay to not force yourself into that box if that's not where you fit. **CAC**

Cathy Martindale

Finding A Way To Win

From radio to television and from racing cars to building houses, Cathy Martindale has never been afraid to roll up her sleeves and dig in. Without trying, she broke down barriers and opened the door for other women in the industry. But all she knows is she did her best, worked hard and had fun along the way.

I got a little red transistor radio for Christmas and would sleep with it by my pillow. I listened to Top 40 KFJZ-AM and KLIF-AM out of Dallas, which had all-male disc jockeys. Those guys – with their bits and characters and voices – made me feel connected to radio at a very early age.

I had some cool jobs as a teenager, but when I got to college at age 17, I heard a commercial about learning to be a disc jockey. Out of all the jobs I'd already had, that one sounded like the most fun. I called the number in the commercial and they wanted \$1,200 for the correspondence course. I didn't have that kind of money and told them, "No, thank you."

Dancing and fighting got me into country music. My best friend Sonya was already really into country, and we made a bet that involved me having to go to a country bar with her, and her going to a rock club I used to frequent. At the country bar, Sonya got in a fight and was sent to jail. I ended up having to raise money on the dance floor to bail her out! That night, the band played "Behind Closed Doors" by Charlie Rich, which was something I'd never heard before. It turned my head, and I started going to that joint with her more and more.

KSCS/Dallas had just flipped Country, so I called and asked if they needed anybody. They told me no, but I went over anyway. They put my voice on tape, and I was on-air within two weeks. A year-and-a-half after I started there, I became PD. Everyone at the station, except for the secretaries, were men. It was a large organization, and I quickly realized I didn't like managing people old enough to be my grandfather, because they resented me.

At 22, I was making \$11,000 a year, and brand-new on-air talent were making more. My boss told me I didn't need to make more money, because I had a husband who could support me. I decided I needed to get a job where I could make as much money as I wanted. I worked weekends at Country KBOX/Dallas and became a general contractor turning out custom and spec homes. I wasn't going to let my gender stop me. I eventually got a divorce and ended up back in radio full-time, but that is a part of my life I'm proud of. I didn't think about the boundaries; I just thought about what I wanted, and I went and got it.

KSCS became the No. 1 station with a huge profit margin, so Cap Cities sent me to the Sterling Institute of Advanced Management in Washington, DC. I also started attending DJ conventions, CRS and CMAs. Gerry House was at WSIX, Charlie Chase was at WSM, and both offered me jobs during one CMA week. I decided to go with WSM in 1983, because I wanted to do a fishing show. TNN was just getting started, and I thought having the affiliation with WSM would be the quickest way to realize my pet-project.

I never got to do a fishing show, but I did do some feature bits. Bo Jackson had a boat custom built in Nashville, and the company that built it said Porter Wagoner and I could take it out for a half-day of taping. Porter was driving, and we had a few crew guys with us. We shot off through the fog racing across Percy Priest Lake, and Porter hit a sandbar. The producer went over the side, and I was hanging on to equipment that was rolling everywhere. We had to call off the shoot, because the sandbar had completely removed the paint off the bottom of Bo's boat!

My dog Casey hosted *Country Beat* with me on weekends at TNN. If I made certain sounds, she would respond with a bark, and the crew thought that was funny. We



even had Casey out at *Fan Fair* with her own handout pictures autographed with her paw print. When Casey passed, viewers donated money to the ASPCA, and one of the backing singers at *Nashville Now* paid for a little coffin for her. She's buried in my backyard.

I did radio shows from the hospital while I was in labor. I didn't have an ISDN in my house when my son was born, so WSM engineers installed one in his nursery so I could do my show during my maternity leave. I'd be on-air at 5am, and sometimes you'd hear my son crying in the background. It gave the audience some perspective about what it was like being a working mom.

Most of my career has been spent with great partners. Coyote McCloud and I got to work together for about four years. Karl Shannon and I spent a lot of time together, too, both as radio partners and in the



Buttons Pusher: Martindale helms the board at KSCS in 1974.



Fun Raiser: Martindale (c) hosts a 1985 Nashville Public Television telethon with on-air partner Karl Shannon (l) and The Judds' Naomi Judd.

community. Karl and I raced cars at the Mark Collie celebrity races. I was waiting for one heat to start, looking ahead at the track, and someone came up behind me. My arm was sitting on the windowsill, and this man touched my arm and wished me good luck. When I looked up, it was Paul Newman!

When I was 15, I spent \$200 on a '62 Chevy. My boyfriend, who had a Mustang, got us in a rally club, which got us into dirt tracks in Dallas/Fort Worth. By 17, I was on the crash crew. As if I really knew how to save someone's life – what was I going to do, give them an aspirin?! Ha! I never followed NASCAR, but I did have that love affair with cars and dirt tracks, so when I was approached to co-host *zMax Racing Country* with Bill Dollar, I thought it sounded fun! Bill died in 1996, and Paul Schadt took over. Paul and I have been working together since.

My biggest faux pas ever was saying a very bad word on television. I was sitting at a desk and had been interviewing Charlie Daniels. The stage manager came over with some cold copy for me to read over people dancing. I was supposed to say, "You're watching the Blah, Blah, Blahs dance," but I called them a bad name, because I misread what she had written down. I didn't just say it once ... I said it twice and added a questioning inflection the second time. Charlie grabbed his chest and fell over laughing saying, "I thought this was a family show!" We had to stop tape; I was laughing so hard I started crying.

For five years in a row, I was Country radio's representative at Michael Jordan's golf tournament. I even got to emcee and make fun of Jordan, Charles Barkley and Lee Greenwood. I don't know how I had the nerve to do that; I'm not even a good golfer! Jordan called me over to his cart once, and there were maybe 10,000 people in the gallery watching him eat his McDonald's hamburger. He was very down to earth ... but a very big gambler.

I got to be a Grammy girl one year, which allowed me backstage access to interact with artists I'd never have met as a Country radio personality, including Prince and Michael Jackson. Some of us from Nashville went to a dinner that had been set up with Stevie Wonder. I was seated next to Stevie and across from Henry Mancini. No one was talking to Stevie, but I felt very comfortable with him and ended up talking to him all night. I can't even remember what we talked about, but I remember the moment and the feeling. **CAC**

MARYNNA TAYLOR

debut single

every single summer

on your desk now for
immediate airplay



IAN FLANIGAN

IN 2020, IAN FLANIGAN WAS A CELEBRATED FINALIST ON NBC'S *THE VOICE* AND HIS RECENT SINGLE "GROW UP (f/BLAKE SHELTON)" HAS MORE THAN TWO MILLION STREAMS ON ALL STREAMING SERVICES. "GROW UP" AND THE NEW SINGLE "**LAST NAME ON IT**" WILL BE INCLUDED ON A 2022 11 SONG ALBUM CO-PRODUCED BY GRAMMY WINNERS CRAIG ALVIN, TODD LOMBARDO, OBIE O'BRIEN, AND PHIL NICOLO.



DAVID ADAM BYRNES HAS HAD SIX BACK-TO-BACK #1 SONGS ON TEXAS REGIONAL RADIO AND WILL TOUR THE COUNTRY PLAYING OVER 125 LIVE SHOWS IN 2022. DAVID'S MOST RECENT ALBUM, "NEON TOWN" DEBUTED TOP 5 ON ITUNES COUNTRY AND RECEIVED RAVE REVIEWS FROM *CMT*, *WIDE OPEN COUNTRY* AND MANY MORE OUTLETS.

David Adam Byrnes



BROOKE★ MORIBER

BROOKE MORIBER IS KNOWN FOR HER "CLARION VOICE" (*ASSOCIATED PRESS*). HER POWERHOUSE VOCALS AND EMOTIONAL SONGWRITING HAVE CONNECTED WITH AUDIENCES FROM NEW YORK CITY TO NASHVILLE - THE TWO TOWNS SHE CALLS HOME. HER MUSIC IS ONE MILLION STREAMS IN AGGREGATE ACROSS ALL STREAMING SERVICES.



AARON GOODVIN

AARON GOODVIN'S NEW SINGLE "**BOY LIKE ME**" IS A PROVEN HIT HAVING RECENTLY SCORED A BILLBOARD #1 IN CANADA. THE SINGLE IS FROM HIS WARNER CANADA/REVIVER EP *LUCKY STARS*. AARON HAS MORE THAN 67 MILLION STREAMS AS WELL AS A DOUBLE-PLATINUM CERTIFICATION, SIX TOP 10 SINGLES AND NINE CCMA NOMINATIONS AND CONTINUES TO TOUR BOTH CANADA AND THE US.



Becky Brenner

Calling Her Own Shots

More than four decades into her career, Albright & O'Malley & Brenner partner Becky Brenner remains a positive, passionate, outspoken supporter of Country radio, its artists and the music they make together. And though her path was not always smoothly paved, Brenner knew what she wanted and worked with tenacity to land exactly where she intended to be, despite the sometimes-literal stumbles along the way.

I listened to Country and Top 40 radio growing up, and I loved hearing conversations, people calling in requests and the music. It was fun to think that somebody in there was talking to me, and I was in awe of the showbiz aspect of it. Those early experiences stuck with me and formed my opinion that radio is about two things: connection to the audience and public service.

My parents were really into Hank Williams and Patsy Cline, and they used to move the furniture out of the living room every Saturday night so everybody could dance on the hardwood floors. They'd invite friends over, and we'd have country music playing. Music has always moved me. I hear music, and I just have to move. I can read music and played piano and guitar a bit, but I was never willing to put the work into it, which I regret now.

I always got in trouble for talking in class and had teachers who tried to direct my talkative nature towards something productive. I started in forensics doing competitions in oratory reading, extemporaneous speaking and debate. We had a radio station at our high school, as well, so I ended up looking for a college that had a radio, TV and film major. I thought I'd be the next Johnny Carson.

When I arrived at the University Of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, I went to the campus radio station to get a job. They said only juniors and seniors were allowed to work at the station but told me the local radio station might take me as an intern. I was hired as a news stringer then quickly moved to overnights followed almost immediately by afternoon drive. I was doing live afternoons on Country WYLT-AM, voicetracking afternoons for Top 40 WOSH-FM and still going to school. I probably didn't have to finish college, but I really wanted to be the first in my family to earn a degree.

I applied for my first television gig in Green Bay, and a guy sent me a letter saying my reporting was great – they loved my stories and writing – but to be in television, I'd need to get a fashion consultant, cut my hair and lose about 20 pounds. When I got that letter, I decided I didn't want to be in a backstabbing industry like that, and I put all my efforts into radio.

My family moved from Seattle to Merrill, WI when I was nine. When I met my husband, I told him I'd live in Wisconsin for another year but wanted to go back to Seattle. I sent my résumé and aircheck to KMPS for a night job – then realized I should've mailed it via FedEx or UPS overnight. I phoned the station, and when they said they weren't accepting calls about the job, I blurted out, "I know that, but I was stupid and sent my résumé via snail mail. But I'm the person you need, and I'm the best person you could possibly hire, so I want you to wait for my aircheck to get there before you make a decision." A few days later, I got a call asking me to fly out and interview.

I did nights for a while before being named Dir./ Production & Continuity. I picked up weekends so I wouldn't lose my chops, and when Jaye Albright came in as PD, she heard me on air and asked why I wasn't doing a regular shift. I told her they wanted me to handle production, but she insisted I be put in middays. I kept helping with production, picked up APD duties and learned how to do traffic logs.

When asked if I can do something I tend to say yes, which doesn't always work out. I once agreed to ride a horse leading a parade into a rodeo arena in Monroe,



WA. I was the second in line behind someone carrying the American flag, and I was in my best jean skirt and cowboy boots. The horse started trotting a bit, and as we started around the arena, I must've pulled the reins a little too much. It was a barrel racing horse, and it shot off to the left. I went flying off on the right, ended up in the dirt, and sat there on my butt with a banged-up head. I think I blacked out for a second!

Jaye approached me about consulting in 1992, and I left KMPS and did that through 1995. I was nervous, but she thought I'd be great. I enjoyed it, but my kids were young, and the travel commitments were killing us. When the opportunity to rejoin KMPS as OM in 1995 came up, I said yes. It gave me the chance to champion artists and music I believed in, and I missed doing bits of sales and programming and being connected to local charities and organizations.

I've loved the music through every cycle of country. When I started in Oshkosh, people were saying Eddie Rabbitt and Crystal Gayle were too pop-sounding. Then came the *Urban Cowboy* stuff. But if you kept some mainstream things mixed with the twang and pop, it was all good to me. I've been accused of wearing rose-colored glasses, burying my head in the

sand or being a Pollyanna, but I'd rather be those things than jaded and cynical. Every decade sees its own kind of resurgence, and I've enjoyed all of them.

When Jaye circled back around to me in 2011, my kids were grown. I was weighing the options and considered going into teaching. I taught Sunday school to three-year-olds and always volunteered at my kids' schools. I elected to join Albright & O'Malley, though, and after more than a decade, I can't imagine a better fit than where I am now. This job perfectly combines my love of music and passion for helping people improve themselves, so it has worked out very well. Thank goodness Jaye talked me into it!

Mike Dungan and Bill Mayne pushed me to get involved in serving on the CRB/CRS board. At that time, you were supposed to have served on the Agenda Committee first, and I had always given a lot of ideas and had spoken on panels, but I'd never been on the committee. I felt guilty applying to sit on the board, but Mike, Bill and Jeff Walker all supported and encouraged me. Serving there and on the CMA board feels a lot like being in radio and serving your local community. I just happen to be serving the Country radio community now.

The way music can move people will never fail to amaze me. Three songs that have spoken to that impact for me are Trisha Yearwood's "The Song Remembers When," David Nail's "The Sound Of A Million Dreams" and Lady A's "What A Song Can Do." Every song radio plays can change the lives of the songwriters, musicians, artists, people in the industry behind the scenes and listeners all across the world. Crazy, right?! That's why we do what we do.

I don't believe women have to be the same as men to be equal to men. Women are inherently more nurturing, and we want everyone to be taken care of. We can't all be the same, but we can be equal. We can be treated with the same respect and professionalism and be offered opportunities on an equal playing field. Any time someone has asked me why we don't have more women in programming, I'd say it was because women are too smart. Programming is all-consuming, and it's a tough, uphill climb to have a life where you are devoted to this and still have a family and a personal life. I do see more women being elevated now, and it's not where we need to be, but decade-by-decade, we get closer.

I never saw anything I did as being groundbreaking or mountain moving. I didn't recognize myself as someone who was breaking glass ceilings. I just saw opportunities and decided to take them. If you never take a risk, you're never rewarded. Then again, sometimes, you fall flat on your ass ... like I did on that arena floor when I fell off the horse!

CAC



Board Room: Brenner joins KMPS in 1982.



Luke What You Made Me Do: Brenner sings karaoke with Luke Bryan at CRS 2008.



COUNTRY
RADIO
Hall of Fame 2022

*"The true definition of service is
doing something not required
or expected."*

-Becky Brenner



**Thank YOU and Congratulations from
Country Radio and A&O&B!**



Debbie Conner

Missouri Loves Company

Show Me State native **Debbie Conner** didn't need anyone to show her how to blaze a trail in radio for generations of women to follow. Conner achieved many firsts in her Hall of Fame career and had a record-setting run at the biggest Country station in her home state. In the end, her career brought her full circle.

When I was in high school, two guys moved into my little town of Piedmont and built a radio station, KPWB-AM. My mother owned a tavern, Ruth's Lounge, and they would sign the radio station off at sunset and come drink some beer. One of them, Joe Bumpus, said, "I need a girl's voice on a commercial," so I went to the radio station where he handed me a script. "Cool," "smooth" and "hmmm" were the three words circled for me to read.

I had no idea there were bigger markets. I'd never traveled out of Missouri. After high school, I got married and had babies. My brother got out of the Air Force and started working at KPWB, so I started sitting-in with him. I got divorced, then started studying for my broadcast license. KPWB's owners built another station about 40 miles away in Ironton [KPIA-AM] where I did sales and voiced commercials. From there, I got a job at KGMO-AM/Cape Girardeau. That's where I found out about stations like WLS-AM/Chicago and DJs like Larry Lujack.

A station in Dallas called after hearing one of the airchecks I was sending out. I gave my notice in Cape Girardeau and loaded up everything. When I got to Dallas, the PD said, "You're welcome to stay - we'll show you around - and by the way, the guy you were supposed to replace decided not to quit." At that point, I pretty much gave up and went back to Piedmont; I thought radio was probably not for me.

While working at my mom's tavern, somehow a guy I knew from Cape Girardeau tracked me down and told me a guy named Dave Donahue at KHAK/Cedar Rapids was looking for someone to do nights. I mailed my stuff, and he hired me over the phone.

After almost a year, the station owner died, and everything kind of fell apart. Dave sent my tape to Craig Scott at WMPS-AM/Memphis, who was taking the station Country and wanted me to do 7pm-midnight. I went to Memphis and played the first country record on WMPS.

Johnathan Fricke at Warner Bros. brought a new artist by for an interview. A few months later, he called to say, "I'm back in Cincinnati. What would it take to get you here?" It's the only time in my career I said, "I don't think you can afford me." I gave him a figure, though, and he said, "Okay, I'll get back with you." I didn't hear from him for a while, so I wrote it off. But he called one night, and I was off to WSAI-AM/Cincinnati for evenings. My first book there, the station had a three share ... and I had an eight. Johnathan said, "Let's talk about afternoon drive."

I only knew of two women in radio. Alison Steele [WNEW/New York] and "Miss Liz" Darrig [WDAF-AM/Kansas City]. Every place I went, I was the only woman on-air. Most of the guys never heard a woman on-air before, so they didn't know what I was supposed to sound like. I was told, "You'll never do radio" and "Women don't like to hear women on the air." Then it became, "Okay, but you'll never do drivetime" and then "But you'll never do morning drive." I was the first woman to do afternoon drive in Cincinnati.

Playing in a media softball game against the wives of the Cincinnati Reds, I saw Johnny Bench. I debated whether to introduce myself but walked over to the dugout. I said, "Hi Johnny, I'm ..." He interrupted me, "Debbie! I listen to you all the time! I love you!" I couldn't believe it!

Johnny Dark from WCAO-AM/Baltimore hired me for nights. My best friend lived in New York City and



flew down to visit. My first night on-air, we went to a bar to celebrate with a glass of wine before my shift. Nobody had told us there was a blizzard coming, and I was snowed in downtown. I had to call Johnny and say I couldn't make it in on my first night. I don't think I told him about the wine. Luckily, he didn't fire me. Johnny was one of the few men at that point who was absolutely on my team. He'd say, "You're better than 90% of the people on the air in this town."

Mine was the only show ever banned by the Naval Academy. They said I distracted the guys in Annapolis from their studies. There were some freshmen who would listen to my show at night, and one of the guys went AWOL. He showed up at a bar near the station and called me on the request line. He said, "I just wanted to see you before I go to the brig."



D & D: Conner with Dolly Parton



They Were Country: Conner in conversation with Barbara Mandrell.

One morning I woke up and said, "I need to go home." So, I did. Back in Piedmont, Ray Massie from WIL/St. Louis found me somehow. "I have your résumé, but I can't find your tape," he said. I went to St. Louis, walked into the station, handed it to Ray and said, "I don't care who you hire, but I was determined you weren't going to hire anybody until you heard my tape." He put me on in mornings with David Craig.

We did that show for 11 years. We were the No. 1 morning show in St. Louis and the first morning show to ever beat KMOX-AM. We interviewed Richard Simmons in-studio once and, after it was over, I asked him, "Seriously, do you always dress like that, in shorts and a tank top?" He pulled his shorts down to his ankles and said, "No, sometimes I dress like this!"

Ray left after 10 years, and a new company came in and let go of the GM. My contract just so happened to come up, and that was the end of that. I had a friend across the street at WKXX. He said, "As soon as your non-compete is up, my boss wants to talk to you." After six months, they created a place for me in middays. About a year after that, WKXX was sold.

Steve Warren was in charge of country for Sirius and talked to me about voicetracking middays from home. He put me on middays on The Roadhouse. We were doing shows a month before the satellite went up, just to get used to doing them without weather, time checks and call letters.

The guy I was with decided he wanted to move to Maui in 2005. My best friend (the one from New York) had married, and they were in Maui, too. I sold my house, moved to Maui, and got a job at a radio station there making very little money. I stayed for a year-and-a-half and then decided I had to go back to be near my kids and my grandbaby.

My first book doing middays at WYCT/Pensacola, my show was the only No. 1 daypart on the station. When the second book came out, I was the only No. 1 daypart again. They called me in and said, "We're going to have to let you go." I thought they were kidding, but they had to cut some salaries. I returned to Missouri and voicetracked some shows for a while, but in 2019 I had rotator cuff surgery and couldn't really work my laptop. I knew it was going to be a long recovery, so I finally hung up the headphones. I now live right next to the house where I grew up. **CAC**



WME

CONGRATULATES

TRISHA YEARWOOD

ON RECEIVING

THE 2022 ARTIST CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
AT THIS YEAR'S COUNTRY RADIO HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CEREMONY.

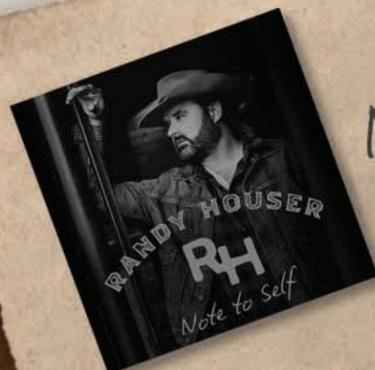
WE ARE HONORED TO BE A PART OF YOUR TEAM AND PROUD OF YOUR CONTINUED SUCCESS.

RANDY HOUSER

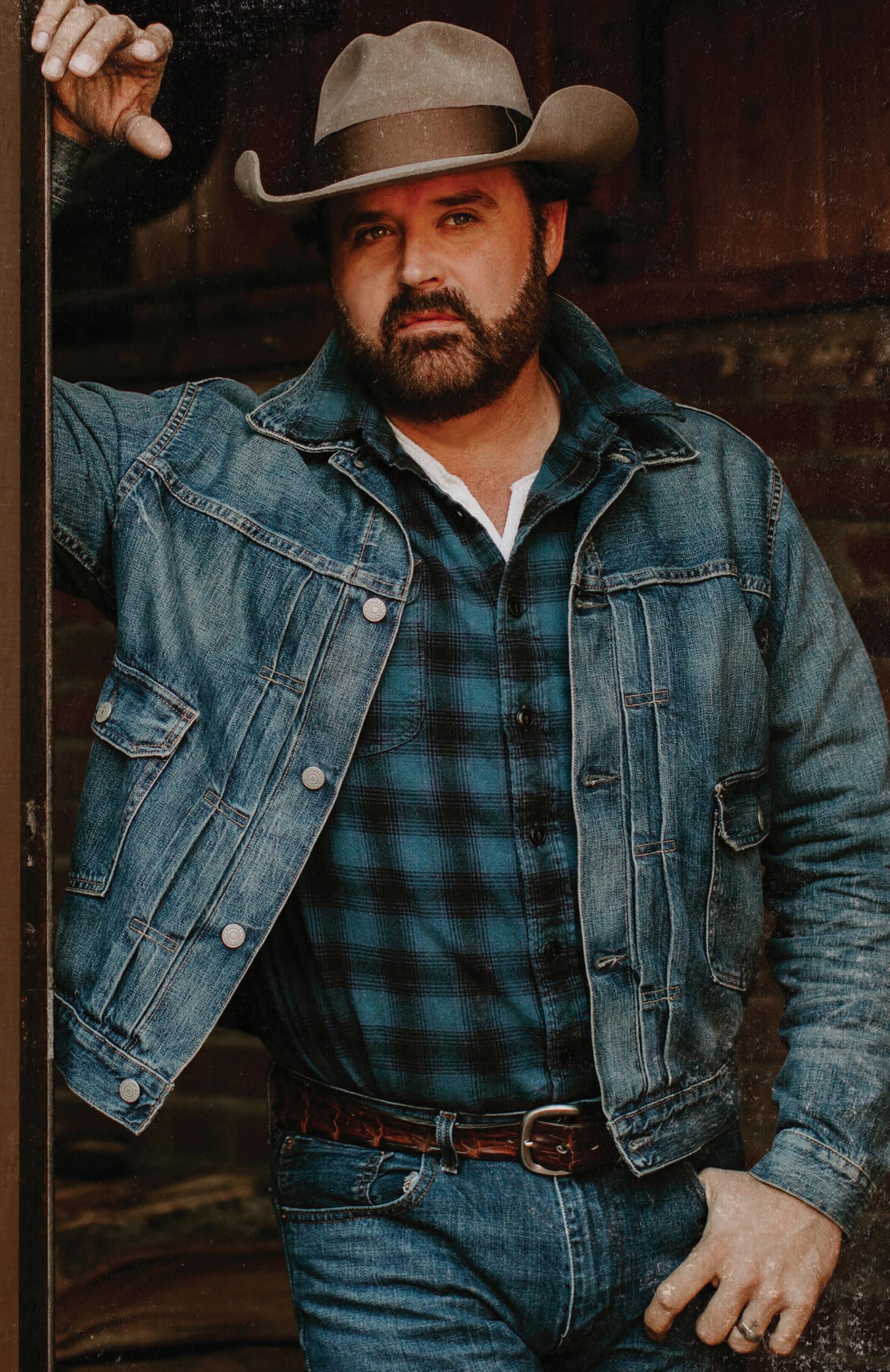
RH

Randy Houser's 2022 "Note to Self" Checklist (so far)

- Sell out headline tour
- Release new single "Note to Self"
- Sell out co-headline tour
- Role in Martin Scorsese's film "Killers of the Flower Moon"
- Role in film "The Hill" featuring Dennis Quaid
- Release groundbreaking music video for "Note to Self"
- Sell out headline show at Ryman Auditorium
- Headline charitable events for Nikki Mitchell Foundation, Musicians on Call, & The Station Foundation
- Fall release of highly anticipated new album
- Fall tour with Cody Johnson



LATEST SINGLE
Note to Self
TOP 50 & CLIMBING



Rachael Hunter + Steve Grunwald

Detroit's Dynamic Duo

They came from different directions and different backgrounds, but when Rachael Hunter and Steve Grunwald started working together, something clicked. More than 20 years after they first partnered, the two now join the Hall of Fame the only way they could: together.

SG: I can remember listening to the radio as a kid and being fascinated by it. My stepfather was a minister at church in Webster City, IA where I met the PD for a local station. I told him I was fascinated by radio. He said, "Maybe we can make you a board operator." I worked there through high school running the board and doing weekend shows. They asked me to cover the local stock car races; I remember having to talk to the drivers and being terrified. My interviewing was awful. I told myself I was going to get good at it if it was the last thing I did, and being able to talk to anybody is the best thing I do now. I've come a long way.

RH: I was born in Michigan but grew up in Connecticut. After college, I met WTIC-AM & FM/Hartford VP/GM Robert Dunn at a social event. He told me I'd be great on the radio but that I'd need some radio education. I found the Connecticut School of Broadcasting (CSB) but didn't have the money for tuition. My then-boyfriend (now husband) said, "I will pay for it if you promise me you'll do something with it and not waste my money." I guess I did something with it. I was 25 at the time – a late bloomer.

SG: I was attending Brown Institute in Minneapolis where a really nice guy named Brian Philips [now Cumulus EVP] hired me as a producer and board op at Top 40 KDWB. I was surrounded by some of the most talented people in the country – Greg Thunder, Alan Kabel and Steve Cochran. I learned so much. If it wasn't for them, I would have quit this industry years ago. I'm not sure Brian would hire me again today, but I think the man is brilliant.

RH: As soon as I graduated from CSB, Dunn asked me to be the backup traffic reporter at WTIC. I got married, and three months after the wedding, my husband got transferred to Detroit. After a few months of not working, I decided I had to get back in. I sent some tapes out and was hired at Metro Traffic. I was filling on then-Top 40 WDRQ, and the morning show requested me to be their fulltime traffic reporter. I slowly worked my way into being hired as part of the morning show.

SG: From Minneapolis, I went to Top 40 KCLD/St. Cloud, MN and was on the morning show as "Adventure Boy" doing all kinds of crazy stunts – the more outrageous the better. I had kept in touch with Steve Cochran, and he hired me as a producer at Talk WLUP-AM/Chicago. That's when I really started getting good. WLUP was sold, and Cochran and I went to Detroit for mornings at Top 40 WKQL. We did that for a year, then the entire staff was fired. I was contemplating quitting radio when WDRQ PD Alex Tear hired me to be part of the morning show with Jay Towers and Rachael.

RH: We were having a great time until 2005 when, while on vacation at Disneyworld, Tear called to say they were flipping the station to "Doug FM." We were all out of jobs. The bright side was getting to do the things I never got to do before ... like taking the kids to school. I enjoyed that. Then-CBS/Detroit GM Debbie Kenyon called about putting me on their Smooth Jazz station. We met for lunch, where she told me, "You are way too energetic for a Smooth Jazz station." However, they were making other changes, including wanting a cooler vibe on Country WYCD. They asked me and Steve to be part of the morning show with "Dr. Don" Carpenter.



SG: We both said yes, and this December will mark 17 years with the station.

RH: When I was let go at WDRQ, I thought it was the worst thing that ever happened to me, but it really wasn't. It opened a door and, a year later, I could look back and be grateful. We worked with Dr. Don and Chuck Edwards, who are both in the Hall of Fame. We brought in Josh Holleman a couple of years ago to make things a little younger.

SG: I would not be entering the Hall if it wasn't for Tim Roberts and Debbie Kenyon. They've allowed me to be creative and do crazy things like being dropped off in the middle of nowhere and having to make my way back to Detroit without spending any money.



What Kenya Do About It: Steve Grunwald in Kenya with Masai tribesmen and a cutout of Brad Paisley.



Kind Of A Drag: Grunwald and Hunter go all-out to film a commercial for a local auto dealer.

RH: Tim Roberts has played a huge part in my career, too. His daughter and my daughter are best of friends and will be in each other's weddings. And I can't say enough about Debbie Kenyon. I feel very fortunate that I have a female above me in radio who I can look up to and run things by. She's made it a point to ask me for the female perspective on the morning show. She's a mom, a wife and has a successful career.

SG: I had a bet with Brad Paisley, who said I wouldn't be able to make it back to Detroit if he dropped me off in Kenya near Mt. Kilimanjaro. I failed, so I had to go onstage in boy shorts and a feather boa at one of his concerts. While I was in Kenya, I gave my business card to a Masai tribesman. Fast forward a few years, and I got an email from a tribesman who said they were having a bad drought. He asked if I could buy them a cow. We called Paisley and he said, "Not only will I buy them a cow, but I will buy them a couple on the condition that you deliver them in person." I went back to Kenya with a cameraman and a cardboard cutout of Brad, where we shot part of his video for "Southern Comfort Zone."

RH: Steve is my work husband, and in some ways, he knows me better than my real husband. We spend more waking hours together. We know each other so well, he's my best friend. We complement each other. There's no beating around the bush with him, and I'm super chill.

SG: I'm thankful for the people who have allowed me to be creative and be who I really am. Without them, I wouldn't be able to do what I've done, and I wouldn't have come close to having the qualifications for this prestigious honor. You flourish if you have the right people around you, and I've been fortunate to have that my whole career. If it all ends tomorrow, what a great life I've had. **CAC**



Workin' On A Full House: Trisha Yearwood and Garth Brooks surrounded by WYCD's Hunter, Jason Raithel and Grunwald.



WESTERN EDGE

The Roots and Reverberations of Los Angeles Country-Rock

PRESENTED BY **CITY NATIONAL BANK**
AN RBC COMPANY 

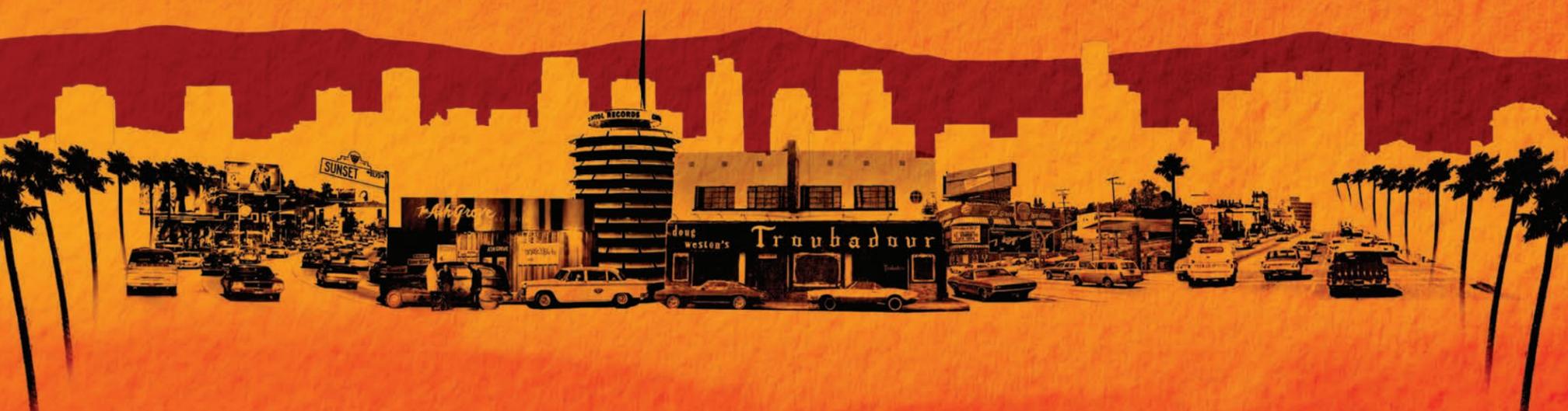
**A major exhibit featuring artists from the Byrds and Buffalo Springfield,
to Linda Ronstadt and the Eagles, Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris,
to the Blasters and Dwight Yoakam.**

Drawn to Los Angeles in the turbulent '60s, a diverse group of artists found a musical oasis—
one that embraced country music and combined it with rock & roll sensibilities.

That sound changed the world.

The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's exhibit *Western Edge: The Roots and Reverberations
of Los Angeles Country-Rock* examines the impact of country-rock that still resonates today.

EXHIBIT OPENS SEPTEMBER 30



Barry Mardit

Happy All The Way

Growing up in the Bronx, **Barry Mardit** didn't realize the New York City radio stations he listened to were some of the best of the best. They did, however, help shape a lifelong passion for creating great radio, including taking Country to never-before-seen heights in a place where most thought it couldn't succeed.

When I was 10 or 11 years old, I latched on to a pop song, "Mr. Bass Man" by Johnny Cymbal. After a while I noticed I could hear it at the same time every day on Top 40 WMCA-AM/New York. They played the top 25 songs between 4 and 7 every afternoon. I started writing down the songs to see how my favorites were doing, and before you know it, I had a year's worth of charts. I thought the radio station would be interested to know what the No. 1 song was a year ago, so I wrote a letter to the DJ. I was amazed when they read my letter on the air, and I wound up keeping track of their charts for several more years.

My parents thought I should be an accountant, because I was doing all these charts and working with numbers. I did major in accounting, but I wanted to go somewhere that had a good college radio station. I enrolled at Brooklyn College and told them I would do anything to work at the campus radio station. They let me be librarian, so I got to catalog all the records as they came in.

I got a call from [Top 40] WMCA-AM/New York offering me a job at their studios on Madison Avenue. They needed a doorman at night to let guests in for their talk show. That was technically my first job in radio; I opened the doors for some really cool people, including John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

The college experience was great, but I wanted to do something more. I had won an album from Top 40 WXLO/New York, and when I went to pick up the album I said, "If you guys ever have anything to do around here, here's what I do now on the college station." Soon after, I got a call asking if I wanted to be a request line operator.

Request lines buzzed like crazy on Top 40 in those days. At night, we didn't even need the studio lights on, because the phones were constantly lit up. My job was to write down the requests, whether it was from a male or female, what age they were, and so forth. I had to make it a bigger deal than that, so I kept track of what song was most requested every hour. I'd give that to the DJs until the PD told me, "You'd be able to answer a lot more calls if you weren't putting together these charts."

A classmate who graduated before me got a radio gig in Beaufort, SC. Shortly after he said, "Barry, I can help you get a job here. They're looking for somebody for the Album Rock station [WBEU]." I took two boxes on a Greyhound to South Carolina, but the station soon went automated Country. They didn't need any jocks, so I was out of work. I went to the Top 40 as "Boogie Bear" on-air. The GM went over to WBEU a few months later, took the station live, and wanted me as his PD. I didn't know anything about Country, but he convinced me to come over. I realized it didn't matter what the music was, radio was radio.

Going into Country was the greatest move of my life. I was eventually hired to do overnights at WFEC-AM/Harrisburg, PA, where the PD was also from the New York City area. He had also worked as a request line operator at WXLO, but we'd never crossed paths before then. I learned a lot from Dene Hallam and moved up to nights and then afternoons. When Dene left Harrisburg to be APD at WEEP-AM/Pittsburgh, I succeeded him as PD. When Dene left Pittsburgh, I interviewed for that job with the PD, Joel Raab, and got hired. The neat thing about WEEP is we could have all been programmers – we all had high aspirations to do a great job. I was at WEEP for about four years. When Joel left, I became PD. I loved that place and thought I was going to be permanently attached to the call letters, but then an opportunity came up.



As much as I loved Pittsburgh, the opening at WWWW/Detroit was one I had to seriously consider. I remember flying in, seeing the city, and thinking, "This is going to be so cool." WWWW was such a good situation. I finally felt confident I could settle down; this was a keeper job. GM Phil Lamka made the environment conducive to doing the right thing. I said to him, "I know it's going to screw with our programming, but I think the *St. Jude Radiothon* is important. It's going to give us a halo effect. While the other guys are playing three in a row, we're curing kids of cancer."

In addition to the radiothon, we did *Toys For Tots* and the annual *Hoedown*, which was a major concert we



Much Too Young: Barry with then-new artist Garth Brooks.



Let Them Eat Cake: Mardit presents a giant cake to Willie Nelson for his 50th birthday.

took over in its second year – 1984. Those events and a lot of other smaller things were instrumental in creating top-of-mind awareness and contributed to the station being at the top of the ratings heap. That was really a good time; we had a book in 1992 where we were No. 1 by a mile. The problem with being No. 1 is that, which I didn't really count on, is you get a target on your back, and eventually someone comes after you.

When my time at WWWW came to an end, it was very hard, and I was afraid. Things had been so good in Detroit, and I didn't want to uproot my family. Someone at *CRS* told me, "There's a guy starting a station in Lansing who could use your help." That got me into consulting. People ask me what I do as a consultant – sometimes I'll do the daily logs, sometimes I'll help find personalities or I'll write promos. I'll do whatever the heck the client wants.

There are so many memories, but the common denominator is the people I worked with and everyone who was part of allowing me to get things done. I knew my part-timers as well as I knew my morning teams. Hopefully my staff appreciated that I treated them all as very important ingredients to success. There's also the record industry. If I couldn't get cooperation from the labels for tickets and passes for contests, how would I have gotten it done?

I look back at humble beginnings and the roads I took to get here and say to people, don't be dismayed if you don't know which way to go when you get to a fork in the road. Chances are, whichever fork you take will lead to something good. Don't just stand there and scratch your head – pick a road and go! It worked for me. I've been happy all along the way. **CAC**

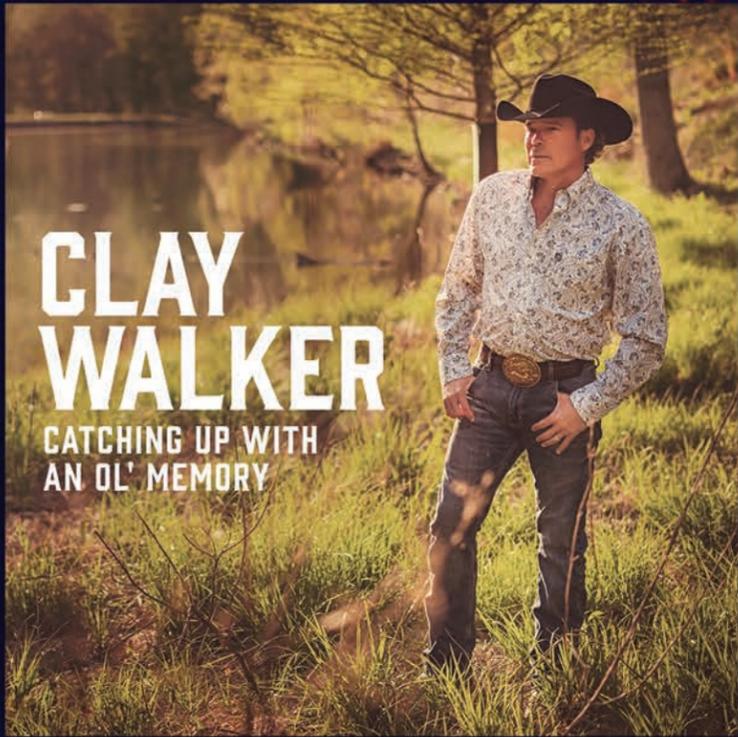


Party Like It's 1989: Mardit flanked by Tammy Wynette, Naomi Judd, Wynonna Judd and Randy Travis.

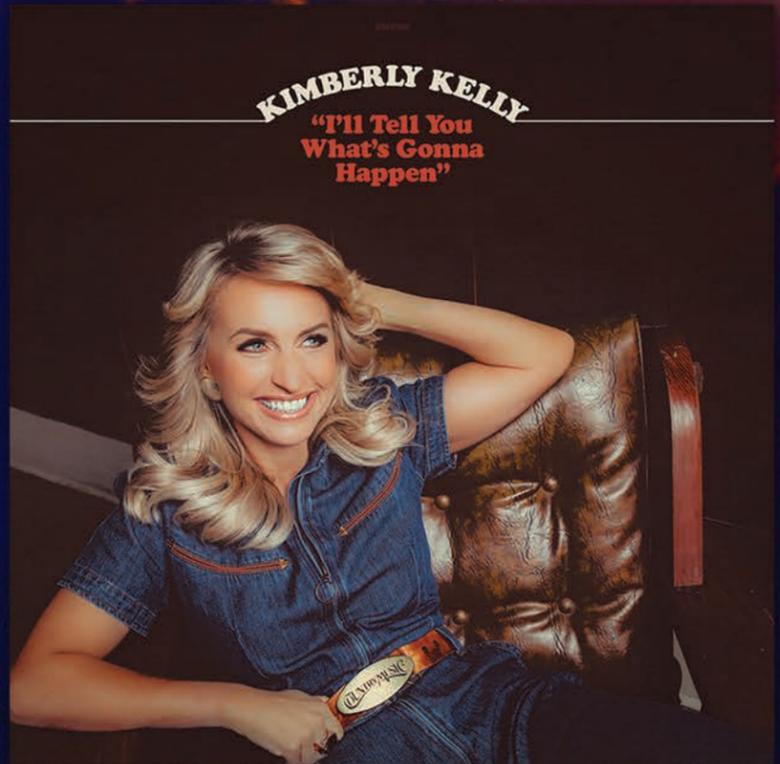
2022 SHOW DOG NASHVILLE

SIZZLING HOT COUNTRY HITS

TOBY KEITH
"OKLAHOMA BREAKDOWN"



CLAY WALKER
"CATCHING UP WITH AN OL' MEMORY"
RECENTLY CHARTED HIT SINGLE



KIMBERLY KELLY
FEATURING THE LEAD TRACK
"SUMMERS LIKE THAT"

COUNTRY HITS FOR COUNTRY RADIO!



2 0 2 2 P R E S I D E N T ' S A W A R D

C O U N T R Y
R A D I O
Hall of Fame EST.1975

CONGRATS ESPO!



JOHN ESPOSITO
CHAIRMAN & CEO, WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE



John Esposito

Under the leadership of Chairman/CEO John Esposito since 2009, Warner Music Nashville has championed more than 65 No. 1s from artists spending more than 16 months at the top of the charts. Concurrently, he's been committed to supporting Country Radio Seminar through his work on the CRB board and in the company's commitment to the event.

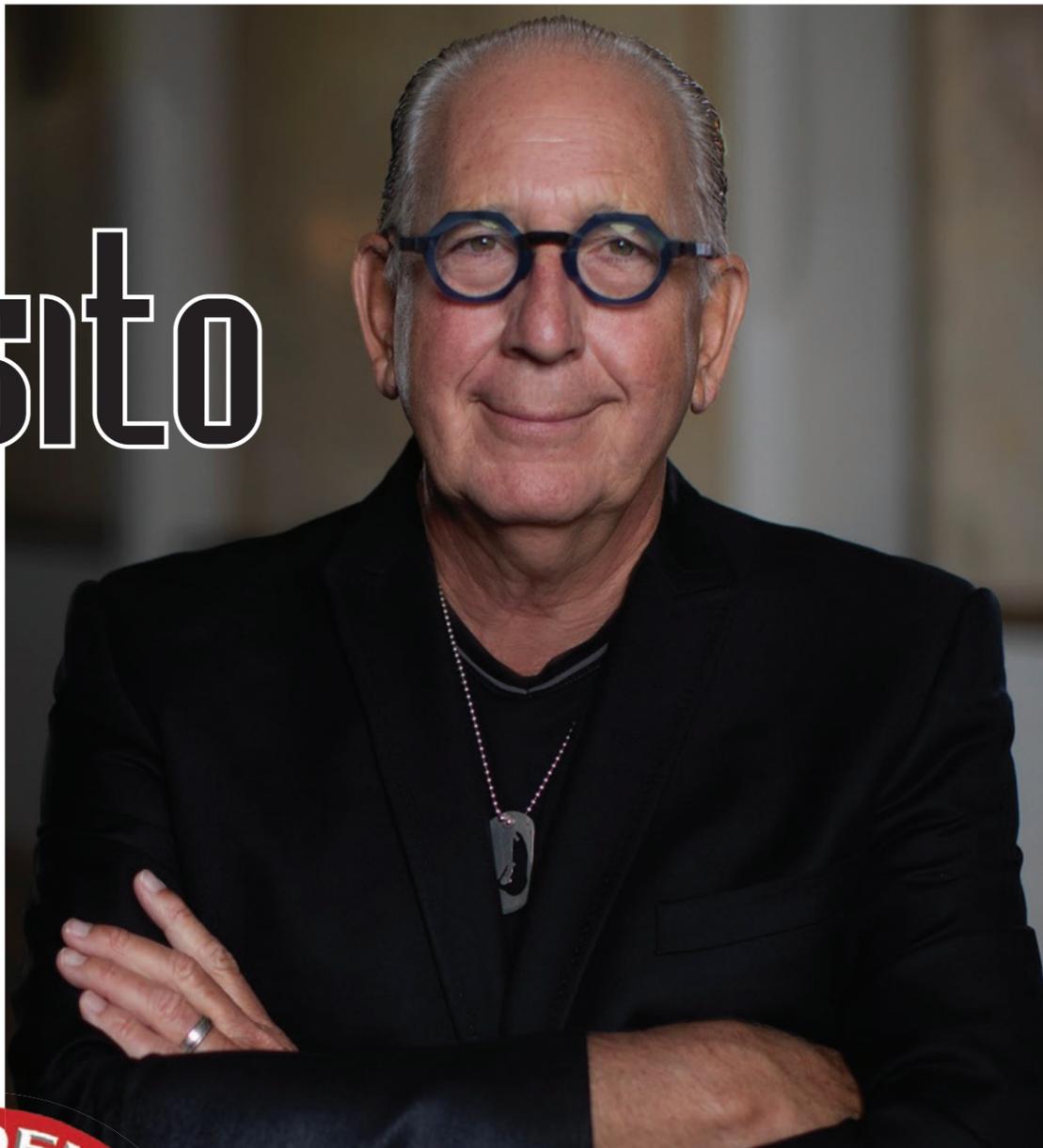
I was two or three months in to my tenure running Warner Music Nashville. Some guy named Bill Mayne asked for a meeting, and I learned how difficult it was for him to be succinct. He came in apologizing for how bad CRS had become and said he was there as the interim head to fix it. I'm sitting there thinking, "I don't even know what CRS is, and I don't know what Bill Mayne is." But he was trying to talk me into making sure we'd support it, and I didn't know I wasn't supposed to. So, of course, I was a hero by simply saying, "Hey, Warner will be there. We'll support it."

Soon convinced to join the board, I got to sit through many a meeting to hear Bill over-explain everything possible. I love Bill, and I've come to realize his heart was in the right place. He was so good for what that organization needed at that time. I appreciate him and what he did. When he said it was time for him to leave, I was now not only on the executive committee of CRS, but also put on the search committee to find his replacement.

Leading the search committee for what ultimately led to Sarah Trahern becoming the head of CMA showed that I had some chops in filtering through candidates and helping in that process, which Charlie Morgan led. We did a good job of coming up with RJ Curtis as the next leader and, thank God, because RJ has done a magnificent job, especially getting us through the pandemic.

We were trying to make a statement at Warner about our passion for the music in radio promotion, and CRS is the ultimate arena for radio promotion: The "Thunderdome." We wanted to make sure we showed off our artist roster and got people to fall in love with what our taste in selecting artists is. Boy, we went through so many iterations of what ultimately led to *Warner Wednesday*, which is now considered one of the premier events at the convention. But I remember we used to be in the basement of that place that's now the FGL House.

It had a funny name, and we decided to take over the basement and get people down there late at night to see our artists. Well, one night, we decided it was gonna be a pairing of artists,



and not necessarily just our country roster. We had Sheryl Crow paired with Blake Shelton and one of my absolute favorite moments, John Oates singing "Rich Girl" with Charlie Worsham. Actually, Charlie did the singing, and John was the backup vocalist, and it was like ... wow. I pinched myself and thought, "If these people knew how lucky they were to be in the room to see all of these interesting pairings."

One of the CRS highlights, not just for me, but for about a thousand+ people in a ballroom was Lon [Helton]'s interview with Blake Shelton this past year. It was hilarious. It was touching. It was deep. It was soul-bearing as



Warner Bros: Espo (r) with Blake Shelton (l) and Bob Kingsley at Warner Wednesday in 2015.

only Blake can be. Here was a superstar artist with a guy who commands a lot of attention – Lon Helton – having a real conversation that went over by probably 25 minutes from its allotted time and could've kept going. It was only out of respect for people to be able to go and change into whatever their nighttime gear would be that it ended.

It was amazing that Lon decided to start it off with Blake's – I don't know if the word horrible is correct – but his rendition of that song that Toby Keith made famous that, thank God Blake didn't release, "I Wanna Talk About Me." Then following that with the infamous New Faces video of Blake up at the hotel room in silhouette. People still talk about when Blake won the New Faces award damn near 20 years ago as one of the funniest intro videos ever. I keep a link to it so occasionally, if I need a real laugh, I watch it. Classic.

My first CRS, which would've been 2010, I had met some radio programmers, but that's about the time I decided I was going on the road. That year, I literally visited 85 stations. I was hell-bent on showing them I was committed to this format, this job of running the label, but also getting to know them. It started a lot of amazing friendships.

Our head of promotion at the time, Chris Stacey, was telling me there's this guy out in San Jose you haven't visited, and he's getting really pissed. Nate Deaton is getting really pissed! And I couldn't get to Nate until 2011. He threatened – and I know, or at least think, he was doing it tongue-in-cheek – to drop all of our records until I made a visit. So, I purposely went out there to visit Nate, and that's when I not only started an amazing friendship with him, but found out if you visit Nate, you're going to eat at the same damn Italian restaurant every single time, which I've now done about 10 times. God bless you, Nate.

I love that CRS was not only my real introduction to Country radio and the start of making a lot of friendships, but how embraced I became by these people. It certainly made the path to building Warner back into a strong label a hell of a lot easier and more fun. I have appreciation for what the Country Radio Board and the Country Radio Seminar stand for on a profound level. I'll probably be one of those old farts 20 years from now still parading the halls like some people (that you can guess names of). Maybe now I won't be having so many people run up to me and say, "Will you listen to my daughter's record?" That part I won't miss.

CAC



TRISHIA YEARWOOD

congratulations
ON YOUR WELL-DESERVED
ARTIST CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Swendolyn
RECORDS

Trisha Yearwood

Artist Career Achievement

Trisha Yearwood has spent three decades in the spotlight performing for millions of fans, earning Grammy, CMA and ACM Awards and building a lifestyle empire. The latter includes four New York Times bestselling cookbooks and her own Food Network series.

My first CRS was in 1991. I was a brand-new artist on MCA, had finished recording my first album, but my first single, "She's In Love With The Boy," hadn't even come out yet. I really didn't understand why I would even attend *Country Radio Seminar* ... nobody would know who I was. Also, I didn't really know what it was – I was pretty green. MCA's head of promotion, Scott Borchetta, said, "We're going to CRS, and I'm going to introduce you to everybody." And he did!

I remember walking around the ballrooms at Opryland Hotel for hours, meeting everybody who was anybody from radio stations around the country. It was really amazing! I vividly remember people being so nice to me. I'm sure in their minds they were thinking, "Yeah, new chick singer. Nice to meet you. Next?" But they made me feel welcome. The anticipation of what might be coming was so exciting to me.

When my single came out a month later, I got a weekly list of every radio station that added "She's In Love With The Boy" and called everyone. Sometimes my calls would go to voice mail – which was fine, because I was scared to talk to people then – but sometimes I'd actually get through to a program director. Many times, they'd put me on the air. That song had such an organic rise, from listeners calling stations after seeing the video on CMT to repeat requests after hearing it on the radio. The perfect storm of a well-written song – thanks Jon Ims! – a dedicated and super successful record label, a young girl from Georgia with a strong passion for the music, and Country radio's willingness to spread the word. I never dreamed all of that would happen on the very first song we put out. I learned, of course, that it doesn't always go that way, but the first single was absolutely a fairytale story.

A lot of those guys and gals from CRS remembered meeting that shy girl Scott Borchetta took around the room that night, and those relationships were wonderful, especially when I started touring. To visit the station made me feel like I had a friend in every little corner of the country.

In 1994, I had a single on the radio that ended up doing well called "The Song Remembers When." It was such a beautiful story about the power of music, written by Hugh Prestwood. After its success, we wanted to send a thank-you to Country radio, and my manager at the time, Ken Kragen, suggested doing something that would live on the program directors' desks so they'd always be reminded of me.

We came up with a talking picture frame, definitely a new gadget in the mid-'90s. The album cover was a photo of me holding a bunch of sunflowers, so we sent that photo in the frame. The PD could press play and hear a personalized message from me. "Hi, Jim! Trisha Yearwood here. Thanks so much for playing my music. See you soon!" or something to that effect. There were more than 200 [reporting] PDs at the time, and I personalized every single one of those frames. People really seemed to love them, too. I did re-record a few on various radio station visits. Sometimes a PD would accidentally hit record instead of play and erase my message! I wonder if anyone still has one of those frames?

I also sent radio more than 200 lipstick kisses when my single "XXX's And OOO's (An American Girl)" was released. If any radio folks remember that, just know that yes ... every one of those lipstick prints was real. I used a lot of lipstick and kissed a lot of paper!

You're lucky if you have one song like "She's In Love With The Boy" in your entire career, and I've been lucky enough to have a couple. In 1997, I got a call from the head of A&R at MCA, Tony Brown, asking me if I could fill in on a last-minute song for a movie called *Con Air*. He said that LeAnn Rimes was



supposed to sing it but there had been some kind of problem, and they needed a vocal done quickly. I said yes. I have to admit I didn't know who Diane Warren was – I do now – and I also didn't know LeAnn could or would release the song at the same time I did.



A Boy Named New: In the Unistar suite with the company's Ed Salamon (r) and Yearwood's longtime guitar player, Johnny Garcia; and performing (below).



At the time, I'm six years into a career, so I'm not the new girl anymore. I'm working hard to get played on the radio. LeAnn has just had a *huge* success with her song "Blue," and she's selling like a million records a minute. I would never have chosen to go up against her at radio. If there can ever be a win/win situation in this scenario, it happened when Pop radio embraced LeAnn's version of "How Do I Live" and Country radio embraced mine. I will forever be grateful to Country radio for taking that on and getting that song to No. 1 for me. With LeAnn's No. 1 at Pop radio, the song really became bigger than both of us and a history maker *for* both of us. It gave my career a kick in the pants and led to a CMA Female Vocalist nod and a Grammy. I credit Country radio for that success.

MCA put on a special show at CRS in 1999. The artists dressed up in '80s attire and sang disco songs. Anyway, the night just happened to coincide with my induction into the *Grand Ole Opry*. This was one of the biggest nights of my career, so my entire family was at the *Opry*. I watched my dad, Jack, get to meet his heroes that night, and just to see him chatting away with folks like Bill Anderson and Porter Wagoner was a dream come true. My mom, Gwen, had visited Nashville on her senior class trip in 1955, and she kept a diary about her experience at the Ryman. Among the *Opry* stars she had seen that night as a young girl was Hank Snow. He was at the *Opry* the night I was inducted, and my mom had him sign her diary ... full circle moments for my whole family.

After an incredible night of becoming the 71st member of the *Grand Ole Opry*, I took my entire family to CRS. We stopped by my friend Maria's beauty salon where she changed my hair to more of a wavy disco style and added a sparkly butterfly hair clip for effect. I changed into a sparkly '80s jumpsuit and added some blue eyeshadow, and off we sent to the Opryland Hotel. With my whole family in tow, I jumped onstage and belted out Donna Summer's "Hot Stuff" to a packed crowd. Around 1am, we all piled into the car and headed home. My dad, a die-hard country music fan (and *not* a disco fan) said, "Well, that was interesting. We went from 'She's In Love With The Boy' to 'Hot Stuff' all in one night!" I'll never forget that night for so many reasons. That's what music is all about!

CAC

**CONGRATULATIONS
JOE GALANTE
ON RECEIVING
COUNTRY MUSIC'S HIGHEST HONOR!**

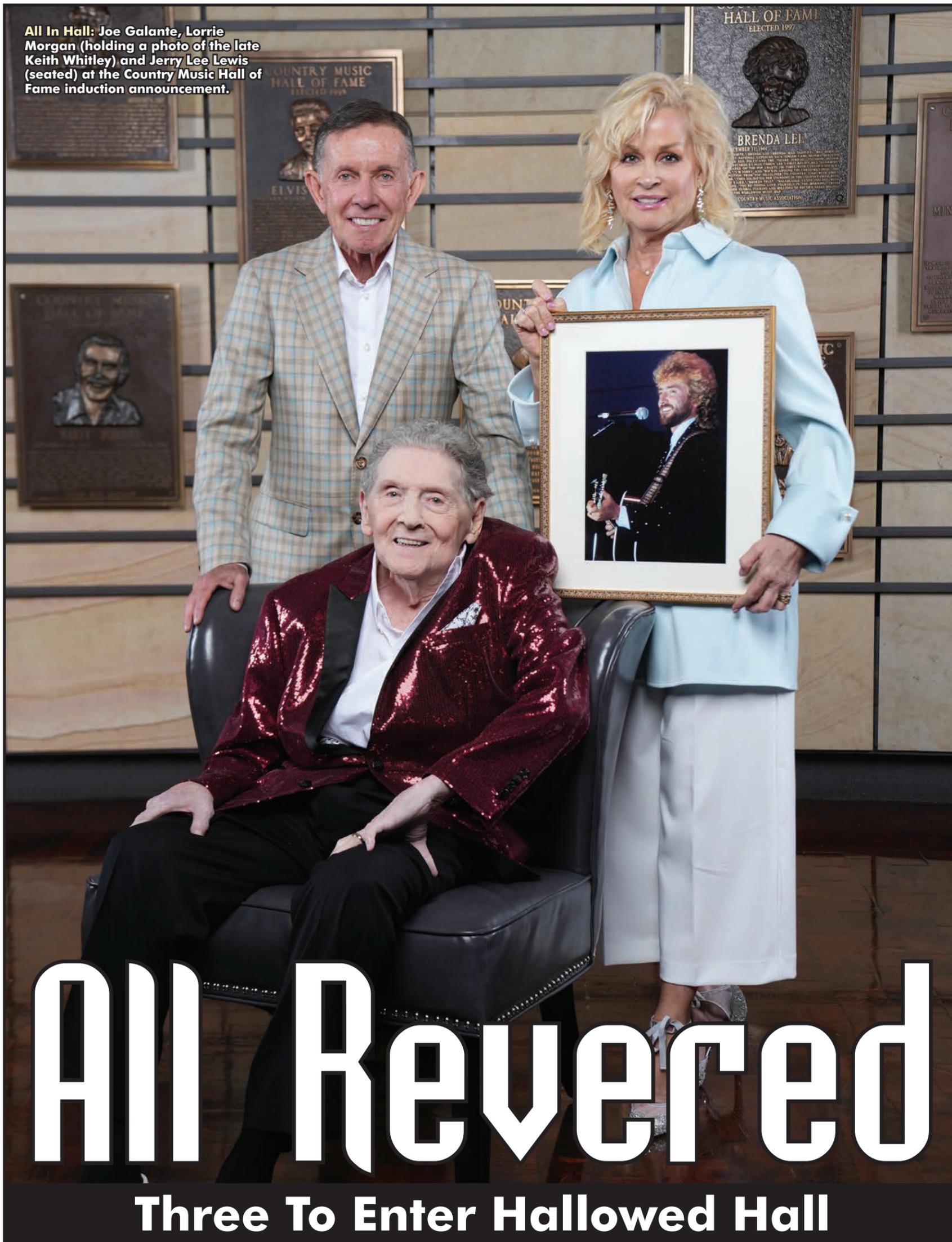
FOR 39 YEARS, YOU MADE SUCH
A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE HISTORY
OF SONY MUSIC NASHVILLE AND THE
CAREERS OF A REMARKABLE LIST OF ARTISTS.

**WELCOME TO THE
COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME.**



SONY MUSIC | NASHVILLE

All In Hall: Joe Galante, Lorrie Morgan (holding a photo of the late Keith Whitley) and Jerry Lee Lewis (seated) at the Country Music Hall of Fame induction announcement.



All Revered

Three To Enter Hallowed Hall

Arguing the most meaningful annual event in country music may be a bottomless rabbit hole, but the **Country Music Hall of Fame** Medallion ceremony – traditionally held each fall – is certainly on the short list. Last month's induction announcement serves as a prelude for all that is to come when the Class of 2022 – **Joe Galante** (Non-Performer), **Jerry Lee Lewis** (Veterans Era Artist) and the late **Keith Whitley** (Modern Era Artist) – receive their medallions this coming October.

For the first time in two years, the **Country Music Association** gathered at the **Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum** in the rotunda to announce the incoming class of inductees. Galante and Lewis were on hand, and Whitley's wife, **Lorrie Morgan**, along with daughter **Morgan** and son **Jesse Keith**, accepted on Whitley's behalf. Upon official induction, the trio will become the 147th, 148th and 149th members of the Hall of Fame, making it one of the most exclusive professional halls of fame. Established in 1961, the CMHoF has inducted fewer than 150 people, though the country music industry itself has been around for more than a century. By comparison, the Pro Football Hall of Fame, which was established in 1963 for a sport that also recently marked a century of existence, will soon award eight new gold jackets, bringing total membership to 362. And on another side of the musical spectrum, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame will add 14 members to its ranks in 2022, bringing its inductee total to 351. All to say, inclusion into the Country Music Hall of Fame is, without a doubt, extraordinary.

"To be recognized by country music with their highest honor is a humbling experience," said Lewis. "The little boy from Ferriday, LA listening to Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams never thought he'd be in a Hall amongst them." Morgan offered similar sentiments on behalf of Whitley: "In my heart, this feels like an absolutely appropriate honor, but at the same time, I know that Keith would be painfully humbled, and even shy, about accepting [induction]. Music was all about emotion to Keith; it was personal. There were so many great artists he admired and even worshiped, so to stand in their company in the Hall of Fame would've been overwhelmingly emotional for him." Galante, who served as head of RCA during Whitley's tenure as an artist, was rendered speechless at the news of his induction. "I did my job, and it was my passion," Galante noted. "I love this format and this business. When Sarah [Trahern] told me Keith [Whitley] was going in, I went, 'Okay, maybe this is the right thing for me at the right time.'"

"Our new inductees come from three very different places, but in October, they will be enshrined in the very same place," says CMHoF CEO **Kyle Young**. "Jerry Lee Lewis is a God-fearing rabble-rouser from a Mississippi River town way down South. Keith Whitley was a Lefty Frizzell-loving country boy from rural Kentucky. And Joe Galante is a game-changing executive from the urban Northeast. They all filled our worlds with music. They are all deserving of our respect and adulation, and their elections into the Country Music Hall of Fame ensure that respect and adulation will endure through the ages."

CAC

STARSEED

ENTERTAINMENT

COUNTRY ARTIST DEVELOPMENT
COMPANY AND RECORD LABEL



THE REKLAWS

• OVER 250M GLOBAL STREAMS

JAMES BARKER BAND

• OVER 250M GLOBAL STREAMS



JADE EAGLESON

• OVER 200M GLOBAL STREAMS



DEAN BRODY

• OVER 350M GLOBAL STREAMS,
MOST CONSUMED INTERNATIONALLY SIGNED ARTIST IN THE WORLD



starseedentertainment.com



@starseedent

FEW

Label promotion execs preview 2022's second half music priorities.

ARISTA

The Arista team welcomed **Nate Smith** and his debut single, "Whiskey On You," which VP/Promotion & Artist Development **Chris Schuler** calls "a consumption juggernaut that will surely be a research monster." He explains, "Since I first heard it, I can't tell you how many hours I've had the hook stuck in my head." **Old Dominion's** "No Hard Feelings" can be heard live on Kenny Chesney's *Here And Now Tour* as part of an hour-long, hit-filled set. And you can find **Morgan Wade** opening for Luke Combs and Chris Stapleton this fall as her debut single, "Wilder Days," approaches Top 20. **Ryan Hurd** continues to climb the chart with "Pass It On," the follow-up to the double-platinum No. 1 "Chasing After You." Schuler also suggests being on the lookout for a new project from **Adam Doleac**.

BIG LOUD

Jake Owen's "Best Thing Since Backroads" marches steadily through the Top 10, while **Ernest's** debut single, "Flower Shops" f/**Morgan Wallen**, blossoms. **Ashley Cooke's** debut single, "Never Til Now" f/**Brett Young**, and **Hailey Whitters'** "Everything She Ain't" are already making noise on the airways. Bringing a fresh batch of releases to accompany the stack of radio hits, the Big Loud team points to forthcoming new music from heavy hitters Owen, **Hardy**, **Chris Lane** and **Dallas Smith**. A slate of single drops is expected from **Lily Rose**, **MacKenzie Porter**, Cooke and **Madison Kozak**. Introducing new artist **Ben Burgess'** debut rounds out the year.

BIG SKY

Big Sky Music Group continues to support **Stephanie Quayle's** self-titled album through the summer with an extra focus on the reacting singles "Hang My Hat" and "Wild Frontier." The lyrics of the last track, "Light My Way," will set up what comes next from Quayle. "Our team is preparing for the most pivotal project in her career," says VP/Artist Manager **Carli [McLaughlin] Kane**. "It's unlike anything she's ever shared before and something that has reminded all of us why we got into this business in the first place." Quayle will continue her partnership with Lucchese Bootmaker, marketing her collaborative boot line via various events.

BIG MACHINE

As **Tim McGraw** and "7500 OBO" peak this July, SVP/Promotion & Digital **Kris Lamb** assures new music is scheduled to be released in the third quarter. The recently wrapped *McGraw 2022* tour averaged 17,000 tickets nightly, ranking him as one of only eight country artists on *Pollstar's* Top 50 Power Index. Following the success of his starring role in *1883*, McGraw has "never been hotter or more commercially viable than he is right now," adds Lamb. CMA and ACM Female Artist Of The Year **Carly Pearce's** "What He Didn't Do" – the follow-up to her No. 1 duet with Ashley

McBryde, "Never Wanted To Be That Girl," – recently impacted. Pearce is opening as direct support for Kenny Chesney at all amphitheaters and *Here And Now* stadium stops. **Jackson Dean's** first single debuted on the Mediabase/Country Aircheck chart higher than any new artist since 2015. Lamb elaborates, "Undeniably the new artist story of 2022, 'Don't Come Lookin' is already Top 20 and traversing the teens with a compelling research story to back up his unprecedented and sustained growth." **Callista Clark**, who had the highest charting debut single of 2021, continues to climb the chart with her sophomore single, "Gave It Back Broken." On the heels of a national and European sold-out tour, multi-platinum artists **Midland** are impacting with their new single, "Longneck Way To Go" f/**Jon Pardi**, July 18. "And as always, you can expect many more surprises and exciting projects to be released from your BMR family in Q3 and Q4," teases Lamb.

BLACK RIVER

"We have a very busy, exciting second half of the year ahead of us here," shares SVP/Promotion **Mike Wilson** due, at least in part, to the introduction of **MaRynn Taylor** and her debut single, "Every Single Summer." Wilson continues, "She's an incredible singer/songwriter who is blowing people away with her powerful vocals on our radio tour." Also on the introduction list: **Josiah Siska**. **Kelsea Ballerini's** "Heartfirst" continues to ascend the chart, and **Ray Fulcher's** "Anything Like You Dance" from debut album *Spray Painted Line* is rolling along, as well.

BMLGR

Brett Young continues picking up speed, fans and chart position with his positive twist on a heartbreak song "You Didn't," as well as with Ashley Cooke on her debut single, "Never Til Now." So says VP/Promotion & Marketing **Ryan Dokke**, who then dubs **Riley Green's** duet with Thomas Rhett, "Half Of Me," "100% summer fun." And speaking of summer, Dokke predicts **Lady A's** "Summer State Of Mind" will be "blasting at the pool, on beaches and in clubs all summer long!" The BMLGR crew will also be introducing **Shane Profit**.

BROKEN BOW

Jason Aldean follows up his 27th No. 1, "Trouble With A Heartbreak," with a new release off double album *Macon Georgia*. His *Rock & Roll Cowboy Tour* kicks off in July. "Jason continues to find and record huge hits," says VP/Promotion **Lee Adams**. "With the release of his 10th album, he's still breaking new ground and reaching the top of the charts time and time again." Following his eighth No. 1, "Thinking 'Bout You," **Dustin Lynch** is moving up the charts with current single "Party Mode." Adams asserts, "Dustin's tour personifies fun with interactive audience moments that bring 'Party Mode' to life. It's the perfect timing for this song." **Lainey Wilson's** "Heart Like A Truck," which debuted with 62 first-week adds, follows her second No. 1 and continues her brand of "country with

a flare." "This year has started off with a bang for Lainey, being the most-awarded artist at the ACMs – including New Female Artist of the Year – followed by Best New Country Artist of the Year at the *iHeartRadio Music Awards*," Adams says. Catch Wilson on tour with Jon Pardi, Morgan Wallen and Luke Combs. "We are so proud of our girl!" exclaims VP/Promotion **Shelley Hargis**. Likewise, Hargis and Adams tout more to come from new artist **John Morgan**, who is joining Aldean's tour.

CAPITOL

Carrie Underwood's *Denim & Rhinestones* was released June 10 and is "off to a fantastic start with 'Ghost Story' already climbing the chart," says VP/Promotion **Bobby Young**. "Feels like a big hit!" **Jon Pardi's** "Last Night Lonely" is his fastest moving single to date and aimed at the top of the chart. Young reports solid streaming numbers on both. "Hell Yeah" is **Little Big Town's** latest effort, with **Phillip Sweet** taking the lead. "Early indications are this is going to be big chart song for them as it continues to break through and has strong streaming numbers," Young says. "We will have a new **Keith Urban** song, 'Brown Eyes Baby,' out July 8 with a July 11 add date." New **Dierks Bentley**, "Gold," follows the chart-topping "Beers On Me," shipping July 29 and going for adds Aug. 8. "Nothing is slowing down at Capitol," Young says. "We hope to soon have new music from **Darius Rucker**, **Luke Bryan**, **Caylee Hammack** and **Mickey Guyton**, and we will be announcing new album projects from Luke, Dierks, Jon and Keith soon. Everyone is back on road, and we're all back in business with major tours. We're expecting a strong quarter!"

COLUMBIA

Columbia had a solid run of great music and live shows to kick off the year: **Luke Combs** is finishing up his stadium dates and will kick off the *Middle Of Somewhere Tour* this fall, sharing all his 13 No. 1s with fans, along with newest single "The Kind Of Love We Make." This year also brought new music from **Maren Morris** with *Humble Quest's* lead single "Circles Around This Town," which should peak later this summer. The *Humble Quest* headline tour will continue through the fall. **Elle King** is "Worth A Shot," as her new single with Dierks Bentley recently impacted Country radio. She is focused on writing and recording for her forthcoming debut country album. "Elle is proving to be a fixture in this genre," says outgoing SVP **Shane Allen**. **Mitchell Tenpenny's** "Truth About You" is a Top 20 single and quickly rising. "As a team, it's extremely gratifying to see the continued growth on both this single and Mitchell as an artist," says VP **Lauren Thomas**. Current singles by **Kameron Marlowe** and **Jameson Rodgers** will continue to be priorities through the summer.

CURB

SVP/Country Promotion **RJ Meacham** points to a strong second half of 2022 while the label's efforts remain "lean, mean and focused." **Dylan Scott's** "New Truck" is aimed at the top of the chart as new album *Livin' My Best Life* streets Aug. 5. "Dylan's got the most incredible, engaged fan base," says Meacham. "And as this single has really gotten into those big rotations at radio, their reaction at shows has been over the top. You can feel it when radio really starts spinning something." **Lee Brice's** follow up to four No. 1s in row, "Soul," is also getting the fans moving. "Just search #Ilikeyoursoul on TikTok, or go to a live show and watch the crowd on this one," Meacham reports. "It's a hit." The team is also collaborating with sister imprint **MCC** on **Tim Dugger's** "Heart Of A Small Town," which impacted mid-June. "This is a straight-up country song that is right in today's wheelhouse," according to **WXBQ/Johnson City, TN PD Nikki Thomas**. "If you're not talking to your core, I feel like you're going to miss the mark every single time ... and this speaks to our core." Meacham also speaks to the excitement for **Hannah Ellis'** "Country Can," impacting this summer. "I first heard the demo



Ashley Cooke

FREE VIEW



Pillbox Patti

on the way to *Live In The Vineyard* and knew immediately it was our single," he says. "That gut feeling has been validated over and over as the team has taken this one to radio. Hannah as an artist and person checks all the boxes: genuine, kind, fun, engaging. And the music does, as well. We can't wait for the world to hear her!"

EMI NASHVILLE

"The second half of 2022 is shaping up to be very busy – lots of exciting music headed your way," says VP/Promotion **Jimmy Rector**, who notes **Tyler Hubbard's** "5 Foot 9" is off to one of the strongest starts for a debut solo release in the history of the charts. He points to strong streaming, fan and listener/programmer reaction. "This is one we hope people will be looking up to for a long time," he says. "Convert! Convert!" **Eric Church's** "Doing Life With Me" recently hit programmers' desks. "It's a song anyone can relate to with that signature Church smoothness that just makes you want to hug your loved ones!" **Kylie Morgan** will be bringing the energy seen in her live show with "If He Wanted To He Would." Going for adds July 25, Rector vouches, "This soon-to-be anthem has already shown big numbers from social media previews and will soon be filling your airwaves making your listeners happy. If you can't relate to this song, then it might be about you." **Brothers Osborne** are in the studio and, Rector hopes, will have new music very soon. "The Grammy Award-winning brothers are a large piece of what makes our format great," he closes.

FORGE ENTERTAINMENT

Host of GSM's *Hoge Wild* **Lucas Hoge** is continuing to have a record year in 2022. Following a new deal with Vere Music (distribution through ADA), Hoge hit the road opening for Justin Moore and continues to travel the globe filming for *Hoge Wild*. Season three premieres June 27 on Sportsman Channel. The newest installment of the series is filled with outdoor adventures and exciting new partnerships with Ozark Ag, Mustang Survival and Remington Ammo. Catch Hoge's new music featured in each episode.

GRASS ROOTS

Aaron Goodvin's new single, "Boy Like Me," is, as Co-Owner/Managing Partner **Nancy Tunick** describes, "a proven hit," having recently scored a No. 1 in Canada. The single is from his Warner Canada/Reviver EP *Lucky Stars*. VP **Renee McClure** recounts Goodvin's 67 million streams as well as a double-platinum certification, six Top 10 singles and nine CCMA nominations in addition to his continued touring of both Canada and the US. **Ashley Barron** brings an encouraging anthem to radio with her latest single, "The Wind," while **Casey Donahew** has risen from a favorite on the Texas scene to a national touring act. His latest album, *Built Different*, features current radio single "Telling On My Heart." Brother-and-sister duo **Juna N Joey** are spinning at radio with "Til Your Heart Breaks," and **Paige King Johnson** defines success in the lead single off of her new full-length album, *Honky Tonk Heart*, "Famous Enough." "These artists and songs connect with listeners through their distinctive voices and authentic lyrics in a time when connection is critical," Tunick sums.

MAGNOLIA DEBUT

Flagship artist **Randy Houser** brings "one of the best voices in the genre" (*Rolling Stone*) back to radio as debut single "Note To Self" climbs the charts, with *MusicRow* praising, "his return is most welcome with such a strong song of regretful hindsight." Dubbed "one of country's finest" by CMT, Houser will continue to release new music throughout the year leading to a Q4 album release. After kicking off 2022 with a stretch of headlining shows, the "captivating as ever" (*Billboard*) road warrior will continue to tour throughout the summer before joining Cody Johnson in arenas this fall. Along with preparing

new music and a relentless touring schedule, Houser landed on-screen roles in Martin Scorsese's upcoming film *Killers Of The Flower Moon* starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro and more, as well as the inspiring *The Hill* starring Dennis Quaid.

MCA

SVP/Promotion **Katie Dean** promises **Jordan Davis** is "back in a big way" with "What My World Spins Around," continuing his streak of "huge hits, all certified platinum and still in rotation." **Sam Hunt** "Water Under The Bridge" is out now at radio, and brand new music from **Parker McCollum** will land at radio in early July. **Kassi Ashton** continues her chart ascent with "Dates In Pickup Trucks," while **Kip Moore** is in the studio readying his newest album.

MERCURY

Priscilla Block's "My Bar" is "the place to be this summer," stresses SVP/Promotion **Damon Moberly**, as she prepares for leg two (fall) of the *Welcome To The Block Party* tour and more new music coming soon. **Chris Stapleton's** "Joy Of My Life" sounds "like the love song of the summer," describes Moberly, who also reports



Nate Smith

Stapleton has been working on a new album due next year. Also in the studio is **Travis Denning**, who joins Dierks Bentley this summer and will link up with the Jake Owen tour in the fall. **Maddie and Tae** have finished a new collection of music, *Through The Madness Vol. 2*, due in fall, and the Mercury team is excited to welcome and launch Nashville's own **Boy Named Banjo**.

MONUMENT

Coming off a "massive" 2021 with **Walker Hayes' "Fancy Like"** leading the way, Monument jumped into 2022 making waves at Country radio with his "AA" and a new single from **Caitlyn Smith**, "Downtown Baby." "With Walker delivering his second consecutive platinum single and Caitlyn off to a fantastic start with 'Downtown Baby,' 2022 is set to be our biggest year yet," says VP/Promotion **Luke Jensen**. "New music is expected from Hayes this summer, setting him up to deliver his third hit single

in a row, while Smith has a new project expected later this year and is set to head back to Vegas with George Strait this winter." Also look out for new music from **Alex Hall**, **Brandon Ratcliff**, sister-duo **Tigirlily** and new artist **Pillbox Patti** this year.

QUARTZ HILL

"This year has started out fantastically, and we are excited to continue building on the successes of both **Joe Nichols** and **Thompson Square**," says VP/Promotion & Marketing **Will Robinson**. "Both these iconic acts have been missed on County radio and by country fans coast-to-coast." He reiterates, "Current singles 'Good Day For Living' and 'Country In My Soul' have both struck a chord, and we are committed to taking both Joe and Thompson Square back to the top of the charts." Robinson reveals **Nate Barnes** has been busy creating "great new music," and the team is looking forward to delivering a new single this summer. "We are excited to be 'unapologetically country,' and you can count on Quartz Hill Records to continue to bring authentic country music to the format," he wraps.

RCA

"Thank you for the incredible support on **Kane Brown's** 'Like I Love Country Music,'" begins SVP/Promotion **Dennis Reese**. "Clearly radio is making this the song of the summer." Chris Young is following last year's "huge smash" "Famous Friends" with "At The End Of A Bar" joined by Mitchell Tenpenny. Reese attributes "strong research across the entire country" as they aim at No. 1. **Restless Road** spent the last two years building fan and touring bases, as well as socials. The team landed on "Growing Old With You" after seeing organic growth at DSPs. "This song is reacting week after week and has been called the 'wedding song of 2022' with fans singing it louder than the band at their shows," Reese says. **Niko Moon** is back with "Easy Tonight," and Reese extols Moon's brand of fun, up-tempo country music as something "we all need after being locked up for the last two years." Following her Top 10 hit "If I Was A Cowboy," **Miranda Lambert's** next release will be "Strange," impacting July 18. "But why wait to play another great song from one of the superstars of the format?" Reese asks.

RECORDS

Erin Kinsey's "Just Drive" has reached more than 30 million global streams, according to EVP/Promotion & Commercial Strategy **Josh Easler**. That and **Matt Stell's** "Man Made" are continuing priorities. Next up, **George Birge** with "Mind On You." "George is as authentic as they come and something our format needs right now," says WGAR/Cleveland PD **Carletta Blake**. "This song shows his songwriting talent and sets the stage for him to become the next Aldean." All three artists will be on the road this summer and fall.

RED STREET RECORDS DEBUT

After kicking the year off with the launch of a country division, Red Street Records is prioritizing flagship artist **Ryan Griffin** and his single "Salt, Lime & Tequila," and newest signees **Neon Union (Leo Brooks and Andrew Millsaps)**, whose launch will be a focus in the latter half of 2022. "We will be going to Country radio and all of the DSPs with new music and a full-blown radio tour in the fall," pledges VP/Radio Promotions & Artist Development **Johnny Chiang**.

REVIVER

In 2020, **Ian Flanigan** finished as a finalist on NBC's *The Voice* and his recent single, "Grow Up" f/Blake Shelton, has more than two million streams. That song and "Last Name On It" will be included on an 11-track, Craig Alvin, Todd Lombardo, Obie O'Brien and Phil Nicolo-produced album due this year. As previously mentioned, **Aaron Goodvin's** new single, "Boy Like Me," recently topped the chart in Canada. Known for her "clarion voice" (*Associated Press*), **Brooke Moriber's** "powerhouse vocals and emotional songwriting have connected with audiences from New York City to Nashville, the two towns she calls home," says Founder/Pres./CPO **David Ross**, noting her aggregate streams exceed one million. **David Adam Byrnes** has enjoyed six back-to-back No. 1s on Texas Regional Radio and will play more than 125 shows in 2022. His most recent album, *Neon Town*, debuted Top 5 on iTunes Country and received positive reviews from CMT, Wide Open Country and more, Ross says. **Steven Keene's** work is "favorably compared to the songwriting of Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie and Leonard Cohen," raves Ross, noting Keene began performing his earliest material at New York City's The Speakeasy, the now-closed singer/songwriter folk club staple.

RISER HOUSE

Summer 2022 brings the continuation of **Dillon Carmichael's** "Son Of A" and additional tour dates on the *Son Of A Tour*, including a slew of support dates with Brooks & Dunn, Cody Johnson and the Moores – Justin and Kip. A deluxe version of *Son Of A* is in the works with collaborations and previously unreleased tracks. Following the release of **Coffey Anderson's** debut EP, *Come On With It*, SVP/Promotion **Bob Reeves** says, "Whether or not you're hip to 'Mr. Red, White, And Blue' and its 87+ million streams, we hope you'll give 'America Is My Hometown' a listen." The team is starting the process at secondary radio this summer. "My Left Hand," **Meghan Patrick's** ode to her engagement and pending nuptials to label Co-Founder and Columbia artist **Mitchell Tenpenny**, is currently building a streaming story, as well as nearing 10 million pre-release TikTok



Jordan Fletcher

views. Reeves tabs it as the go-to wedding song of the summer. "While Patrick continues to rack up accolades in her native Ontario, Canada, we hope we will finally get to do a full radio tour this fall and truly launch her career here in the states," says Reeves.

SHOW DOG

Singer, songwriter, entertainer, artist and label owner **Toby Keith** has released the second single from *Peso In My Pocket*, "Oklahoma Breakdown," going for adds this summer. The song follows the album's first single, "Old School," which enjoyed the highest chart debut of Keith's storied career. The Show Dog team will continue to promote **Clay Walker** and his second single from *Texas To Tennessee*, "Catching Up With An Ol' Memory."

STONE COUNTRY RECORDS DEBUT

"**Easton Corbin** is back with some great country music," boasts VP/Promotion & Marketing **Matt Galvin**. "He's been busy the first half of the year on the sold-out Cody Johnson tour, and the second half of the year is full of tour dates." Corbin's label debut, "I Can't Decide," is out now, and Galvin says Country radio is "so glad he is back!" **Ben Gallaher** is continuing his radio promo tour and recently finished his album. "With a voice that stands out, a writer of more than 300 songs and one of the best guitar players on the planet, the buzz is real on Ben Gallaher," stresses Galvin. Both Corbin and Gallaher will drop albums in late 2022.

STONEY CREEK

VP/Innovation, Radio & Streaming **Adrian Michaels** opens noting the Stoney Creek team is on a "hot streak" with five artists in the Mediabase Top 50: **Parmalee**, **Jimmie Allen**, **Lindsay Ell**, **Frank Ray** and **Jelly Roll**, the latter two making their debuts. Parmalee's follow-up to "Just The Way," "Take My Name," is having chart success and an impressive consumption story with more than 150 million total on-demand streams, according to Michaels. Look for a new single in Q3 (after the current one reaches the top) and an upcoming national TV appearance. Fresh off 75 national television appearances, co-hosting the ACMs and winning ACM and CMA awards, Allen is nearing Top 30 with the debut single from his forthcoming album *Tulip Drive* (6/24), "Down Home." Allen joins Carrie Underwood on tour this fall. Ray is nearing Top 20 with his debut single, "Country'd Look Good On You," which Michaels shares is "showing strong testing and has recently converted in Boston, Philadelphia, Miami, Indianapolis and Cincinnati." Ray's new EP will be released Aug. 12. Jelly Roll is Top 30 only 10 weeks after impacting "Son Of A Sinner," which has also racked up 41.5 million on-demand streams. Michaels explains Mr. Roll is staying busy visiting Country radio while touring with Brantley Gilbert, Koe Wetzel and Shinedown this fall. He hints a "big national television event" is on the horizon.

TRIPLE TIGERS

"The second half of 2022 continues to be all about focus," says SVP/Promotion **Kevin Herring**. **Scotty McCreery** will be following up the fastest-moving song of his career, "Damn Strait," with a positive, up-tempo track, "It Matters To Her," impacting early September. Likewise, **Russell Dickerson** is also riding the wave of his fastest growing track, already sporting more than 100 million worldwide streams with "She Likes It." He's in the studio finishing up his third project for the label, an EP planned for August. **Jordan Fletcher** is the first new artist introduced on the label in nearly three years, and Herring promises he's "well worth the wait!" Fletcher's Dave Cobb-produced album features lead single "Death And Taxes," a song about the life lessons a father leaves his son. He's currently on radio tour with a single impact date in mid-July.

VALORY

The imprint kicked off the summer celebrating **Thomas Rhett's** 19th No. 1, "Slow Down Summer," from his No. 1 debuting album *Where We Started*. VP/Promotion & Marketing **Chris Palmer** predicts the summer will get even hotter with current single "Half Of Me," f/Riley Green. Rhett's *Bring The Bar to You Tour* will also feature labelmate **Conner Smith**, whose debut single, "Learn From It," continues to climb the charts. With more than 55 million streams to date, Smith is validating his place on several 2022 artists-to-watch lists. **Justin Moore** is on pace to top the charts again with current single "With A Woman You Love" and, speaking of chart toppers, **Eli Young Band** recently released their sixth studio album, *Love Talking*, featuring their single of the same name. **Aaron Lewis** started the new year with his No. 1 album *Frayed At Both Ends*, featuring current single "Someone." "As we write the next chapter for the Valory Music Co., an integral part of that will be **Tiera Kennedy**," shares Valory VP/Promotion & Digital **Ashley Sidoti**. "We will be bringing this impressive young artist and her music out to radio in the coming months." Both Sidoti and Palmer add, "Hold a spot on your playlist now ... you're welcome." Stay tuned for new music from **Brantley Gilbert**, **Tyler Rich**, **Abbey Cone**, **Kidd G** and **Mackenzie Carpenter**, too.

WAR

Gabby Barrett's "Pick Me Up" is climbing the charts and racking up consumption numbers. Upcoming milestones include serving as direct support on Jason Aldean's summer tour before welcoming her second child (it's a boy!) this fall. "We're witnessing Gabby Barrett's ascent to superstar status right before our eyes," beams Dir./National Radio Promotion **Michael Chase**. The Grammy-

winning **Zac Brown Band** are a top priority with "Out In The Middle." *The Comeback* showcases ZBB's original southern rock sound, and "Out In The Middle" delivers "exactly what Country radio listeners expect from one of country music's most successful artists," Chase says. *Grand Ole Opry* member **Chris Janson** is unlocking airplay with "Keys To The Country." "Radio wants tempo and infectious hooks, and 'Keys To The Country' does not disappoint," Chase asserts. Janson's fourth studio album, *All In*, features 16 tracks including the single and a collaboration with Eric Church. He plays fairs and festivals this summer before heading out on the road this fall for a co-headlining tour with Travis Tritt. **Tyler Braden's** "Try Losing One" impacts Country radio in August with, what Chase calls, "unmatched vocals and lyrics that cut through the clutter." Prior to signing to Warner, Braden served as a first responder and firefighter in Alabama and Brentwood, TN. Now he's notched more than 120 million streams and a place in the finals of NBC's *American Song Contest*.

WEA

Kenny Chesney's "Everyone She Knows" is aimed at following its predecessor, his 34th No. 1 "Knowing You," to the top. Chesney continues to pack stadiums on his *Here And Now Tour*, which includes 40 shows across the country and will close with a two-night stand at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough. Three-time Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter **Ingrid Andress** is nearing the Top 20 with "Wishful Drinking" w/Sam Hunt. Performed by the pair on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, the song has earned more than 125 million global streams. With her sophomore album due Aug. 26, Andress is spending the summer and early fall on Keith Urban's *The Speed of Now World Tour*. **Michael Ray** followed up his fourth No. 1 and first multi-week chart topper, "Whiskey And Rain," with current single "Holy Water." The song has been described as "[working] brilliantly" and "packing a punch with haunting electric guitar punctuations" (*MusicRow*). The Florida native is spending the summer on Lee Brice's *Label Me Proud Tour*, "rising to a new level of stardom on every stop," says Dir./National Radio Promotion **Stephanie Hagerty**. **Bailey Zimmerman** has amassed more than one million followers across his social channels, and his forthcoming radio debut, "Fall In Love," is now hitting nearly eight million streams per week. The label notes it has had higher consumption in its first 11 weeks than 14 of the 15 Country Aircheck No. 1 singles in 2022. Hagerty adds, "Through his plainspoken charm, contagious enthusiasm and genuine portrayal of life on the back roads, the up-and-comer has already attracted a loyal and passionate fan base."

WHEELHOUSE

An exciting second half of 2022 for Wheelhouse can be attributed to the debut from newcomer **Kolby Cooper**, "Excuses," as well the sure-to-be-wedding-favorite from **Blanco Brown**, "I'll Never." Cooper, who VP/Promotion **Ken Tucker** reports is already filling venues from Kansas City to Starkville, MS, is "an exceptionally talented 22-year-old who somehow writes songs that show a depth of understanding well beyond his years." Meanwhile, Brown – fresh off the multi-platinum (12x) "The Git Up" and "Just The Way" with Parmalee – has written what Tucker calls "a love song for the ages." Add chart climbers from **Chayce Beckham** and **Lindsay Ell**, **Elvie Shane** and **LoCash** f/Mike Love and Bruce Johnston, and Tucker anticipates Wheelhouse "has a recipe for success."

WMN

Cody Johnson is prepared to match the success of platinum-certified, two-week No. 1 "Til You Can't" with his new single, "Human." *MusicRow* raved, "I didn't think it was possible to follow a perfect performance like 'Til You Can't,' but this stunning meditation on frailty and mistakes is just as breathtaking. This man is dusted with the glitter of superstardom." Catch Johnson on his headlining tour and select stadium dates with Luke Combs. This summer, **Cole Swindell** will follow his back-to-back multi-week No. 1 singles "Single Saturday Night" and "Never Say Never" with fan favorite "She Had Me At Heads Carolina." Paying homage to Jo Dee Messina's classic, the song hails from *Stereotype*, which Dir./National Radio Promotion **Chris Fabiani** declares "cemented Cole as a country music superstar." With two gold certified albums, nine platinum hits and seven No. 1 singles, **Brett Eldredge** continues at Country radio with the title track from his newest album, *Songs About You*. Fabiani describes it as a "soulful and upbeat reminder of all those songs that take you to a particular time and place in your life." The album was released June 17, with the *Songs About You Tour* kicking off two days later. **Jessie James Decker** has more than 30 million streams and close to 300,000 equivalents for her female anthem "Should Have Known Better." Decker continues to tour while running four retail locations for her fashion brand, Kittenish, and connecting with her six million social media followers. "We are excited to introduce **Breland** to Country radio later this year," says Fabiani, who touts more than 550 million global streams and a No. 1 song with Dierks Bentley already under his belt. He adds, "Warner Music Nashville can't wait to bring his enthusiasm, authenticity and upbeat energy to you and your listeners with a radio single coming this fall and his highly anticipated debut album due later in the year!" Finally, keep an eye out for new music from 28-time chart-topper **Blake Shelton**. **CAC**



Ben Gallaher

TRUE INTEGRATION



Zetta[®]

Automation

GSelector[®]

Music Scheduling

Revma[™]

Streaming

Aquira[®]

Traffic

RCSCloud

Peace-of-Mind

RCS2GO[®]

Mobile

SPOTIFY'S Brittany Schaffer & Rachel Whitney

Years ago, this publication asked Sony/Nashville Chairman Randy Goodman if streaming services were more like physical retail accounts where labels aimed to place product and purchase endcaps, or more like radio stations where music was promoted for airplay. He replied, "Yes." At Spotify/Nashville, Head/Artist & Label Partnerships Brittany Schaffer and Head/Editorial Rachel Whitney are perhaps the embodiment of that reality. Below, they explain that internal structure, who Spotify's country audience is, and their roles advocating for country music across the company and the platform.

CA: How big is Spotify's Nashville operation?

Rachel Whitney: We've grown a lot over the pandemic. I will have added three people on my team before the end of the month.

Brittany Schaffer: I was the sixth person to join Spotify's office here four-and-a-half years ago. Since then, Spotify's footprint in Nashville has almost quadrupled. Several different teams happen to be based here, the majority being the music team. My team has more than doubled in size since I joined, and then the music team as a whole has, as Rachel was saying, grown exponentially. As have the support teams, whether that's social, creative, marketing – there's been a real commitment from Spotify to support the work we do outside of just people on the music team.

So, there are more than 20 people here, supported by more out of New York?

BS: Our U.S. headquarters is in New York. There is also a large presence in Los Angeles and offices around the U.S. Each has its own focus. Obviously, in Nashville, it's primarily the music team. Some offices are heavy in engineering, ad sales or other parts of the company. Spotify's U.S. presence has expanded dramatically since I joined in 2018.

RW: Somewhere in there, we've got the editorial team – more than 150 music editors around the world. The Nashville team covers all the music that comes out in the genres we oversee for the U.S., and we work closely with our global teams that cover local genre releases. Our Nashville editorial team

THE INTERVIEW

covers rock and alternative, Christian and gospel, country and folk, and roots music and Americana. We cover country music that comes out of Nashville, Texas and Canada.

BS: Similarly, our partnerships team in Nashville is not genre specific. We are focused on any music that's coming out of Nashville, whether that's labels that release music from here or artists that make Nashville their home. Country is obviously a very significant part of the work we do.

The editorial and partnerships pillars strike me as the old newspaper arrangement where reporters and salespeople were on different floors ... or the radio cliché about jocks and suits.

BS: Spotify has always felt strongly about having healthy editorial and partnerships teams – keeping those separate, but also keeping them closely aligned. We do everything together but with a different focus. From the partnerships perspective, it's understand what labels and artists are focused on. The editorial team is really focused on the listener and the culture. Those two often go hand-in-hand, but there's sometimes a healthy tension.

Beyond editorial and partnerships, there are activations like Spotify House at CMA Fest. What are those additional aspects specific to country?

BS: I put what we do as a music team into five categories. First, we track and support new releases for established and emerging artists, whether they are signed or independent. Second, we partner with those artists on creative ways of reaching new audiences and engaging their fan bases. That may look like billboards, social media campaigns or artist release activations – it can really run the gamut.

We also celebrate the culture and lifestyle of the country music community, which is how you might find us leaning into award shows or *CMA Fest*. That's where our audience and the artists are engaged so we, likewise, engage and have a presence in those moments.

RW: That's also where playlist marketing around moods and moments comes in. Playlists like Party Cove or Country Cookout – dialing into listeners where they are.

BS: The fourth area is identifying and highlighting trends. For instance, the '90s country trend we saw this past fall. The fifth area is focusing on how to be advocates for country music across the whole company. How does country music and how do country artists fit into larger Spotify initiatives – podcasting, ad sales, music offerings and discovery. Rachel, in particular, has spent a lot of time focused on that since she's been at Spotify, and it's been a real game-changer for how we elevate country music.

What does that country advocacy look like in practice?

RW: For instance, making sure new artists are represented in our RADAR program. Some of these global marketing programs can be really impactful, and we want to make sure country is in consideration. Also, making sure we are celebrating our Black creators in the Frequency program, making sure we're celebrating our women creators in the Equal program – identifying talent and making sure they're being supported.

The investment we're willing to make in capturing cultural movements is reflected in what we did with the Indigo playlist. A few years ago, we noticed a lot of great music coming out of country that wasn't quite the Hot Country mainstream but obviously still part of the genre. That inspired the creation of Indigo. And, it's one thing for our music curators to say, "We need this space for current, alt-country Americana music." It's another thing for the company to get behind it. And, Spotify really did.



Hi Fy: Schaffer (l) and Whitney.

That was already in progress when I started, but I got to be behind the scenes when we launched that playlist alongside an impactful marketing campaign. It spoke to people. We knew that it wasn't going to be the biggest playlist on the platform, but it wasn't intended to compete with something like Hot Country. It has created a kind of language and community in that space and, when music raises its hand there, we can move it over. We've had some success in that way with

artists like Morgan Wade and Zach Bryan.

BS: That's also a great example of how closely

our teams work together. A lot of the insight behind that came from conversations happening in the office between the editorial team and partnerships team. There's clearly an audience for this music, but where does that live on-platform? Kacey Musgraves, Chris Stapleton, and even Eric Church have great success in Hot Country, but sometimes there are songs that sonically are not the best fit. We realized there's a gap, and that realization didn't have to come top-down to get addressed. If you've got an insight and there seems to be a real audience, Spotify is willing to engage.

What's an average day for each of you?

BS: Right now, it's getting up and feeding the baby, but when I'm not on maternity leave, it's always different. Our team is focused on tracking all the new releases and making sure that information is translated to the editorial and other teams across Spotify. We are also looking for ways to support those new releases through various on- and off-platform opportunities. That may be looking at what's going on with the New Music Friday or Nashville billboards we have. It could be supporting on socials or more long-term planning for a large album release marketing campaign. We spend a lot of time looking at new music and trends, talking to label partners and managers. We are also engaging with the trade organizations – CMA and ACM when they have events, the Country Music Hall of Fame when they have a new inductee class. And then planning big marketing activations, like a *CMA Fest*, where our team books 50-plus artists, identifies how we engage with fans on the ground, and creates an artist space that's a respite from the heat and chaos.

RW: On our side, the best way I've found to explain it is almost like a newspaper. We have a publishing deadline of 11pm CT Thursday. We get up Monday morning and start listening to music. As a team, we're pitching for our all-genre spaces



like New Music Friday. We're making sure any releases that might cross over into different genres are put in front of the right people. We're tracking anything going viral on Spotify or social media and communicating that across our broader team. Music meetings are usually Tuesday, Wednesday, we do all the real new music listening, and every editor is listening to hundreds of songs; it's cram time. Historically, the Spotify team has done an incredible job setting the expectation that listeners are going to discover bands and artists that they've never heard of every single week. We honor that in how we program. If you are an artist that has never had a listener before, we have a home for you – if your music is good.

What's that process for music and for your team?

RW: We're listening through our pitch tool, moving songs into playlists, and then onto a path through the playlists. We recently relaunched New Music Nashville as New Music Friday Country, which will be our home week-over-week for brand new releases. The songs and artists trending out of that go into From Nashville, which is our rising stars playlist. For new singles from established stars as well as songs we see trending with listeners, it's New Boots. Then, obviously, Hot Country is our flagship with a strong variety of music combining new tracks from superstars we know our listeners are going to be looking for, songs we've seen move through the system, and the best performing songs by artists from a variety of backgrounds. We get to take a lot of risks, but all those artists have earned a spot.

Thursday night, everything goes live. Friday, we make sure everything got published properly, [playlist cover images] are updated, and then we review our mood and moments playlists. Then we start all over again Monday. On top of that, we also speak into the cultural voice of Spotify – aligning with the partnerships team on who we're booking for *CMA Fest*, making sure the marketing team has what they need to celebrate these seasonal moments in country music ...

BS: We have a lot of meetings.

RW: We do. And, my job is to try and make sure my team doesn't.

When you say a song or artist is raising its hand, what specifically are you seeing?

RW: A variety of things. Overall, the cultural context of the song, the artist, the moment. Is there something happening with an awards show, on social media or how it's performing in our system? What percentage of the listening is organic? If we have it in a playlist, how many times is it getting skipped compared to other things? How many times is it getting saved into another user playlist? How many streams is it getting compared to other songs on a playlist?

Do you have a picture of who the heavy country listener is?

RW: Every playlist has its own unique audience. The platform covers a lot of ground with demographics and psychographics.

You have access to that data?

RW: To a point. We find that our listener trends younger than the mainstream audience. We can see it in the songs that resonate on some of our bigger playlists. And each playlist connects with different listeners. We don't have a singular view; we ask, "Who are all the people who love country music in all of its colors and shapes? Can we have a destination for them, a recommendation, that makes Spotify

their destination for country listening, regardless of what they prefer?"

BS: When we're doing marketing campaigns or looking at how best to engage with fans, we don't have to pick the 35-year-old woman driving her kids to school. We can segment moments and opportunities to lean into a teen audience, college students, or listeners who love straight-down-the-middle music you'd hear on Hot Country, the radio or anywhere else.

We sometimes refer to bridge artists, who have an audience that may not consider themselves country fans but love Kacey Musgraves, for example. For country streaming to reach the levels seen in pop, hip-hop and Latin, we have to find listeners who can widen the base.

Are there bridge listeners? Can you see when listeners sample, discover and dive deeper into country?

RW: We're not really looking at it like that. We can see when artists like Zach take off and the rising tide lifting all boats.

BS: Remember, there's a whole other part of the Spotify ecosystem that is algorithmic. That's where lists like Discover Weekly come into play. You may have become a Zach Bryan fan, so what is that next artist you're fed who you haven't listened to before?

RW: Some people just want to hit play, and whatever comes up is going to be good enough. And some really want to be in control of their experience. One of the things that's special is country fans trust us to deliver a great experience. We have more country listeners who listen to music they find on the homepage than any other genre.

Labels have built out whole departments devoted to working with you and other DSPs. What's that side of streaming growth been like? Are you inundated with pitch calls?

RW: We're thrilled streaming is impactful in a way that has driven that. What happens behind the scenes that labels know but maybe isn't as visible externally is how much a label or artist can do on the platform without ever having my email. Independent artists can upload their music, pitch it to our team and, potentially, make it onto a playlist. They can set their feature track, create a [moving image] canvas and add a tip jar or donation link. We've done a lot of work to democratize that process over the last three or four years.

BS: In 2021 streaming was 83% of all recorded music revenue. That requires us all to take what we do more seriously. Streaming is no longer an afterthought when artists are thinking about how to release and market their music. It's on equal footing if not driving the conversation. We can be better partners because we're getting more information with a longer lead time.

We are getting more music more frequently, which does make our jobs more challenging in some ways. In other ways, it makes for more of a long-term conversation beyond day or week of release to building and sustaining careers.

You say that, and the conversation I hear in my head is someone calling to question the one-off TikTok sensation getting a prime playlist slot over the signed artist who has sustained a successful touring career.

RW: It's so interesting you say that, because I actually had someone reach out with questions about an artist we recently had on Hot Country. By the way, new artists who go viral on social media still have to work their way through our playlists. Just because something is viral other places on the internet doesn't mean that it's going to work in New Boots.

That said, it's fundamentally critical for me and my team that our work is not 100% driven by what the major labels are doing. If that's what we're doing, we're not actually doing our jobs. Our job is to help listeners discover music they're going to love. Full stop.

BS: We're looking at a number of different data points – social media, hard ticket sales, festivals, radio, other streaming platforms, who publishers are signing. Knowing who the team is around an artist is certainly an important piece. And then, for instance, seeing if what's happening on a social platform is happening with Spotify listeners.

A great viral moment may create exposure for that artist that doesn't translate to meaningful streaming success. Hopefully we instill enough integrity in the decision-making process that people respect what we're doing.

RW: We're always looking at the whole artist – what else are they doing? Are they on the road? Are they working on an album? But the reality is that some artists don't get those chances as often as others. Typically, they're women. So, we may make adjustments to create space for artists that deserve a home in a playlist like Hot Country, even if they don't have the same exact setup as a superstar.

Music is now often started in the streaming world before going to radio. How do you handle it when airplay peaks months later? Do you feel that with listeners?

RW: We might re-add a song to Hot Country if it's starting to raise its hand on an awards show or a chart. While we're committed to making sure listeners discover something new if that's the experience they want, we need to have some element of familiarity for those listeners who come in from off-platform looking for country music. You want it to feel like home. If nothing sounds familiar, you've lost them.

When a song gets to peak exposure, do you see skip rates go up?

BS: We can see that. But that speaks to what Rachel said about having various types of listeners. A very engaged music consumer may want to skip at that point, but to a more casual listener, it's still fairly new.

RW: More often than not, the problem is having so much great music that it becomes a very challenging decision about what to remove from a playlist. It's rare we're pulling things off because they don't perform well. It's more likely that we need to create space for new music.

What do you wish people knew about Spotify that they don't?

BS: Rachel touched on this, but I wish artists and their teams would spend as much time focused on how they can directly control engagement with fans on the platform as they do on playlisting. So many tools through Spotify For Artists are incredible and free – access to the data, uploading a canvas, sharing to socials.

RW: You do not need anyone on my team to know your name to be extraordinarily successful on Spotify, which is built for creators and their teams to drive their own careers. How we engage on the editorial side with playlists is part of the universe, but it's not the only thing happening.

Easier and more effective than hammering you with phone calls and emails, I suppose?

RW: It doesn't actually work like that anymore. Someone can tell my team about a song, but if the listener doesn't respond, that's just the reality. It's always good to get a reminder if something's starting to pop up on an artist's dashboard or if there's a big TV moment coming up. But generally speaking, we've got a really good communication system through our pitch tool. The partnerships team keeps up with the stories artists are building, and we communicate about that. So, it's not like I answer phone calls all week.

BS: That's my team's job. Our partners are really great, and maybe one of the biggest shifts in the last several years is everyone getting into a groove working together because, the reality is, we all need each other.

CAC



DYLAN SCOTT NEW TRUCK POWER UP!

CURB
RECORDS
curb.com

LEE BRICE **SOUL** CONVERT NOW!

CURB
RECORDS
curb.com



TIM DUGGER HEART OF A SMALL TOWN IMPACTING NOW

MCC
CURB
CURB
RECORDS
curb.com

Hannah Geller COUNTRY CAN COMING THIS SUMMER

CURB
RECORDS
curb.com



“Eldredge continues with his brand of smooth, easygoing grooves that highlight his endless vocal charisma...”

billboard

*brett
eldredge
songs
about
you*

THE NEW ALBUM
FEATURING THE SINGLE “SONGS ABOUT YOU”
AVAILABLE EVERYWHERE NOW

