

RADIO HALL
OF FAMERS

WHY SONGS ARE
GETTING SHORTER



RADIO ONE'S
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THE INTERVIEW



COUNTRY AIRCHECK

SEPTEMBER
2024

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Why Songs Are Getting Shorter

AND WHAT IT MEANS

A funny thing happened on the way to putting together the countdown: an extra song was needed. While assembling the three-hour show each week, *Country Countdown USA* producer George Achaves noticed a decline in song run times, told host Lon Helton ... and a Country Aircheck investigation was underway.



George Achaves

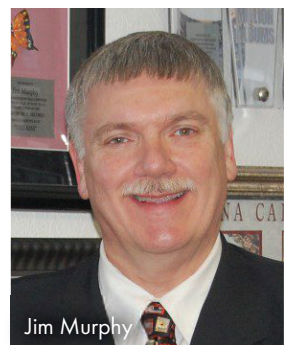
Remarkably, among the top 20 airplay songs of each year over the last decade, there's only one longer than four minutes. Luke Combs' "Fast Car" clocks in at 4:14 – but was written in 1987. Finding another top 20 song longer than four minutes means going back to 2014 for Eric Church's "Give Me Back My Hometown" (4:12) and Miranda Lambert's "Automatic" (4:07). Average run times haven't dropped this low since the 1980s (see graph next page).

Cable TV music provider Music Choice runs 60 minutes of music every hour – no talk, no commercials – offering a clean look at the data. "Since 2014, the average song length has gone from 3:27 to 3:11," says Head/Country Programming Jim Murphy. "On the surface that doesn't seem like a whole lot, except when you see that on an almost year-by-year basis, it gets shorter by one or two seconds. I now have about 250 more spins in an average week than I had in 2014. I've had to add positions on my clocks in just the six years I've been with the company."

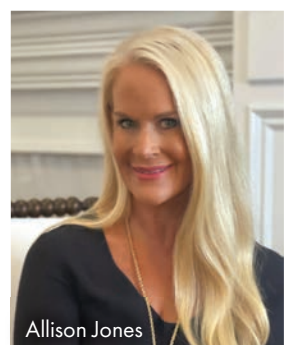
While the shortest songs don't seem to be getting shorter, the longest songs definitely are (see sidebar next page). "There was a time when we'd have a lot of four-minute songs," Achaves says. "Those were the days of Diane Warren and Dave Loggins. 'How Do I Live' was 4:26. Those days are no more."

"I'm playing one current song that's over four minutes – The Frontmen 'Beatles And Eagles' at 4:46," Murphy says. "My next closest is Cody Johnson's 'Dirt Cheap' at 3:59. So it's not just power ballads, but also story songs becoming more rare."

BMLG EVP/A&R Allison Jones definitely sees the shift. "Lorrie Morgan's



Jim Murphy



Allison Jones

‘Something In Red’ was the first big song I was a part of,” she says. [Ed. Note: 4:38.] “What a genius piece of work – an emotional journey. There is no way that could happen now. Even with our Tom Petty tribute record, those versions are shorter than the originals, probably because the artists are so conscious of that. If a song



had a bridge with lyrics followed by an instrumental bridge like we used to do, I wonder if it would even make it through.” Could the decline be a throwback to an earlier time? “In all fairness, a lot of songs from the ‘70s and ‘80s were verse, chorus, turnaround and repeat the chorus,” says Universal Music Publishing/Nashville Chairman/CEO **Troy Tomlinson**. “Writers in those days would have a few beers at lunch, come back to finish the song and go, ‘Hell, we don’t need another verse. Just repeat the chorus.’ And those songs were getting cut! At some point pragmatism is at play.”

Mic & The Mechanics

In today’s world, that pragmatism may have more to do with views than brews. “Rap, hip hop, R&B and pop probably started going there first,” says songwriter **Ashley Gorley**, whose current credits include “I Am Not Okay” (3:17) and “Park” (2:44). “I’ve got all the ADD tendencies, so it made sense to me – a natural progression of shorter attention spans.”

Songs are only one symptom. “We’re cutting commercials out of the shows we watch,” Gorley says. “We won’t drive to the restaurant to pick up our food anymore. And we’re not going to listen to an outro for 45 seconds. I don’t think listeners feel like, ‘Oh, why did that cut off?’ I can’t remember the last time my kids got to the end of a song they like. They just click back and start over. Or get 1:15 in and jump to the next one like a DJ. That’s just the way of the world.”

“Everything on social media is a blur,” Jones adds. “Faster and shorter. I always tell artists to make records that people are going to listen to during the occasions of their life: A campfire on the lake, a first dance, a graduation song, something to dedicate to your children. Other than those moments, and maybe road trips, people are skipping and flipping. Everyone wants to get to it in a hurry. It bleeds over into all of entertainment. Not sure if that’s good, but it’s the reality.”



One culprit, arguably: TikTok. “The younger generation, it’s just so ingrained in the way they think,” says producer/songwriter **Ross Copperman**, whose credits include “Dancin’ In The Country” (3:00) and “Beers On Me” (2:55). “When I write with younger artists who are heavy on TikTok, they’re definitely thinking about that 1:15 clip. It’s not about getting right to the hook, it’s about the section they’re going to pull out.”



Although, getting to the hook is still top of mind. “That started happening several years ago,” Gorley says. “To grab somebody, you need to come out guns blazing. Make a statement, melody or groove that catches them before they swipe or skip.”

The mechanics of songwriting are changing, as well. “When I started, you’d cut five songs in a studio, get the mixes and pitch it to a few producers,” says producer/songwriter **Jesse Frasure** – “Young Love & Saturday Nights” (3:15) and “Hole In The Bottle” (2:35). “Even as late as 2014 we were still doing demo sessions, but the tools of the trade have made it easier.”

“Editing is the most crucial thing,” he says. “Is that section in there because it lets the song breathe? Or can it come out? In the era of ProTools, you can fly the chorus around, move a solo or bridge. Sometimes it’s just a breath and a breakdown chorus to make the last one feel fresher. Going the other direction, you might have a catchy post-chorus and think, ‘We need that on the first two because it’s so good.’ If all those things feel necessary to a song and it goes long, so be it. But if I’m just getting into the third chorus and I’m at three minutes, something is wrong. I try to go for 2:30. If it naturally goes over three with a fade-out or a little bit of an intro, that’s okay. I go on feel.”

“Bridges used to be a bigger deal,” adds Copperman. “Now it’s like, ‘Let’s skip the pre-chorus on the second verse and use that as the bridge’ – a two line deal that’s probably six seconds. That in itself explains a lot of going from 3:40 to 3:05. The second verse is now a half verse. Young writers are like, ‘Of course we’re doing a half-verse on the second one.’ That’s become standard.”

“So many songs are written with Splice loops now, which are a four-chord progression,” he continues. “The producer drags it in, you write the song to the Splice loop, and you’re not necessarily changing chords. You used to change the chords on the pre-chorus, and that would maybe draw the length of a song out. Then you’d have some interesting chords in the end part of the chorus to drive the hook, but now it’s just over.”

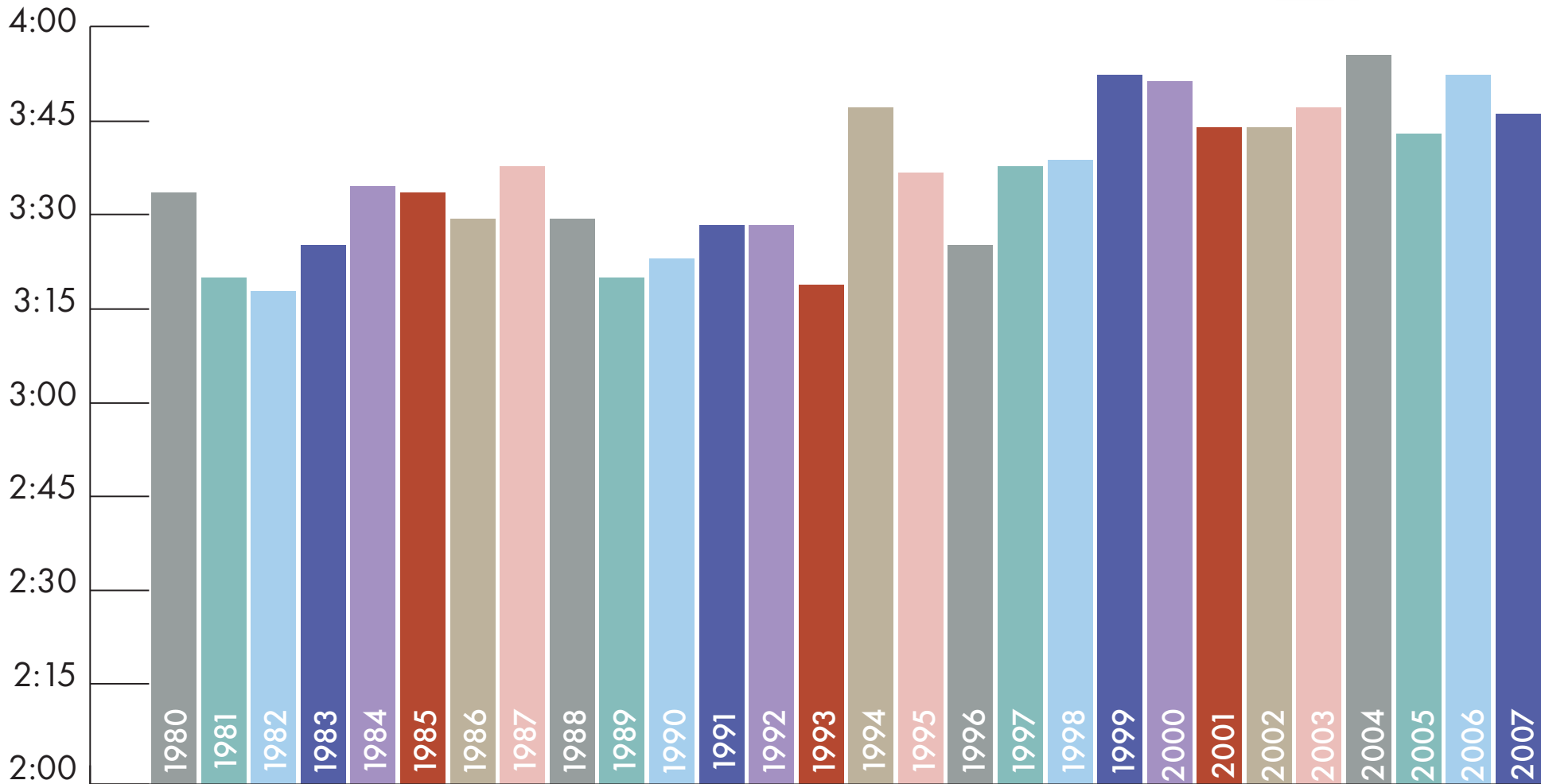
Being pitched songs on a daily basis, Jones says the cuts are everywhere. “We’ve lost the art of the intro,” she says. “There are no bridges anymore. Outros aren’t as prevalent. You used to hear modulations and a repeat of the chorus. Now that’s gone.”

Gorley is still writing four-minute songs ... but, “Sometimes you hit a sweet spot where a song ends right where people will want to hear it again. There’s an instinctive thing when you listen back and realize you can cut the intro in half, get back to the verse immediately or that there’s a lot of blank space. If it’s a rocking country thing and needs a long solo, I can see that, but even then I’m ready to get back to the meat of it. If you need more time with a bridge or a punch in the end, we’ll do it. Those songs will exist forever. But no one is going, ‘Let’s add some stuff here to fill this up a bit.’”

In some respects, radio has been ahead of that curve ... if not advancing it. “As long as I’ve done this there’s always been the radio edit,” Jones says. “For Jackson Dean’s ‘Heavens To Betsy,’ we did a radio edit to the intro and outro because we knew it would either get talked over or they’d do their own edit. But he’s extremely proud of the full track.” The album version is 3:45; the version delivered to radio is 3:24. “We prefer to deliver it edited because we don’t want edits made that aren’t artist approved.”



Average Runtime For The 20 Most-Played Songs



Murphy furthers the thought: “Not everybody, but some of us would add 2% to the speed of songs. We’d ‘plus it up.’” And labels played along. “For many years, promotion people would try to sell you on, ‘It’s only three minutes,’” he continues. “This is legend, but sometimes they would even lie ... right on the label. If the song was 3:52, they’d put 3:12 on it without blinking. Well, if we’d only waited a few years, it would’ve taken care of itself.”

Timesick Blues



Marty Brooks

WIL./St. Louis MD **Marty Brooks**. “You might have a gold title that played every couple of days now playing once a day or day-and-a-half. That gives the listeners a little more flavor ... more chances to hear our music. That’s not a bad thing.” Adds Audacy RVPP **Scott Roddy**, “Country’s about telling the story and if you can do it in less time, that’s great.”

“The idea of getting more songs in rotation is enticing,” Frasure admits. “In this day and age, it feels a bit like we’re all working on the Titanic and cheering each other on. The last hurrah for songwriters is radio ... that’s where catalog is built. Streaming is catching up, but so far I’ve never heard of anyone selling a catalog based on streaming alone. So I love getting more rotations. Those seconds and minutes add up.”

Speaking of streaming, there may be financial implications for labels and artists, too. “If you can stream 25 or 30 songs in an hour, you’ll make that much more money,” Murphy points out. “Labels aren’t compensated by the minute, but by each play. So if songs are 2:30 instead of four minutes, you can get that many more per hour or day.”

Whether songs can get any shorter remains to be seen, but in other formats, run times are dropping below two minutes. “There’s so much music out there and no rules,” Gorley says. “You could have an album of songs that are a minute apiece – a chorus and that’s it. I don’t see Country radio songs going that short – it’s so storytelling-based. You need at least a couple minutes to experience that. Hard to do in 30 seconds.”

“I’d like to think it’s cyclical,” Copperman says. “With TikTok extending the length of their videos it might move the other way. But our attention spans are so shot. I can’t even watch a movie. A 45-minute show feels long.”

Jones says the art will dictate. “If it’s a big hit and longer, radio will 100% play all of it because they know their listeners will listen to all of it. If you captivate the listener, that’s the end game. For instance, Zach Bryan, Tyler Childers and Billy Strings – artists who fall in the genre but aren’t necessarily on the radio – are having success with longer and extended songs.”

In the meantime, “People getting to hear more music is the greatest benefit,” Murphy says. “You get room for more different songs and artists, potentially.”

And if it’s any consolation to those worried songs are becoming too short ... a country icon done it this way. “Hank, Sr. used to say the songwriter’s job was to write it, then cut out all the fat,” Tomlinson laughs. “His songs were notoriously short. You barely started listening and it was over.”

What if any impact shorter songs has beyond the speakers is debatable. “We sometimes get buzzy here in the industry, but the civilian world doesn’t know,” Frasure says. “Does a fan give a shit?” As illustration, he points to two of his favorite songs. Bob Seger’s “Night Moves,” for instance, is 5:24. “I would have never guessed that,” he laughs. “And to me, ‘Sittin’ On The Dock Of The Bay’ (2:43) is one of the quintessential commercial songs. Both of those songs sound perfect to me.”

Whether fans notice or not, they’re hearing more music. “The clocks are made to have one or two drop songs, and we’re playing more of those,” says



Scott Roddy

Shortest Songs AMONG THE TOP 20

2020s

- 1 DAN + SHAY/Glad You Exist (2:23)
- 2 PARMALEE/Take My Name (2:26)
- 3 PARMALEE/Girl In Mine (2:32)
- 4 MORGAN WALLEN/You Proof (2:34)
- 5 CHASE RICE f/FGL/Drinkin’ Beer Talkin’ God Amen (2:34)

2010s

- 1 DYLAN SCOTT/Hooked (2:26)
- 2 BRETT ELDREDGE/Lose My Mind (2:34)
- 3 SAM HUNT/Body Like A Back Road (2:40)
- 4 JUSTIN MOORE/Somebody Else Will (2:40)
- 5 BEBE REXHA f/FGL/Meant To Be (2:43)

2000s

- 1 JOE NICHOLS/What’s A Guy Gotta Do (2:22)
- 2 JOSH GRACIN/Nothin’ To Lose (2:36)
- 3 TOBY KEITH/I’m Just Talkin’ About Tonight (2:45)
- 4 RANDY HOUSER/Boots On (2:51)
- 5 KENNY CHESNEY/No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problem (2:55)

1990s

- 1 DIAMOND RIO/Unbelievable (2:21)
- 2 VINCE GILL/Take Your Memory With You (2:25)
- 3 ALAN JACKSON/Chattahoochee (2:27)
- 4 RICKY VAN SHELTON/I’ve Cried My Last Tear For You (2:29)
- 5 TRACY BYRD/Holdin’ Heaven (2:31)

1980s

- 1 RANDY TRAVIS/Too Gone Too Long (2:24)
- 2 CONWAY TWITTY/Desperado Love (2:25)
- 3 RODNEY CROWELL/Above And Beyond (2:28)
- 4 PATTY LOVELESS/Timber I’m Falling In Love (2:30)
- 5 OAK RIDGE BOYS/Trying To Love Two Women (2:30)

Longest Songs AMONG THE TOP 20

2020s

- 1 LUKE COMBS/Fast Car (4:14)
- 2 JAKE OWEN/Made For You (3:52)
- 3 JELLY ROLL f/LAINEY WILSON/Save Me (3:48)
- 4 LUKE COMBS/Even Though I’m Leaving (3:45)
- 5 SCOTTY MCCREERY/Damn Strait (3:42)

2010s

- 1 BRANTLEY GILBERT/You Don’t Know Her Like I Do (4:47)
- 2 TIM MCGRAW w/TAYLOR SWIFT/Highway Don’t Care (4:36)
- 3 ZAC BROWN BAND/Colder Weather (4:35)
- 4 SARA EVANS/A Little Bit Stronger (4:18)
- 5 ERIC CHURCH/Give Me Back My Hometown (4:12)

2000s

- 1 SARA EVANS/I Could Not Ask For More (4:47)
- 2 ALAN JACKSON/Small Town Southern Man (4:40)
- 3 BON JOVI/Who Says You Can’t Go Home (4:40)
- 4 TIM MCGRAW/My Best Friend (4:39)
- 5 TIM MCGRAW/Watch The Wind Blow By (4:36)

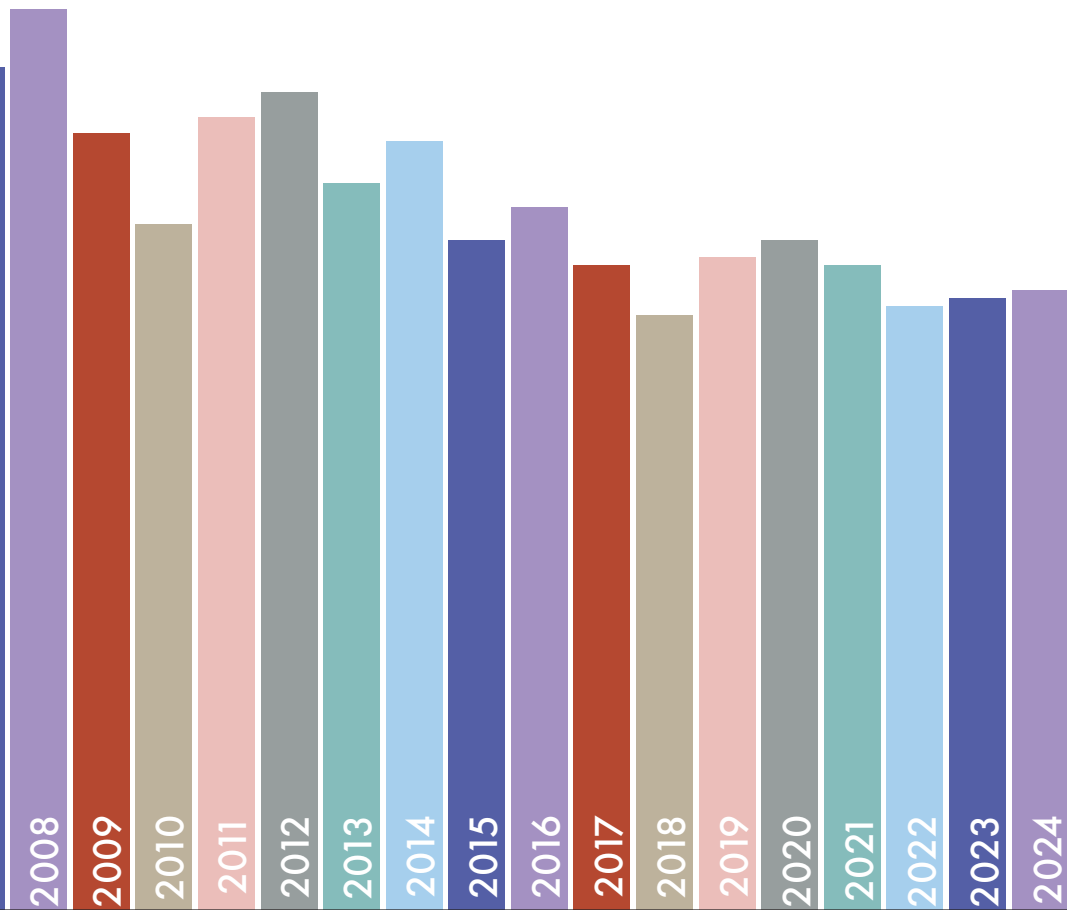
1990s

- 1 TIM MCGRAW/Please Remember Me (4:55)
- 2 STEVE WARINER/Holes In The Floor Of Heaven (4:47)
- 3 ALABAMA/God Must’ve Spent A Little More Time (4:38)
- 4 REBA MCENTIRE/Fallin’ Out Of Love (4:34)
- 5 TRAVIS TRITT/Tell Me I Was Dreaming (4:33)

1980s

- 1 RONNIE MILSAP/Still Losing You (5:16)
- 2 DAN SEALS/Everything That Glitters (4:50)
- 3 WILLIE NELSON/City Of New Orleans (4:47)
- 4 WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD/Pancho & Lefty (4:44)
- 5 RONNIE MILSAP/In Love (4:34)

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RADIO HALL of FAME

Mary McCoy

Radio Years Young

At 86 and with no signs of slowing down, Mary McCoy still co-hosts a daily show on KVST/Conroe, TX, just as she's done for the past 73 years. McCoy's fame had largely been confined to southeast Texas, but her success could only remain hidden so long. In the past few years long overdue recognition has found her – the Texas Radio Hall of Fame, the Guinness Book of World Records and, now, the national Radio Hall of Fame.

My daddy worked on a farm and on Saturday nights we'd sit on the front porch listening to the *Grand Ole Opry*, and I would yodel along. When I was about five, my mom started teaching me how to play the guitar. I wanted to sing, make records and have my own radio show.

We moved to Conroe when I was about 10 and lived in a tent. At the time there wasn't a radio station in town, but I would sing in talent shows at the theater. We lived in that tent for four years, and the kids at school would make fun of me. The more they made fun of me the more determined I was.

In 1950, my mom heard them testing a new station. She said, "Mary, I think there's gonna be a new radio station." That made me so happy – I was determined to be on that station. KMCO-AM signed on April 15, 1951. The station was going to have a talent show, and the manager of the theater told the station manager, Jimmy Dorrell, about me. I was in fifth grade at the time, and he called me at school. "Mary, I've heard so much about you, we want you to be on the talent show this Saturday."

After I did my songs on the talent show, Jimmy asked me if I knew enough songs to do 15 minutes. I said, "I think so," so he recorded 15 minutes and told me to go home and listen to the radio. It was the worst thing I'd ever heard. I cried so hard. I thought, "That's it, I'm never going to sing again."

The next week, I got a call at school. It was Jimmy, "Mary, guess what? We have a sponsor for your show." I said, "Really? I was horrible." He said, "Well they don't think so." I got my first two-hour show Monday through Saturday when I was 12. That wasn't enough, though. I wanted my own record show playing records like the other DJs.

I did it all. I filed records – those blessed 78s weighed more than I did – and I did sales. People would ask me to buy ads, and I knew what the rates were, so I'd sell it to them and take the order back to my boss. But my record show was all I cared about. I'd watch when the other jocks were on the air to learn the board.

When I first started with KMCO, they'd have bands play across the street on Saturday afternoons. If I was performing, I'd see my dad walking in and out of the crowd. I said, "Daddy, why do you keep walking through the crowd? You never stand still." He said, "I'm trying to see if anyone's saying anything bad about you."

I would go to school during the day, do my radio show, and then sing on Saturdays. I was 16 when Gabe Tucker, who worked with Col. Tom Parker, came by the sta-

tion. I told him I wanted to make records. A year later, I performed on the *Louisiana Hayride* in Shreveport. That's when I first met Elvis. He was 20.

I was sitting on the steps on the back of the stage, and he walked up and said, "I'm Elvis." I said, "I know who you are." He asked if I was hungry, I said I could always eat. He replied, "Let's go across the street to that restaurant." By the time I got off the steps I looked up and there were about 15 girls already lined up behind him. "Elvis, tell you what," I said. "You go on and I'll be here when you get back, because I'd never get a word in edgewise with you." When he came back, he came straight to me. That was one of the biggest nights of my life. He was so kind. I've never met anyone who showed respect like he did.

The Louisiana Hayride came to Conroe two weeks later. Of course, I was on the show that night. Elvis tripped on the steps going up on the stage and hit his head, but he went ahead and put on one heck of a show. People always ask, "Mary, did he ever kiss you?" No, he didn't. People also gave me Elvis memorabilia. At first, I had a small room for it all upstairs. After my husband passed, my daughter turned his man cave downstairs into the "Elvis Room."

I made my first record in 1960 with the Cyclones. I was country as country could be, but they were the hottest rock group around. I cut four songs. The one that really opened the door for me was "Deep Elem Blues." I remember driving in the car and listening to Top 40 KILT-AM out of Houston, hearing it come on and being so excited. I couldn't believe what was happening. I was under contract until the early '70s.

The people in Conroe just took me under their wing; they saw how determined I was. People would ask if I was ever going to leave. The Houston stations approached me, but I just couldn't turn my back on that little station I grew up in.

In 2011, I fell and broke my neck. I had to stay home in a halo brace. I told my co-host Larry Galla, "I can do this." He would send me the scripts every morning, and for three months I did the show from my home.

The manager at KVST asked my daughter to find out who had the longest career as a DJ in the Guinness Book of Records. She's like my manager, and she researched day and night for over a year. It turned out I've been on the air longer than any other woman.

I was invited to do an introduction at the *Grand Ole Opry*. I told them, "You don't know how long I've waited to put my feet on this stage. I can't sing for you, but I can talk for you." It was just a dream come true.

When Dennis Green called to tell me that I was being inducted into the Hall of Fame, I looked at Larry and said, "Is this legit?" He said, "Mary, I'm afraid it is." I said, "I'm not good enough." It was the happiest day of my life, again.

I don't feel my age – most of the time I feel 16. Radio has kept me young; that and the people. I love working with people. I've accomplished so many things I never thought possible. I hear people say, "I can't do this," or "I can't do that." If you want to do something bad enough, you can do it. I just never gave up. God's let me do everything I wanted.

CAC



Disc Appearing Act: McCoy in the KMCO-AM record library.



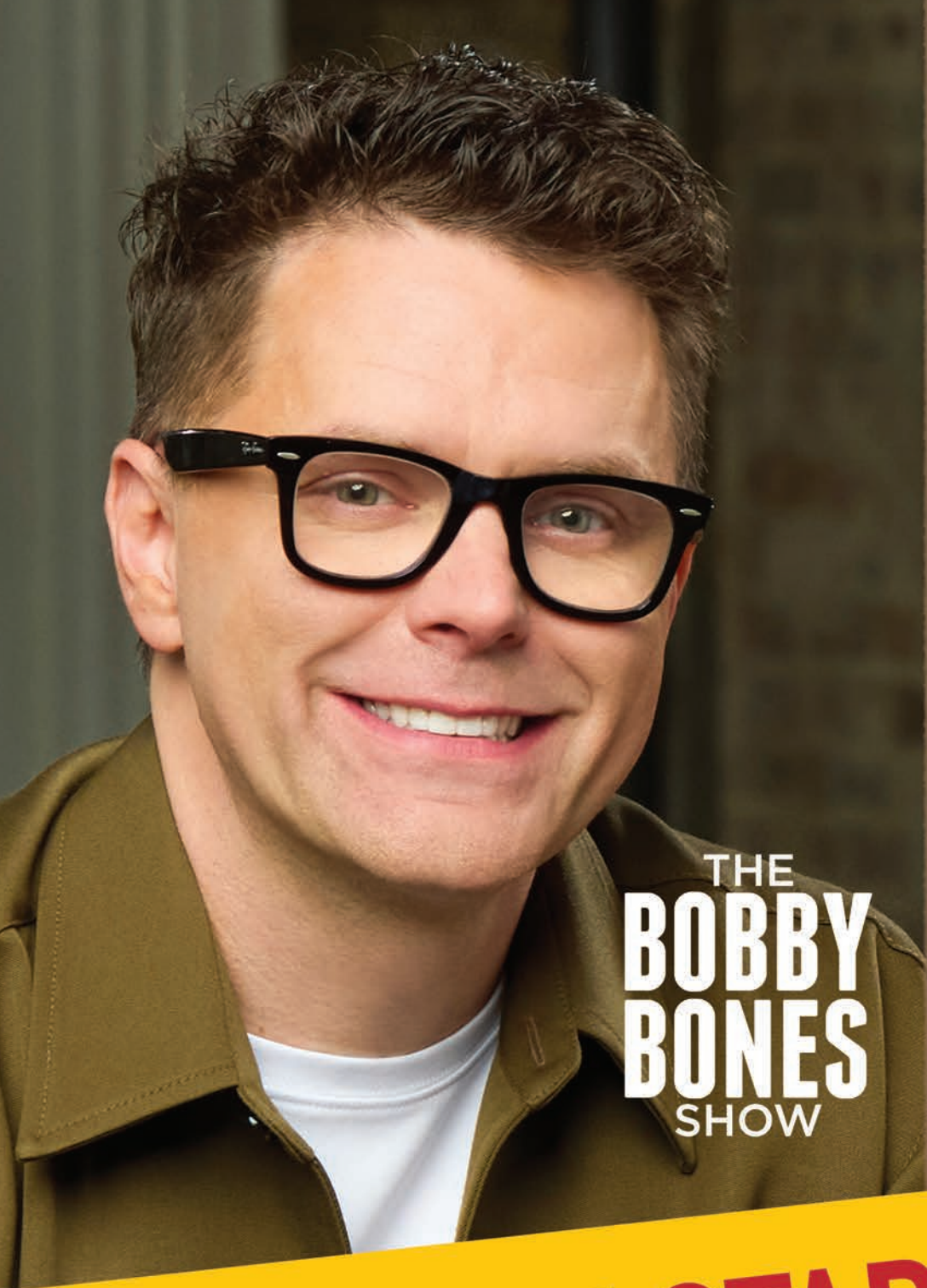
Mary, Queen Of Spots: Behind the mic during her first year at KMCO.



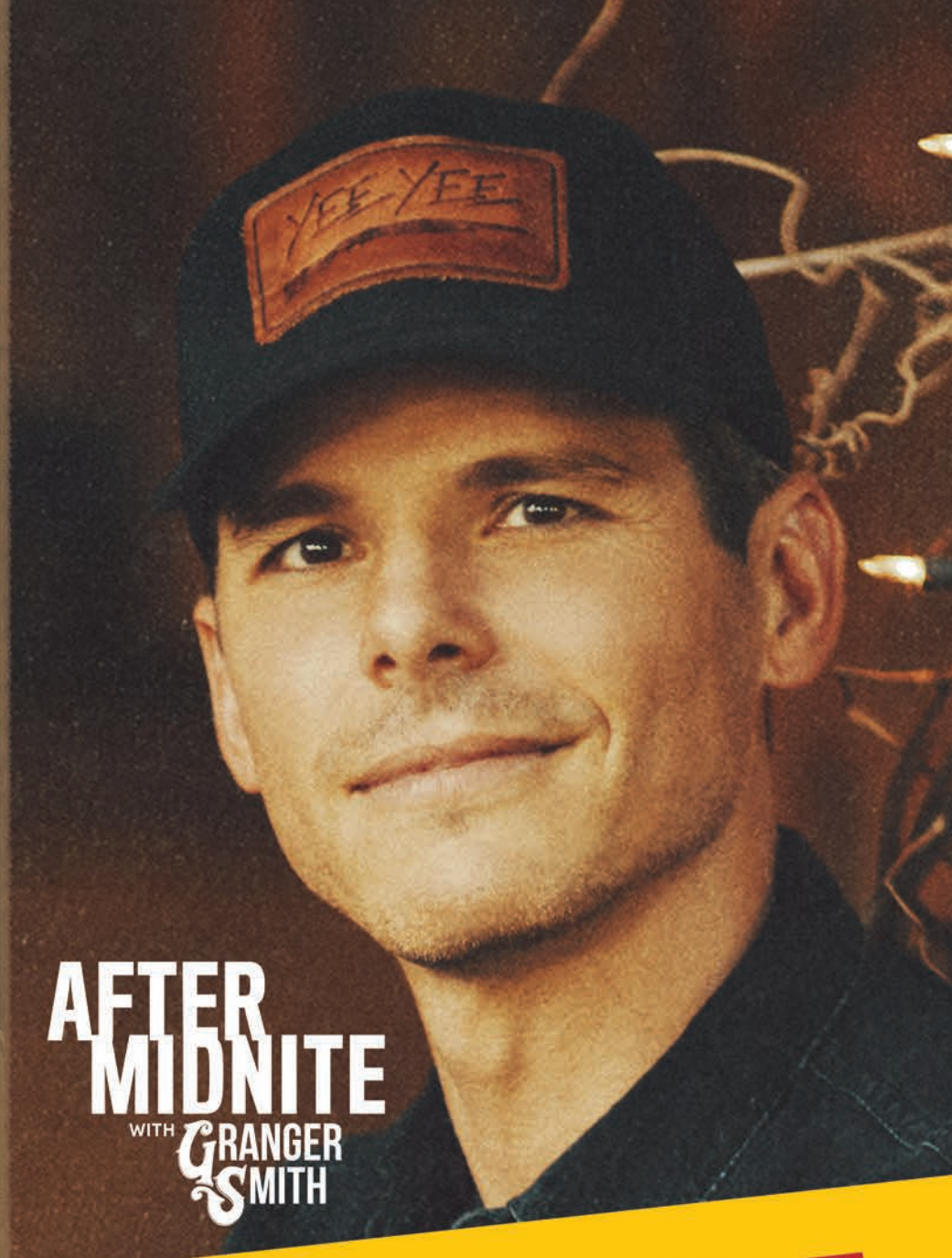
Record Holder: McCoy with her Guinness world record certificate.



Amazing Graceland: (l) With Elvis Presley in Conroe, TX on August 24, 1955; and onstage at the Grand Ole Opry.

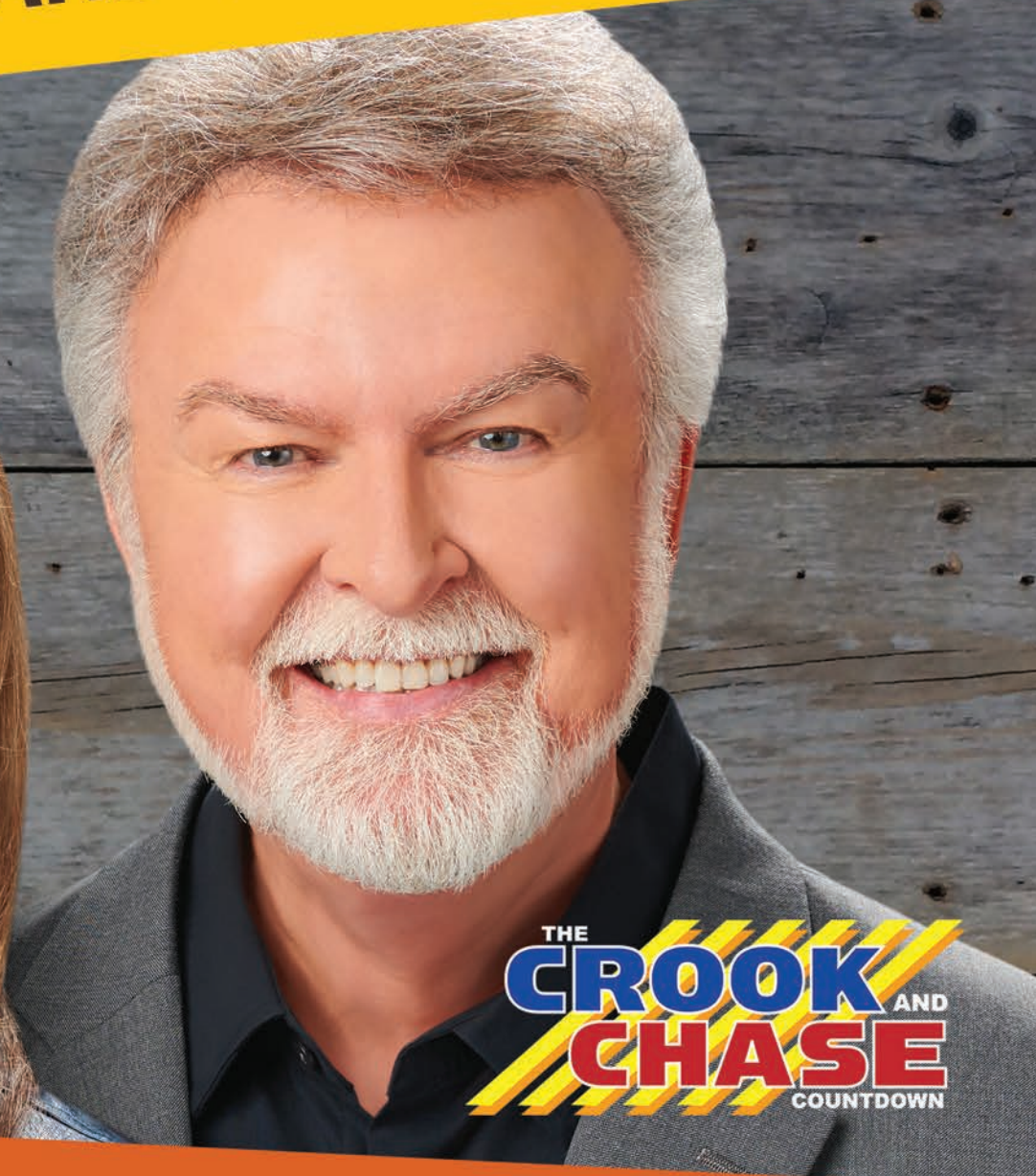
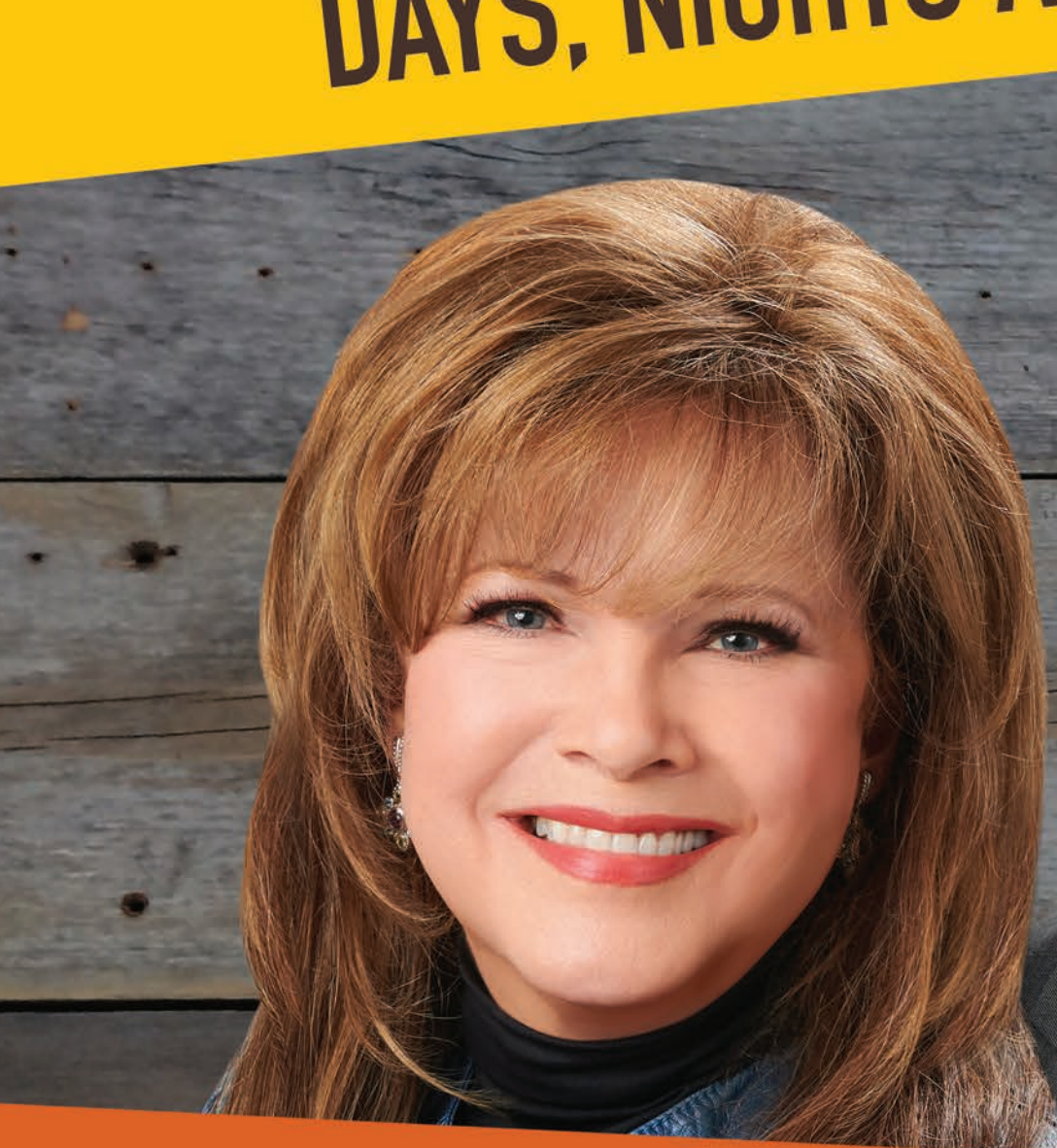


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RADIO HALL of FAME

Crook & Chase

Keeping The Spark

*With the Museum of Broadcast Communications' national Radio Hall of Fame ceremony coming to Nashville for the first time this year, it's only fitting that inductees at the Sept. 19 ceremony include Music City-based icons **Lorianne Crook** and **Charlie Chase** – longtime hosts and Executive Producers of The Crook & Chase Countdown. Marking their 41st year as a broadcasting team this year, Crook and Chase are heard on more than 150 affiliates nationwide. Also hosts of the iHeartMedia podcast Crook & Chase: Nashville Chats, the duo joined the Country Radio Hall of Fame in 2013.*

LC: Both of us got teary-eyed when we found out about the Radio Hall of Fame induction. This is so Crook & Chase, but we ran around hugging everybody in the room, and then we sat down and realized we never hugged each other.

CC: It was a very exciting moment, and very emotional. I've been in radio since I was 13 years old when I got a third-class radio license, so this is truly a big check-mark and a lot of satisfaction for the career I've chosen.

My first big star interview was with Jeannie C. Riley when "Harper Valley P.T.A." was No. 1. I was 16 years old and working at WRGS/Rogersville, TN. I was starstruck by this very attractive 24-year-old singer, but she was such a sweetheart, and it really gave me confidence to move forward in radio.

LC: Our success is based on the relationship with the industry and the artists, the conversations we get to have, and the way they allow us to present them and their music. So, we're not just accepting this award on behalf of Crook & Chase. We plan to make a big point of thanking everybody in the industry who allowed us to get here. We never had our eyes on any kind of awards or nominations, much less being in the Hall of Fame. We've just very much been nose to the grindstone, working.

CC: Any accolades that came our way were big surprises to us.

LC: We do feel that our show is a conduit in that sacred connection between artists and fans. It's a privilege. When an artist is across from us, they have no idea what we're going to hit them with, or [they might worry about] how we might take things deliberately out of context just to be fallacious. They have to put a lot of trust in us, so Charlie and I make



sure that we're fair. We don't shy away from difficult subjects, but we don't do "gotcha" questions. We try to have mature conversations about life, but mostly just have a ton of fun and try to bring out the best qualities of each artist.

CC: The important groundwork for whatever result we get is that we're fans, and look at things from that perspective. People pick up on that. That's what makes a good, strong connection, because we're getting things out of the artists that the fans want to know.

LC: There seems to be a level of trust, and we've heard that not only from our listeners, but from the artists as well. Brothers Osborne gave us the hugest compliment. They said, "You guys have been together for decades, every time we talk to you we feel like you still have the spark. That thing is precious. That is your pilot light. Don't ever let it go out." We take that to heart.

LC: We're still on Music Row, and we have a call button on the front of our building. We have people who push the button and just start singing, hoping to be discovered. It's really kind of sweet.

COVID put a damper on the tour bus business, but for years prior to that the ["homes of the stars" tours] used to stop in front of my house. People used to come back to my personal property, very respectfully, and leave their little homemade CDs tied up with a bow on my front porch. It breaks my heart in a way because we can't "discover" everybody. I would love to be everybody's big break if I could.

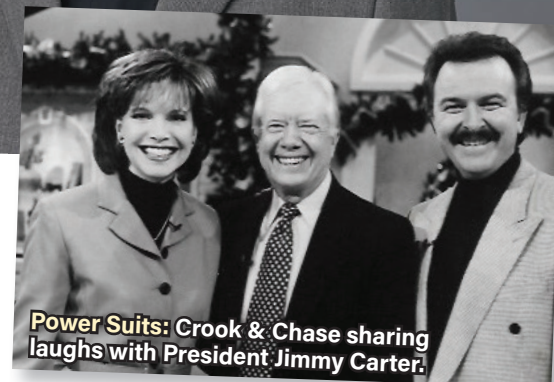
CC: The busses came by my house, too, and my son, when he was six or seven years old, set up a lemonade stand to sell to the tourists. He made a lot of money, and then blew it all at Disney World.

LC: I remember the first time we had Garth Brooks on ... and Randy Travis ... and when this pretty girl named Shania Twain played us some of the first songs she'd written. Charlie and I just look at each other and go, "Yep, this is the next superstar." It's really cool to be able to be in on the beginning of that, and to help it along in any way we can.

CC: People often ask, "What's the secret to our chemistry." We don't want to know. But we do live separate lives. So, when we come together, we bring two different perspectives. There is a great chemistry and always has been as far as broadcasting goes. It's kind of like a brother/sister thing.

We're in there for the same reason, but look at it from different angles, and we get a wonderful result.

LC: Fans did sometimes mistake us for a married couple, especially in the beginning when our [TV show] viewers and even the media saw we got along so well on the air. One time I said out loud on the show – and I didn't mean this to be mean – but I said to the audience, "Do I look that stupid?"



Power Suits: Crook & Chase sharing laughs with President Jimmy Carter.

CC: And my follow-up was, "Do I look that desperate?"

CC: Lorianne deserves to be in the Hall of Fame because she is a dedicated professional and knows the business so well – something she demonstrates every time we do the show. She's a winner.

LC: Charlie is smooth. I'm sure it's that radio training since the age of 13 – being on the air and able to handle any sort of situation. That's why we've had so much fun doing live broadcasts over the years. He's helped me learn to roll with it and have fun, which has become our forté. He's also funny as heck. The things that come out of his mouth, I just look over at him and gasp sometimes! So, a total pro, smooth, funny and just fun to be around. Keith Urban calls him "Trouble."



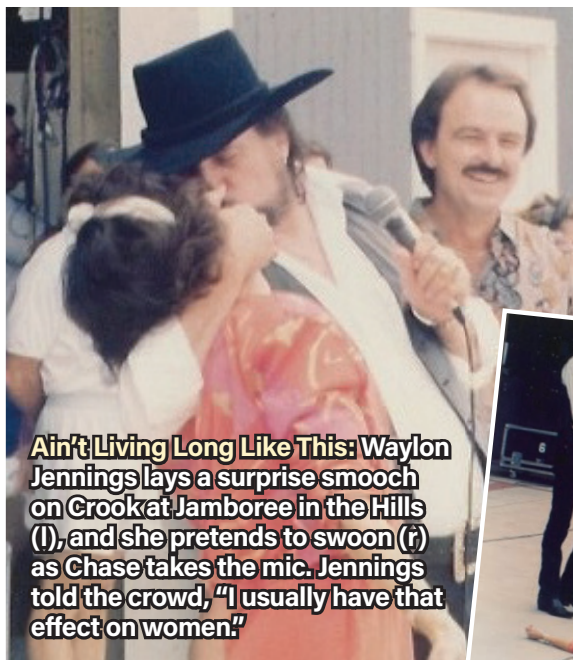
Selfie Smiles: A selfie with longtime friend of the show Darius Rucker.

CC: What advice would we give to someone just starting? There are enough people in radio, so don't. [Laughs] It's not instant stardom. If you can get your foot in the door, learn. This business is changing so much – more so than it did in the '70s, '80s and '90s. So, stay on top of it, observe, and be ready to sacrifice some time because, honestly, when I was young, I was working seven days a week at times – even after I got married. It's not a free ride. It's a lot of fun, but be prepared and be patient. Work hard and do your best, because that will probably introduce you to the next opportunity.

LC: It's exactly like the artists tell us, that 90 minutes they're onstage and the "star" is the smallest slice of the pie – maybe 5% or less of what they actually do. The other 95% is hard work. There are things that are difficult and not necessarily fun that you have to do in order to have a successful and balanced career. It's the same for broadcasters.

CC: I'm very proud of the partnership and the longtime association with Lorianne. We have a wonderful team, a wonderful relationship with the industry, the artists, and it's something that was created through time. A lot of hard work, dedication, and caring ... and it continues on. We're honored that the Hall of Fame is giving us recognition.

CAC



Ain't Living Long Like This: Waylon Jennings lays a surprise smooch on Crook at Jamboree in the Hills (l), and she pretends to swoon (r) as Chase takes the mic. Jennings told the crowd, "I usually have that effect on women."



NEW ALBUM ARRIVING OCTOBER 25

Kelsea Ballerini
PATTERNS

NEW SONGS OUT NOW
“COWBOYS CRY TOO
(WITH NOAH KAHAN)”
AND
“SORRY MOM”



Who's next? That's the question posed to the industry power brokers named to this year's reader-voted Power 31. The annual rankings in Artists & Music and Airplay & Exposure categories can be found on page 25. Meanwhile, below in alphabetical order are the country music and Country radio professionals they believe are in the mix for future inclusion in the Power 31.



SALLY ALLGEIER

Red Street National Dir./Promotion

"Sally is doing an amazing job representing Red Street Records and their roster of artists," says iHeartMedia EVP/Country Programming Strategy **Rod Phillips**. "She has an amazing ability to promote and market their artists while understanding local radio and coming to us with a true strategy. She will shine, impress and succeed on Music Row for a long time to come."

BENJAMIN C. AMAEFULE

Warner Chappell Music Nashville Mgr./A&R

"[Benjamin] has great A&R instincts, and can spot a great songwriter and help them develop," says Big Loud SVP/Marketing **Candice Watkins**. "I've been able to see him do this firsthand with an artist I work with, and it's impressive. We're also both on the market for personal hat brand deals."

MICHELLE ATTARDI

Big Machine Music Sr. Dir./Publishing

"Her passion and dedication to the songwriters she works with are unmatched," says BMG/BBRMG VP/A&R **Katie Kerkhove**. "She has long-term visions and works tirelessly to elevate their careers."



RYAN BEUSCHEL

The Neal Agency GM

"I met Ryan Beuschel years ago when he was a young manager in the UMG A&R department," says Mercury SVP/Promotion **Damon Moberly**. "I've watched Ryan navigate the A&R side of our business, and then transition to a publishing pro, signing up-and-coming and established songwriters to Warner Chappell's roster, while building some of the most valuable relationships in Music City. Ryan was recently appointed GM of The Neal Agency, where he will no doubt use his skill set to expertly navigate the agency business and so much more. As a guy who still believes

that great relationships matter, I believe we will see Ryan use his to the best benefit of his company and his artists."

KELLY BOLTON

Warner Records VP/A&R

"Kelly approaches A&R from a song-first perspective," says Producer/Big Loud Partner **Joey Moi**. "Her experience and relationships in publishing allow her to help an artist discover their true creative identity in the songwriting room, ensuring their careers are built with a strong foundation of support in the creative community."



SHAINA BOTWIN

Boom Music Group VP

Selected by Big Loud Owner/Managing Partner **Craig Wiseman**.

CHRISTI BROOKS

KCY/ San Antonio PD

"I've gotten to know Christi over the last year or so, and she's a brilliant programmer, has great music instincts and puts

together a great radio station (can you say Marconi nomination?), says KPLX and KSCS/Dallas PD **Mike Preston**. "And she's funny on socials, too!"



ANDREA BURTSCHER

Audacy Dir./Country Promotions & Experiences

"Andrea continues to illustrate a high level of organization, communication and creativity when dealing with Warner," says Warner Music Nashville VP/Radio Accounts **Tom Martens**. "She moved to Nashville as a company liaison several years ago, and I see her as a future leader of our format."

KATIE BRIGHT

Capitol Nashville Dir./Midwest Promotion

"Anytime someone wants to start a national promo

effort based in Chicago, Katie would make the top 10 on this list every year (and should probably already be on it)," says iHeartMedia/Minneapolis SVP/Programming **Gregg Swedberg**. "She knows everyone, she gets records played, represents her artists fiercely, and walks the tightrope between radio groups better than anyone."



JACKIE CAMPBELL

615 Leverage + Strategy Co-Founder/Partner

"Jackie is one of the most bright, creative, and passionate people I have had the opportunity to work with over the years," says Big Machine VP/Promotion & Marketing **Erik Powell**. "Her dedication to building 615 Leverage undoubtedly makes her a power player in this industry."

HAYLEY CORBETT

PunchBowl

Entertainment Manager

"Keeping up with Hayley (along with co-manager Juli Griffith) on all things Megan Moroney has been an insanely rewarding experience," says Sony/Nashville SVP/Promotion **Lauren Thomas**. "Hayley's attention to detail, creative problem solving and willingness to support our efforts at Country radio are only matched by her positive attitude. Really proud to work beside her and hope she gets some time to nap soon. (Although at the pace Megan is going, that is very TBD.)"



"one of the most bright, creative, and passionate people I have had the opportunity to work with"

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**KENZIE COUCH***MCA/Nashville Coord./Promotion*

"Kenzie joined my team as an intern after graduating from UTK, and it was within that first week or so that I could tell she was a rock star," says Curb SVP/Promotion **RJ Meacham**. "Fearless, outgoing, energetic, and super creative – I could go on. She was with us for a few semesters, and I told her if I couldn't find a job for her at Curb, I would kick the doors down for her elsewhere. Ultimately, I connected her with my friends over at UMG

and MCA, where she quickly landed the coordinator position. I am 100% certain that Miranda [McDonald] and crew would concur – Kenzie is gonna be big."

"WAYNE D" DANIELSON*iHeartMedia nationally syndicated personality*

"Wayne is passionate about the artists in our format and their music as well as the power of radio to connect with people," says Warner Music Nashville Co-Chair/Co-President **Ben Kline**. "He's a thoughtful interviewer, and nobody hustles more."

**PAISLEY DUNN-BANKS***WFKY & WVKY/Frankfurt, KY morning host*

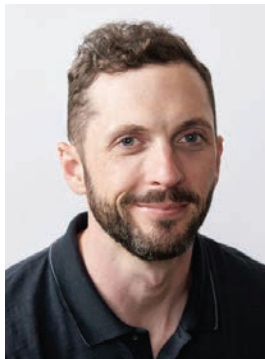
"Several years ago at CRS, I was at the Women's Mentoring Breakfast," says Audacy Regional Brand Mgr./Central **Marci Braun**. "Up to my table walked this wide-eyed woman, wearing a fringe shirt and a skirt. She sat down and told me this was her first CRS and that she had won the Lisa McKay scholarship. In the few minutes I got to chat with her, I realized her passion for all things radio and for this format. It has been wonderful to see her grow and shine!"

**KENLEY FLYNN***Sony Music Publishing/Nashville VP/Creative A&R*

"Kenley is a great publisher for any writer to have in their corner," says Tape Room Music Founder **Ashley Gorley**. "He creates special opportunities for his writers and works hard to see a vision come to reality."

**ALLYSON GELNETT***Curb**Dir./Promotion Northeast*

"Rarely have I met someone with such a relentless pursuit to do better and to soak up knowledge at every turn," says SiriusXM & Pandora VP/Country Programming **Johnny Chiang**. "Allyson's passion for continuous development is a remarkable quality that I'm sure will drive her to new heights in our business."

**TRACY GIBSON***Leo 33 Dir./Promotion & Marketing*

"Tracy Gibson is such a rock star," says BBRMG VP/Syndication & Group Strategy **Shelley Hargis**. "I love that she comes from radio, so now working in the label side of things she has the radio background and knowledge to bring with her. Anything I've ever done with her, she has been buttoned up and on her game every step of the way! As a matter of fact, I feel like she's always ahead of the game! Tracy 'gets it' in every sense of the word. She's just a lovely human, but also a lady that gets shit

done! Even though she works at another label, I'm a fan, and have been a cheerleader for her for quite some time. I love watching her continue to shine!"

**JAMIE GRAVES***Warner Music Nashville Dir./Streaming*

"He handles the DSP relationships and does a fantastic job," says Apple Music/Nashville Head/Music Business Partnerships **Jay Liepis**.

**JULI GRIFFITH***PunchBowl**Entertainment Manager*

"Juli was already a well-respected publisher in town, but it wasn't until she launched her management company with Megan Moroney that I started working more closely with her," says Sony/Nashville EVP/COO **Ken Robold**. "In the nearly two years since, we've seen incredible growth with Megan, with Juli and Hayley Corbett as vital partners to Megan's team. We all

believe Megan is the next country music superstar, and Juli will be a mainstay on this list."

MILLER GUTH*Spotify Mgr./Artist & Label Partnerships*

"Miller joined Spotify out of college and jumped right into the fire," says UMG/Nashville EVP/COO **Mike Harris**. "He has always shown a great knowledge of the music and constantly shows up for the artist/label. He is one of the 'next generation' that gets the big picture."

**ALEK HALVERSON***KAJA/San Antonio PD*

"Alek Halverson has my vote as the person that represents the future of our radio format," says Stoney Creek VP/Innovation, Radio & Streaming **Adrian Michaels**. "A multi-generational radio talent who learned his skills from his father at the young age of eight years old, Alek leads with swagger, confidence and knowledge beyond his years. He has great ears for music, a brain that is always in creative mode and a



social media game that is unmatched. Our future is in great hands with this future power player."

**SUMMER HARLOW***Mercury Records Dir./Northeast Promotion*

"Summer always offers a kind word and a smile, and has a passion for country music and her artists," says Broken Bow VP/Promotion **Lee Adams**. "In 2023, Summer and I experienced a similar life journey, and I watched her navigate it with professionalism and grace. She's a bright and shining star."

"Such a rock star"

ALEX HEDDLE*Big Machine Music SVP/Publishing*

"I am highly impressed with Alex Heddle," says Morris Higham Pres. **Clint Higham**. "He has some of the best A&R skills I've seen in my 32 years in the industry. He's also on the street constantly and thinks about the next five years vs. the last 90 days. His relationships with writers and artists are most impressive. Alex is a fantastic music man and puts his artists first and foremost."

**CAROLINE HODSON***Tape Room Music Dir./A&R*

"Caroline always has a positive attitude, she's quick to offer a smile and doesn't get flustered by rapid requests coming her way from in-demand creatives," says Sony Music Publishing/Nashville CEO **Rusty Gaston**.

**MICHAEL JASPER***WME**Agent/Brand Partnerships*

"To do brand partnerships really well, Michael has

an understanding of the many, many ways that an artist connects with the public," says Triple 8 Management Founder/Triple Tigers Managing Partner **George Couri**. "He has an understanding of how to identify and how to reach the public for the artist and for a brand, as well as how to make a meaningful connection between the two. This requires an understanding of digital marketing, social marketing and connection, and how to stay true to the artist. This makes him great at his current job, but would make him great at any job that tries to connect the public and the artist, which is what most of us are trying to do every day."

**BRITTANI (KOSTER) JOHNSON***The Core Day-To-Day Mgr.*

"One name you can take to the bank is Brittani (Koster) Johnson," says BMG Pres./Frontline Recordings, The Americas **Jon Loba**. "I've had the chance to watch her lead the DMS team on the CRS Agenda Committee this year, where she presented some incredibly thoughtful and exciting panel ideas for CRS 2025. Having worked both in record promotion and now streaming, she has a very well-rounded view of the complexities of both, along with how they intersect and can benefit each other. Additionally, she is one of those professionals that even

if you have not worked with her directly, you hear her name mentioned over and over again by others in the industry as one of the best."

**SAMANTHA KANE***Opry Entertainment Group Mgr./Artist Relations*

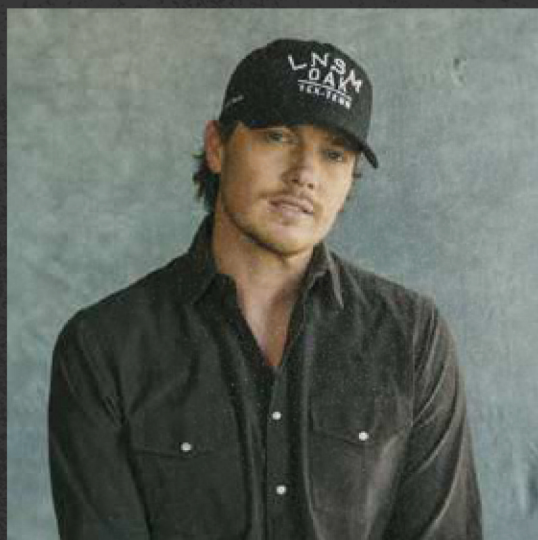
"Sam's creative thought process, attention to small details and overall organization culminates in her being one of the most exceptional young superstars in our industry," says Big Machine EVP/GM **Kris Lamb**. "There is nothing that can stop Sam from accomplishing her goals, and she will undoubtedly be a prominent future leader in our industry."



"He creates special opportunities for his writers and works hard to see a vision come to reality."



MATT STELL



GEORGE BIRGE



ERIN KINSEY



ALLI WALKER



NELLY



COLE PHILLIPS



DREW GREEN



TY MYERS



DAX

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 JOE FISHER - joe.fisher@sonymusic.com
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TIM MCGRAW

"One Bad Habit"
TOP 15 AND CLIMBING!



CARLY PEARCE

New Single
"truck on fire"
CLIMBING THE CHART!
hummingbird
ALBUM OUT NOW!
hummingbird 2024/2025 world tour
LAUNCHING IN OCTOBER!



JACKSON DEAN

New Single
"Heavens To Betsy"
OUT NOW!
On The Back Of My Dreams
ALBUM OUT NOW!



BRIAN KELLEY

"Acres"
AT RADIO NOW!
New Album
Ed And Mary Margaret's Son
OUT THIS FALL!



MIDLAND

Barely Blue
ALBUM OUT NOW!

**INTRODUCING
NEW ARTISTS**



CHASE MCDANIEL



MAE ESTES



LECADE





THOMAS RHETT

7th Studio Album
About A Woman
AVAILABLE NOW!
Featuring Current Single
"Beautiful As You"



BRANTLEY GILBERT

Studio Album
Tattoos
AVAILABLE NOW!
Featuring Current Single
"Over When We're Sober"
With Ashley Cooke



JUSTIN MOORE

Forthcoming Studio Album
This Is My Dirt
AVAILABLE OCTOBER 11!
Featuring Current Single
"This Is My Dirt"



CONNER SMITH

Storytellers EP
AVAILABLE OCTOBER 4!



MACKENZIE CARPENTER

"Boots On"
OUT NOW!



RILEY GREEN

Current Single
"Damn Good Day To Leave"
New Album
Don't Mind If I Do
AVAILABLE OCTOBER 18!



CHRIS JANSON

Current Single
"Whatcha See is Whatcha Get"
TOP 30 AND CLIMBING!



BRETT YOUNG

"Say Less"
OUT SEPTEMBER 27!
New Music Coming!



GREYLAN JAMES

"Who Broke Up With You"
On Tour With Ashley Cooke **THIS FALL!**



NOAH HICKS

"Second Time Around"
Featuring Shaylen
OUT NOW!



SHAYLEN

"To Tell You The Truth"
OUT NOW!

**TIFFANY KERNS**

*CMA SVP/Industry Relations & Philanthropy
& CMA Foundation Exec. Dir.*

"Tiffany is a uniquely gifted professional who does her job for the right reasons," says Townsquare SVP/Content & Programming **Kurt Johnson**. "Through the years she's developed unmatched relationships, programs and networks to bring music education to schools and students who need it. She ascended to the job of Executive Dir./CMA Foundation – succeeding none other than Joe Galante – and now is the SVP/Industry Relations for all of CMA. Tiffany moves our industry forward in increasingly important ways."

Definitely the next generation of Power 31ers."

KAMRON KIMBRO & JONATHAN TOWNLEY

Thomas Rhett's Tour Managers

"Kam and JT have been with Thomas Rhett for just over 10 years, and both are great at their follow-through, communications and taking care of business both on and off the road," says Valory Pres. **George Briner**.

**ROHAN KOHLI**

Warner Music Nashville VP/A&R

"Rohan – or 'MusicRo,' as he's appropriately called – has some amazing ears, tireless work ethic and is truly one of the good humans in our industry," says Warner/Chappell Pres./CEO **Ben Vaughn**.

GREG LEE

*NBC Universal VP/
Entertainment,
Live Events & Specials*

"Greg is a magnificent champion of country

music and is doing it in ways that haven't been done before," says UMG/Nashville Chair/CEO **Cindy Mabe**. "He was most recently instrumental in the *Toby Keith American Icon* special, honoring the life and legacy of Toby Keith and making it a prime time event that was so emotionally powerful it connected us back to why country music is a genre like no other. We are family.

Greg is incredibly motivated to develop artists' stories in country music and has been instrumental in creating new paths for discovery through the *People's Choice Country Awards* and other programming opportunities that NBC is building. To know Greg is to feel his passion for his job and for country music."



"has some amazing ears, tireless work ethic and is truly one of the good humans in our industry"

**LARAMIE LOMANTO**

Red Light Management Day-To-Day Manager

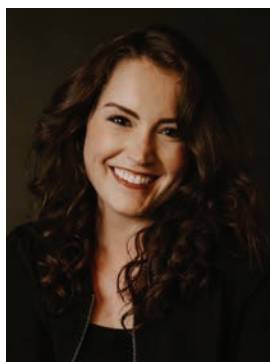
"In the short time I have known and worked with Laramie in tandem with Riley Green, she has simply been a rock star," says Nashville Harbor Pres. **Jimmy Harnen**. "She has exceptional attention to detail, incredible follow through, always positive, energetic and she does it with a smile on her face even in the most trying of situations. There's never a fire drill, and she's always a 'possibilitarian!' Whether she is in the office or on the road, her approach to handling every situation is exemplary."

KAILEEN MANGAN SMITH, BRIANA GALLUCCIO

*Boom Music Group
Mgr./Creative,
One Country
Dir./Promotion &
Partnerships*

"I can't pick just one," says MCA VP/Promotion **Miranda McDonald**.

"Kaileen Mangan has the ability to walk into a room and instantly make you feel like you've known her for a million years. This industry is so much about relationships, and she is brilliant at making and maintaining them. She sets the tone for any room she's in, and her smile is infectious. Briana Galluccio is one of the most driven people I've ever known. Briana's 50% is most people's 100%, and it's remarkable to watch. She will be a force. She already is."

**TRACY MARTIN**

The Core Entertainment Pres.

"Tracy Martin is, without a doubt, a future Power 31 industry leader," says Warner Music Nashville SVP/Radio & Commercial Partnerships **Kristen Williams**. "Look no further for a woman with confidence, class and grace – and knows how to get shit done. She is a management rock star and a force to be reckoned with."

**SHELBY MARVEL**

*ShopKeeper Management
Artist Mgr.*

"Shelby approaches every scenario with incredible positivity while also maintaining the utmost professionalism," says Big Loud EVP/Promotion **Stacy Blythe**. "She is also a new(ish) proud mom! I love watching her interact with others, as her energy is contagious."

CHARLIE MAXX

WXYC/Wilmington, DE PD

"Charlie Maxx is well on her way to becoming a power broker," says WXTU/Philadelphia PD **Mark Razz**. "Honest, with a great ear for the music and dedication to programming the most efficient, well thought-out radio brand she's associated with."

**BRENT MICHAELS**

KUZZ/Bakersfield PD

"I admire his deep knowledge of country music both new and old, and his talent for curating a radio station that seamlessly blends well-known artists with emerging talents is truly impressive," says Big Loud VP/Promotion **Tyler Vaughn**. "Brent's innovative and engaging approach to social media keeps his audience captivated and amplifies excitement around music and local events. Beyond his dynamic on-air presence as a live and local DJ with palpable passion, he dedicates time to actively participating in the Bakersfield community. His friendly demeanor and positive energy make him a standout presence, consistently radiating great vibes. Brent embodies the qualities of an exceptional leader and an inspiring figure in the industry."

**MANDELYN MONCHICK**

Red Light Manager

"Mandelyn Monchick has done a brilliant job navigating Lainey [Wilson's] career," says Big Machine Label Group Chairman/CEO **Scott Borchetta**.

**JANSEN MORGAN**

*Sony/Nashville
National Promotion &
Content Specialist*

"She was a great promotions person for us at Audacy and is on a fast track to succeed at a high level on the label side," says Audacy VP/Format Captain – Programming **Tim Roberts**. "She's organized, has a great work ethic and is fun to work with. Plus, with a last name like Morgan it seems inevitable, LOL!"

**ASHLEY MORRISON**

WFUS/Tampa PD

"If you pay attention to what Ashley is doing, it's the perfect blend of new and old programming 101," says BBRMG VP/Promotion, Marketing SXM Radio **Scotty O'Brien**. "The listeners' best interest is always her priority. She's always asking, 'How does this benefit the listener? The community?' She's also always planning and scheming, and I love it."

BROOKE NIXON

New West Records VP/Digital Marketing

"Brooke leads with her passion for music," says Valory Music SVP/Promotion & Digital **Ashley Sidoti**. "She enjoys a challenge and cultivates relationships in a refreshing and endearing way. I've watched her professional growth over the last decade and can't wait to see what the next decade holds for her!"

**AARON SPALDING, CHRIS PARHAM, Hayley Corbett**

(listed earlier)
*Live Nation Talent Buyer,
Concord Music Group
VP/Brand Marketing,
PunchBowl Entertainment
Manager*

"All three have great, but very different personalities," says Sony/

Nashville Chairman/CEO **Randy Goodman**. "They're all three students that love to learn and execute on the knowledge. They all do so with great confidence, but with their own brand of humility. Love watching them work."



RECORDS

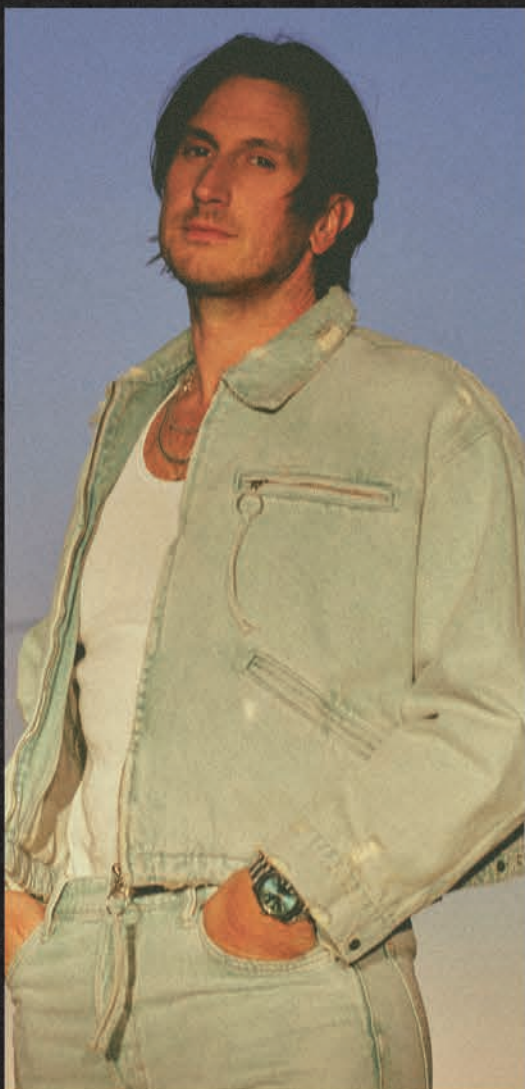
EIGHT YEARS:

11 #1 SINGLES

25 RIAA CERTIFICATIONS

4 BILLION STREAMS

THANK YOU COUNTRY RADIO



**RUSSELL
DICKERSON**



**SCOTTY
MCCREERY**



**JORDAN
FLETCHER**



KRISTEN REED

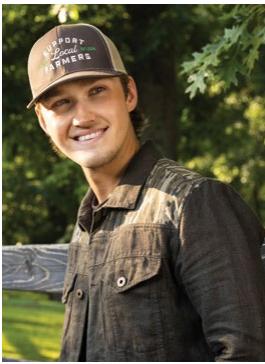
Concord Label Group VP/Data Analytics & Research
 “Kristen Reed will be running this town someday,” says Capitol VP/Promotion **Chris Schuler**. “One of Nashville’s smartest, Kristen’s understanding of the business and having an early beat on trends before they happen will not only get her far, her unmatched people skills make her the perfect leader.”

NICK RIVERS

WIRK/West Palm Beach APD/MD



“Nick is a progressive thinker, both as a music director and also a fan of the format,” says Sony/Nashville EVP/Promotion & Artist Development **Steve Hodges**. “He acknowledges the challenges and embraces new ideas of exposing music on terrestrial radio while maintaining the job of growing the station’s ratings, which inevitably leads to revenue growth. Probably the most important thing for Nick at this point in his career is the fact that he’s learning from and being mentored by one of the brightest programmers in the industry, [OM/PD] Bruce Logan. Bruce is a rare breed, in a super great way, and Nick is fortunate to have that sort of leadership to continue to learn from.”



JORDAN ROWE

Songwriter

“Likely not the power we normally think of,” says iHeartCountry Brand Coordinator/SVPP Nashville **Gator Harrison**, “but songwriter Jordan Rowe not only is trying to pioneer a brand of country music he refers to as ‘Kingdom Country,’ but he’s launched a weekly Bible study branded as Music Row Ministries to encourage all future power players.”

DAWN SANTOLUCITO

WKLB/Boston APD/Marketing Dir.

“Beyond being incredibly brilliant, she is very in tune with her brand’s audience and is always willing to learn and evolve,” says Cumulus VP/Country and WKDF & WSM-FM/Nashville PD **Travis Daily**. “With as fast as our business changes you have to be willing to evolve, and she is not scared of change or tackling the hardest of challenges. I’m a fan.”



KATHLEEN SHEA

Sirius XM/Pandora PD

“I picked Kathleen because good leaders do more listening than talking, and she’s a good listener who pays close attention to all aspects of the music and the story,” says Warner Music Nashville VP/Radio **Anna Cage**.



MARGARET TOMLIN

Sony/Nashville VP/A&R

“Margaret Tomlin has the maturity and emotional balance of somebody who’s been in the industry for decades, with a very intense eye for the future,” says producer **Dann Huff**. “I’ve seen her time and time again facilitate creativity in artists, producers and musicians. I’m grateful to have had a chance to work with her over the last several years. Whatever the record company of the future is, I have an inkling that she is headed for a CEO spot in her future.”

RIO VAN RISSEGHEN

The Orchard Label Mgr./Nashville

“Having had another career before coming to the country music industry, Rio processes a unique drive, real-world outlook and unbreakable passion only seen in a select few industry newcomers,” says Amazon Music Head/Country **Michelle Tigard Kammerer**. “Not only is she brilliant, has an incredible work ethic, and is a creative genius, she also takes the time to invest in her artists (as most are independent), find their story and create one-of-a-kind campaigns that speak to and grow the fan connection. Moreover, in only a few short years, she has already established herself as a ‘one-to-watch’ in town, a ‘go-to’ on the indie label side and a natural leader, as was recently voted in as the President of SOLID (a young professionals music industry organization). This is just the beginning for Rio, and I have no doubt she will not only make the Power 31, but will most likely top it one day. Go, Rio, go!”



ALAINA VEHEC

Sony/Nashville, VP/Commercial Partnerships

“Alaina is and will be a future country power broker because of her tenacity and dedication,” says Amazon Music Principal Music Curator/Music Industry **Emily Cohen Belote**. “She consistently demonstrates a strong work ethic and a relentless commitment to helping Sony/Nashville artists become bigger and bigger superstars. I’ve worked with Alaina for a long time now, and it’s been a pleasure because she doesn’t bring just skill to her role, but passion and a problem-solving mindset to her work.”

BREE WAGNER

Apple Music Country Coord./Music

“Bree is a true music seeker with an elite ear for what’s next,” says Radio One Houston Dir./Operations **Travis Moon**. “Her passion for artists and songs, combined with her instincts, makes her an invaluable collaborator in our industry.”



CHEYANA WEEKLEY

UMG/Nashville Dir./Marketing & Project Management

“Cheyana is one of the best up-and-coming music executives I know,” says BMG/Nashville EVP/Recorded Music **JoJamie Hahr**. “Her creativity, take charge attitude and organizational ability are just a few of the qualities that will have her running a label one day.”

CHRISTINA WILTSHIRE

Warner Chappell Music Nashville Sr. Dir./A&R

“From the first time I met Christina while she was an intern at Warner Music Nashville, I felt she was bound for big things in the music biz,” says Triple Tigers Co-Pres. **Kevin Herring**. “She has great ears, and the sky is the limit for her! I am always watching her career with great interest.”



CAC

“consistently radiating great vibes”



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Sam Hunt - Chris Janson - Cody Johnson
Toby Keith - Chris Lane
Florida Georgia Line - Little Big Town
Locash - Dustin Lynch - Scotty McCreery
Justin Moore - Kip Moore - Jake Owen
Parmalee - Thomas Rhett - Chase Rice
Darius Rucker - Dylan Scott
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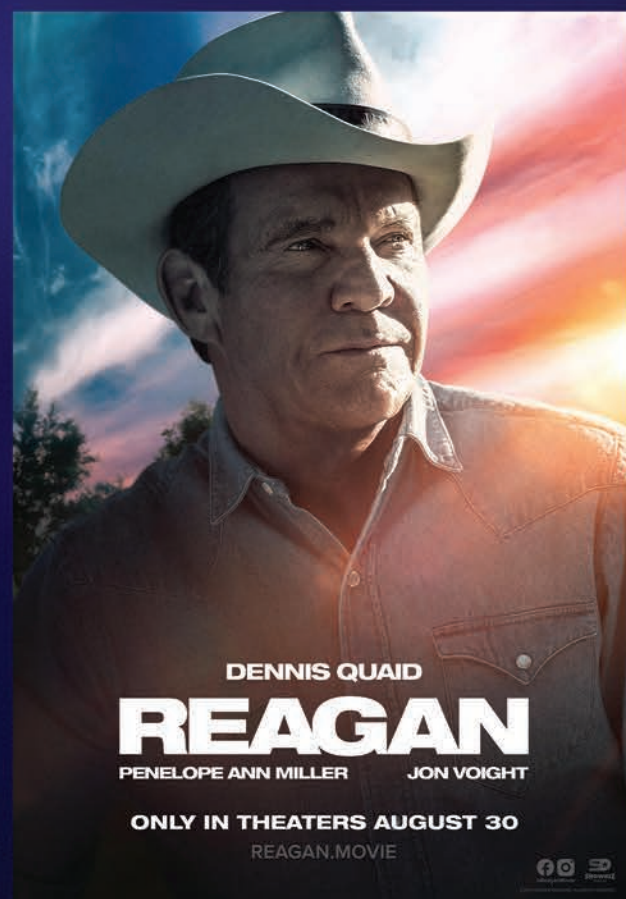
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KILLIN' TIME
FEATURING JON PARDI
STREAMING NOW



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FEATURED IN REAGAN
IN THEATERS NOW



BIG LOUD

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COUNTRY AIRCHECK
POWER 31 HONOREES



SETH ENGLAND



JOEY MOI



CRAIG WISEMAN



STACY BLYTHE



CANDICE WATKINS



TYLER WAUGH



2 0 2 4 E D I T I O N

AIRPLAY & EXPOSURE

Stacy Blythe
Big Loud
EVP/
Promotion



1

Rod Phillips
iHeartMedia
EVP/Country
Programming
Strategy



2

Kristen Williams
Warner Music
Nashville
SVP/Radio &
Commercial
Partnerships



3

Tim Roberts
Audacy
VP/Country



4

Ashley Sidoti
Valory
SVP/
Promotion
& Digital



5

Marci Braun
Audacy
Regional
Brand Mgr./
Central



6

Johnny Chiang
SiriusXM/
Pandora VP/
Country
Programming



7

Kurt Johnson
Townsquare
SVP/Content &
Programming



8

Steve Hodges
Sony/Nashville
EVP/
Promotion
& Artist
Development



9

Gator Harrison
iHeartCountry
Brand
Coordinator
SVP/
Programming



10

Erik Powell
Big Machine
VP/Promotion
& Marketing



11

Shelley Hargis
BBRMG
VP/Syndication
& Group
Strategy



12

Anna Cage
Warner Music
Nashville
VP/Radio



13

Mike Preston
Cumulus
KPLX &
KSCS/Dallas
PD



14

ARTISTS & MUSIC

Jon Loba
BMG
Pres./
Frontline
Recordings,
The Americas



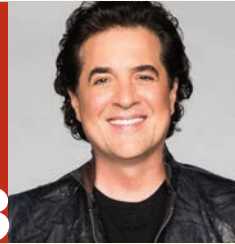
1

Seth England
Big Loud
CEO/Partner



2

Scott Borchetta
Big Machine
Label Group
CEO/
Chairman



3

Cris Lacy
Warner Music
Nashville
Co-Chair/
Co-President



4

Ben Kline
Warner Music
Nashville
Co-Chair/
Co-President



5

Cindy Mabe
UMG/
Nashville
Chair/CEO



6

Randy Goodman
Sony/Nashville
Chairman/CEO



7

JoJamie Hahr
BMG/Nashville
EVP/Recorded
Music



8

Michelle Tigard Kammerer
Amazon Music
Head/Country



9

George Briner
Valory
President



10

Craig Wiseman
Big Loud
Owner/
Managing
Partner



11

Mike Curb
Curb Word
Entertainment
Owner/
Chairman



12

Ken Robold
Sony/Nashville
EVP/COO



13

Kerri Edwards
President/KP
Entertainment



14

AIRPLAY & EXPOSURE

Lauren "LT" Thomas
Sony/Nashville
VP/Promotion



15

Tom Martens
Warner Music
Nashville VP/
Radio Accounts



16

Bobby Bones
The Bobby
Bones Show
Host



17

Travis Daily
Cumulus
VP/Country



18

Scotty O'Brien
BBRMG VP/
Promotion,
Marketing,
SXM Radio



19

Gregg Swedberg
iHeartMedia/
Minneapolis
SVP/
Programming



20

Tyler Waugh
Big Loud
VP/Radio
Promotion



21

Mark Razz
WXTU/
Philadelphia PD



22

Travis Moon
KKBQ/Houston
Dir./Operations



23

Miranda McDonald
MCA
VP/Promotion



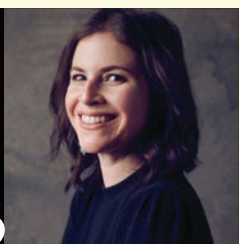
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Adrian Michaels
Stoney Creek
VP/Innovation,
Radio &
Streaming



25

Emily Cohen Belote
Amazon Music
Principal Music
Curator/Music
Industry



26

Damon Moberly
Mercury
SVP/Promotion



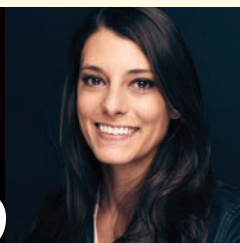
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RJ Meacham
Curb
SVP/Promotion



28

Rachel Whitney
Spotify/Nashville
Editorial Head



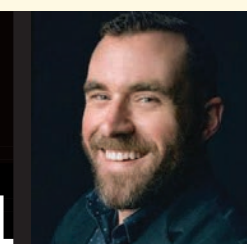
29

Lee Adams
Broken Bow
VP/Promotion



30

Chris Schuler
Capitol
VP/Promotion



31

ARTISTS & MUSIC

Jimmy Harnen
Nashville
Harbor
President



15

Ben Vaughn
Warner/
Chappell
Pres./CEO



16

Candice Watkins
Big Loud
SVP/Marketing



17

Mike Harris
UMG/Nashville
EVP/COO



18

Clint Higham
Morris Higham
President



19

Dann Huff
Producer



20

Rusty Gaston
Sony Music
Publishing
Nashville CEO



21

George Couri
Triple 8
Management
Founder, Triple
Tigers Managing
Partner



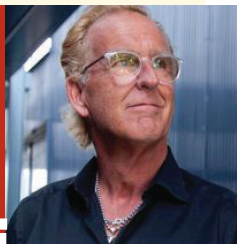
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Shane McAnally
SmackSongs
CEO
Monument
Co-President



23

Brian O'Connell
Live Nation
President/
Country



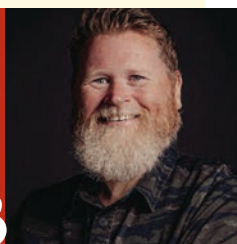
24

Kris Lamb
Big Machine
EVP/GM



25

Chris Kappy
Make Wake
Artists Founder/
Chief Navigation
Officer



26

Katie Kerkhover
BBRMG
VP/A&R



27

Ashley Gorley
Tape Room
Music Founder



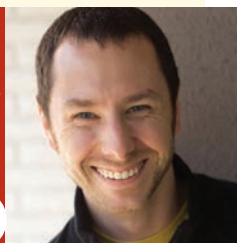
28

Kevin Herring
Triple Tigers
Co-President



29

Jay Liepis
Apple Music/
Nashville Head/
Music Business
Partnerships



30

Joey Moi
Producer, Big
Loud Partner



31



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DAVID KANTOR

THE INTERVIEW

For The People

Recent purchases of the Emmis/Indianapolis and Cox/Houston clusters – following an earlier purchase in Charlotte – moved Radio One beyond parent Urban One’s longstanding focus on urban and African-American audiences. Among the new formats, Country, with WLHK/Indianapolis and KKBQ/Houston. Radio One CEO David Kantor explains his and the company’s expansionist approach, integration of new formats and belief in radio’s people.

CA: What was the thought process that led Radio One to expand from super-serving African-American and urban audiences? Did opportunity change the mindset, or did the mindset change and you went looking for opportunity?

DK: A combination of both. Clearly we have the AA and Urban footprint nationally and in all of our marketplaces, but that’s only 15 to 20% of the U.S. population. And while we certainly do well nationally in the AA space – where we are the leader – the long-term goal should really be to get up to being the number one, two or three player in the markets in which we operate. When you have a market that’s only 15% African-American – Houston, for instance, is somewhere around that – you’re not going to have more than the three Urban stations, which it already has. So if I’m going to expand locally, I need to expand into the general market.

We came up with a strategy that, first, was to consolidate whatever Urbans we could in markets we’re already in. Those opportunities are far and few because you’d have to get a competitor to sell to you. With the way radio stations are going right now, I’m not sure there are a lot of sellers among the Urban players in our markets. The second strategy meant moving into other formats, whether it be Hispanic, Classic Rock, Country or Conservative Talk. Those are formats I have in my background with ABC Radio and AMFM. A lot of people in the company did as well. The third strategy would be to enter a new market, which has not proven to make sense yet under the economics.

Why Houston and Indianapolis in particular? Was it just the availability?

Houston and Indy were similar, as was Charlotte. We did that deal with Audacy in 2020. We were maxed out in those marketplaces. Although there were other potential Urban players, we didn’t think they were going to exit the format. They were all good operators, particularly in Houston, where they shared a lot of our operational philosophies. We saw the stations as very complementary. Most of our Indy stations are in the top 10. Four of the top 10 in Houston are ours. In Indy, we’re now No. 1 in the market, and in Houston we’re No. 2. It gave us economy of scale, particularly to compete in the general, local market.

What did you learn integrating new formats into the company?

Actually, it went both ways. In my opinion, a good PD is a good PD regardless of the format. Most critical aspects are the same – particularly in music formats or very targeted formats like Conservative Talk or Hispanic, which share a lot of similarities with Urban and the AA space. We also looked significantly at the people we were bringing in. The people at the top in both Houston and Indy were some of the best in the country in their formats. We may not have that strength, but we brought it in with the acquisition, then gave them a lot of authority to move forward. I’m a big believer that outside of the stick, everything else is about the people. We were really excited to get Travis Moon in Houston, who is one of the best PDs in the country. We actually put the Urban stations under him for operations.

What was it about Travis that led you to put the Urban stations under him?

Travis is the kind of radio person I like to think I am. He has that balance of being very analytic and strategic, but also having that gut. Jelly Roll was a great example of Travis being on something very early just on feel. After you’ve evaluated everything, you still have to say, “I know this guy’s going to be a hit” because you’re integrated into operating stations. I tend to look for people who are very good with the data and basic strategy, but also have that instinct for the business because they’ve been in it so long and they love it so much.

There’s an idea that Urban and Country audiences share some psychographics in terms of community, loyalty – maybe more TSL formats than cume. Now that you have both, do you see those parallels?

If there’s a strong, double-digit urban population – and obviously there isn’t really in L.A. anymore, which is why they only have one or two Urban stations that are very low rated – a mainstream Urban AC is very similar to Country. The way the playlists work, the way the currents roll up or don’t roll up, the way you look at recurrences, the music testing – even the way your jocks operate. Very similar.

I’ve always had the philosophy that all radio audiences are actually similar. They’re just very targeted. And what you have to do is get to the psychographics and the demographics that fall into that particular audience and build on that. Now, I would argue Country, Classic Rock and Urban AC are all broad-based formats. Whereas mainstream Urban, Classic Hip Hop, classic Talk, Hispanic and Classic Country are going to be much more targeted formats. With the broad-based formats, I’d focus much more on building cume to the maximum we think is available. On narrow formats, that’s about dominating a P1 position and increasing time spent listening as much as possible.

How does Country compare to Urban in terms of revenue delivered per ratings share?

Historically, a more broad-based format, sold properly, probably outperforms an Urban or Hispanic format. You would expect they would fall into the top five or top 10 in some markets. But because of our success focusing so much on one format, we have gotten very good at selling that format locally and nationally,





THE INTERVIEW

They Call The Thing Radio: Kantor (c) at the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo with (l-r) its CEO Chris Boleman, Radio One/Houston VP/MM Pamela Kay, HLSR Board Chair Pat Mann Phillips, Radio One/Houston DOS Wayne Jones and HLSR CRO Amber Burda.

which obviously gives us some benefits. In an efficient marketplace, everybody would get the same amount of revenue per share. In an inefficient marketplace, those who can effectively reach the different buckets of revenue – national, local, the advertisers who are particularly interested in a population I'm targeting – will maximize that. So I don't think it's reflective on the format as much as it is on the sales strategy you implement.

Speaking of national, have there been any issues integrating Country and other formats into your national sales strategy?

Not yet. Our general market national strategy is primarily Katz and our corporate sales on a broad-base basis. For national advertisers we work with who are targeting a national African-American footprint, we leave those stations out. We've started to talk to more advertisers about having a bit of a Country footprint in Indy and Houston, News/Talk in Charlotte and Indy, and AC in Indy and Charlotte. As we gain more stations in other formats, that will become a much bigger integration into a national and regional sales strategy – as well as programming strategy. That's down the road. Right now, non-urban accounts for roughly 28% of our audience, just by expanding in those three markets and the Hispanics that we have in several Northwest markets.

Did anything surprise you once you got into operating and working closely with the Country stations?

I was surprised at how much new country material there is. In that respect, it's much more like mainstream Urban than Urban AC, where there's very little new material. Country and mainstream Urban could have dozens of new releases every week you have to go through to decide what's going to be important to your audience. Plus there's much more of a local slant. You can't just do historical research that works across several markets. You really have to look at what's going on in Houston and Texas, or in the Midwest and Indianapolis.

Have you had much interaction with country labels or artists yet?

A little bit, but Travis obviously does, and he's done an extremely good job. In general, we let our PDs handle most of that unless there is something we want to discuss at a major level. An example we've thought about: We do an extremely successful cruise with Tom Joyner and around 30 acts. We've talked about potentially doing that in other formats. That's where we'd have more conversation with the labels. When we're doing NTR events and can tie it back to what we're also doing on the radio stations, that works really well for us.

So you're pleased with the Country stations and adding more would be attractive if you had the opportunity?

Yes, yes and yes. I would love to have more Country stations. Like mainstream Urban, Country is always going through musical changes in the types of songs and artists who are popular at any given time. More recurrent-based formats like AC, Classic Rock and Urban AC have to be much more focused on fundamentals because you don't have all that new music coming in. So Country takes different skills, which goes back to having confidence in your PDs.

Are all the stations under one roof in Indianapolis and Houston?

Yes. We are building a new facility in Indy that's probably a year away, but they are all currently operating out of the old Emmis facility. And in Houston we moved everything to the Cox facility, though that lease is coming up in the next couple of years. We believe all the formats should be together

because your jocks in various formats still have more things in common than they don't. And we've done interesting things. We've had a jock from our Urban station be on our Conservative Talk station and vice versa. Not necessarily for cross-listening, but more for understanding of different types of genres and people.

Zooming out to Radio One in general, what is the programming philosophy around live and local programming versus having personalities on in multiple markets, using outside syndication and/or voice tracking?

We have different philosophies by station and market – even in Urban, where we pretty much own all of our syndication except for Steve Harvey in Atlanta. It's a very syndicated format going back 25 or 30 years to when Tom Joyner started with us and quickly moved further in that direction with Steve Harvey, D.L. Hughley and Rick Smiley, and The Breakfast Club. To the point most stations in the U.S. were airing a syndicated product. We use quite a bit of syndication in Hispanic, too, but in Country, Urban AC, AC and Classic Rock we tend to focus much more on live and local, trying to build a traditional big morning show with the right music for the marketplace and doing a lot of outreach. We probably do more outreach than anybody.

Is radio's biggest issue attracting audience, retaining it or selling that audience to advertisers who seem to be moving toward digital platforms with better attribution?

They each have their own set of problems. In the last 10 years, media in general has become more segmented – not just internet versus radio versus television, cable, newspapers – but it's segmented even within those modules with streaming, podcasts and over-the-air radio. People only have 24 hours in a day and a lot of that is spent doing other things, so we're fighting every other media – not just audio – for a share of their usage. Sum zero. Within our segment, particularly on the younger end, people are moving very rapidly to streaming and podcasts, which has taken away from over-the-air broadcasting.

As it relates to ad sales, same thing. Advertisers now have a lot more choices than radio and TV. Streaming, audio streaming, podcasts, over-the-air, and also geotargeting on the internet. The food business went through this, too. There used to be just M&Ms and Peanut M&Ms. Now there are many more types of M&Ms. Maybe they've expanded the overall market for their candy, but each individual product may not be as strong as it used to be. We have to look at that, too. How do we expand the audio marketplace even though it may not strengthen traditional broadcasting? We may have to put our focus into streaming and podcasts.

Which could solve some of the attribution and targeting problems.

The advertising universe has changed dramatically. They once wanted to go to one place and reach as many people as possible with one message. Now it's the complete opposite. They want to go to as many places as possible with as many messages as possible, reaching a specific person or small group of people. That is a very significant technological change for all media. Unfortunately, it's more difficult for radio. We can do that through podcasting and streaming, but over the air, we can't. Part of that will take place because, over time, streaming will continue to grow – much as streaming on television has. The TV advertiser can now get that attribution through streaming that they couldn't get through broadcast. Radio faces the same thing, it's just a harder path for us. But it's inevitable.

Something like 20% of audio listening is now through

streaming or podcasting and, considering that didn't really exist pre-COVID, that's pretty significant movement in four or five years. That will continue to accelerate, particularly as older groups begin to adopt the technology. Right now, I'm constantly looking for formats in the adult realm more than I am in a younger end because most of the adults are still heavy radio users. The other benefit radio has is the automobile because it takes somewhere around 20 years for automobiles to float through the marketplace. So we have time to make the conversion, but we have to be conscientious of these trends. Audio is shifting to what are now really computers and cars, not radios. We need to be conscious of being aligned with how usage is changing so we don't get caught off guard.

How do you view the surge country music is having at the moment?

Formats always go in waves and a lot of it has to do with the material. Of all of them right now, country probably has the freshest material coming out. I won't overly date myself, but I remember when Top 40 was really a combination of Urban, Pop, Rock and Country. And then formats became much more segmented. For a while, Urban dominated the pop charts. Now you're seeing Country doing that. Plus you're starting to see artists crossing formats. You have Jelly Roll performing with Eminem. There's a lot more congeniality across formats and talent than there used to be.

You're retiring at the end of the year. Do you have any sense of relief that radio's changing dynamics will no longer be your headaches?

I'm happy that this is a good time for me to retire. I was originally looking at 2020, then COVID came in and I felt I should stay through that. The industry is changing so rapidly and we have so many talented people coming up, so it's time to hand the baton to another generation. And that doesn't mean I wouldn't be around for people to call if they want advice. I'd be happy to give it. But we need to look at things very differently. My perspective goes back to when you could only own 14 radio stations. I worked for ABC, which had seven AM and seven FM, making it the largest radio player. Radio is nothing like that anymore. Five years from now, even more so. It's time for a new generation to take charge.

Was there a moment when it clicked for you that this business was something you wanted to be a part of?

When I was an undergrad at UMass, I started doing a radio show and fell instantly in love with it. I stopped going to classes, spent all my time at the radio station and then started a concert promotion business. My initial entry came through music, but once you're in – if you have that fire in your belly and love the industry – you want to be part of it. Every day is different. I can wake up and tell you what I think the day's going to look like, but when I go to bed at night it looked nothing like that.

What are your plans?

I want to relax, get some more adventurous trips out of the way before I get too old and can't do them. And I just bought a place in Brooklyn. I have three kids with grandchildren in New York City, and have always wanted to spend more time there outside of work.

Final thoughts?

We are still an industry of people. That is our greatest asset and the most important thing for moving our business forward. People not only bring better ways of operating, they offer creativity, freshness and new products. I see it all the time in this industry – how do we cut costs? But that's just one aspect. We all much would prefer – how do we grow our revenue? You grow revenue through your people coming up with fresh and innovative ideas.

CAC

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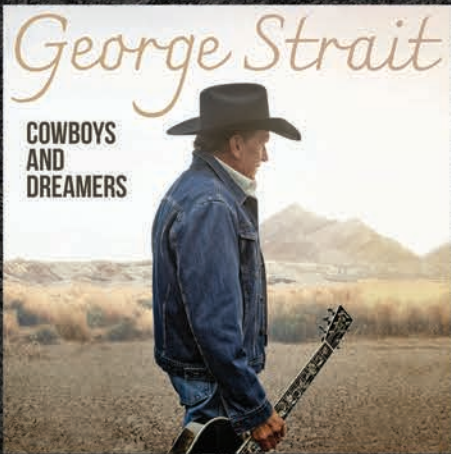
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DIRT" OUT NOW!
FEATURING THE CURRENT HIT
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