

# THE INTERVIEW

Scott Borchetta

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# YOUR 2007 MEMORIES

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# TOP SEVEN OF '07

Indie uprising, Country reclaims Cali, labels get a sinking feeling and the return of Garthzilla, among other big news of the year.

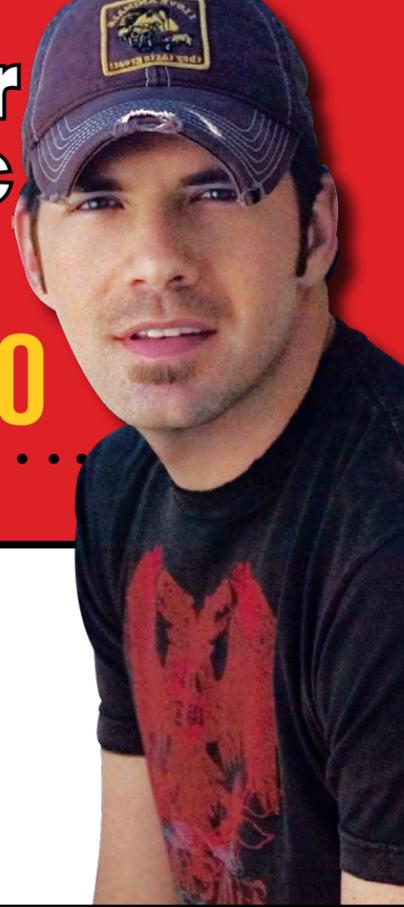
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# The Year In Music

Arista & Kenny reign again, Rodney has top song, and...

# THE TOP 100

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COUNTRY

# AIRCHECK

DECEMBER 2007

Aaron Tippin

RASCAL FLATTS

SHEDAISY

Josh Gracin



LYRIC STREET RECORDS

10 YEARS

20 MILLION ALBUMS

THANKS COUNTRY RADIO FOR A DECADE OF AIRPLAY PARTNERSHIP!

Trent Tomlinson

Bucky Govington

Marcel

Sarah Buxton

Lari White

# TOP SEVEN OF '07

Big Changes, Big Personalities, Big Stories



No question, he's still got it. **Garth Brooks** stepped out of his self-imposed soccer-dad exile and proved he moves the audience needle more dramatically than anyone since, well, Garth. "More Than A Memory" debuted at No. 4, tying his own Mediabase record, and his *Ultimate Hits* was Country's top-seller in its second week, following a debut-week hat tip to another monolithic artist return by The Eagles.

## 3 GARTHZILLA RETURNS Brooks' Off-Again Retirement Boosts Country

And much to the delight of the broadcast constituency, Country radio was at the very center of Brooks' well-orchestrated return. From the Garth Radio Seminar (GRS) gathering in Nashville at which he announced his plans, to the marathon nine-show concert run in Kansas City and associated nationwide cinema-cast, Country radio was front-row-center. Brooks has also scheduled five shows over two days in Los Angeles to aid fire victims. At least his vocal cords will have a few years to recover.

## 4 TICKET PUNCH Country Tours Rule The Road

"Country touring is as healthy as it has ever been and getting healthier," says Live Nation's **Brian O'Connell**. "There are more bites at the apple for more artists. We still haven't found the top end." For confirmation, look no further than blockbuster 2007 tours from **Kenny Chesney**, **Tim McGraw** and **Faith Hill**, **Rascal Flatts**, **Brad Paisley**, **Keith Urban**, **Brooks & Dunn** and **Alan Jackson**, **Toby Keith**, **George Strait** and even a one-city stand by **Garth Brooks**.

In an over-stimulated marketplace, the word "live" still has pull. "Touring is the only way to cut through the radio-television-internet clutter," O'Connell says. "Touring gives artists the ability to touch fans on one-to-one basis and put new music in front of them."



And though life on a bus has long been the most reliable path to profit for country artists, the center of gravity keeps shifting further away from recorded music. "There was a time when you toured to support the record," O'Connell says. "Now you're putting out records to support the tour. It's come full-circle."

Touring's growth isn't just good for the superstars, according to Monterey/Paradigm's **Brian Hill**. "You have the next generation of headliners like **Sugarland**, **Little Big Town**, **Montgomery Gentry** and **Gary Allan** touring consistently and doing well," he says. "And you've got the emergence of **Taylor Swift**, **Jack Ingram**, **Jason Aldean** and **Miranda Lambert**, who are making an impact in the hard-ticket market and doing strong business on their own – that's hope for the future." Amen.

For radio and the music business, 2007 will be remembered as a year of upheaval. Broadcasters are experiencing the greatest ownership shift in the post-Telecom era, and record labels are suffering through the most painful format conversion in the industry's history. But don't worry, there's plenty of good news, too – particularly for the country community. Nashville artists are making hay on the touring circuit. Lots of it. And the Country format got two top-five markets back in California this year. Onward!



Not since the 1996 Telecom Act set off a ground-shaking buying spree has there been so much turmoil in radio ownership. Wall Street's lack of confidence in the medium's growth is behind many of the deals, including the massive \$19.5 billion buyout of **Clear Channel** by a consortium led by **Bain Capital Partners** and **Thomas H. Lee Partners**, whose intent is to take the group private. The move precipitated the sale of

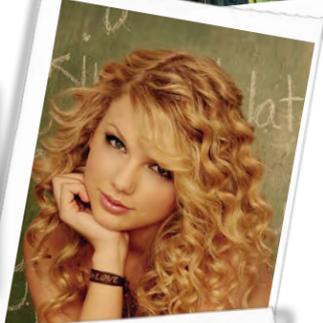
## 1 OWNERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES Buyouts, Sellouts & More For Radio Groups

448 of Clear Channel's smaller market radio stations and all 42 TV stations. Speaking of private, Atlanta-based management for **Cumulus Media** announced a July deal in which President/CEO **Lew Dickey** and an affiliate of **Merrill Lynch Global Private Equity** would take the 344-station company off the market for \$1.3 billion. A \$2.7 billion deal between the **Walt Disney Co.** and **Citadel Broadcasting** closed in June, sending **ABC Radio's** 14 FM and eight AM stations, as well as **ABC Radio Networks**, to **Citadel**, which is now the third-largest radio group. And in November, **Lincoln Financial Group** began exploring options to divest its 15 stations in Atlanta, Denver, Miami and San Diego. As for the Clear Channel stations being divested, 52 in Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas are going to Dallas-based **GAP Broadcasting**. And **Gap West**, which operates separately, is buying and already running 57 more in Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Washington and Wyoming.

## 2 IN D HOUSE Independent Labels Continue Raising Expectations

**Tracy Lawrence's** two-week No. 1 wasn't the first sign that independent labels have some pretty good friends at Country radio, but it sure drove the point home. The ascension of **Rocky Comfort/COS's** "Find Out Who Your Friends Are" was immediately preceded by the No. 1 affirmation of **Emerson Drive's** "Moments" on **Midas** – a historic back-to-back for independent country releases.

Independents rang the cash register as well, with **Big Machine** earning a double-platinum certification for **Taylor Swift's** self-titled debut, which shows no sign of slowing. And that success probably made the decision to launch Big Machine sister imprint **The Valory Music Co.** that much easier. Factor in launches including **Nine North** and **John Michael Montgomery's Stringtown**, and the ranks of independents remain crowded despite losses including **Rust** and **903**.



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Top Performer **Kenny Chesney**



# THE TOP SEVEN OF '07

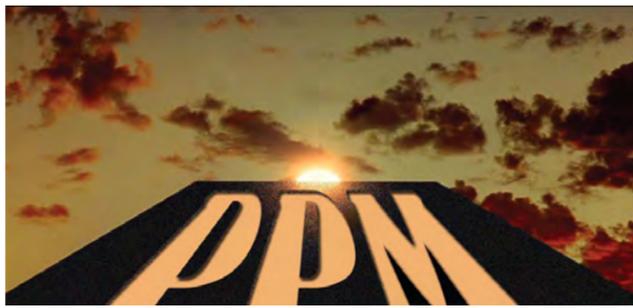


## 5 HOW LOW CAN YOU GO? CD Sales Fall – No Bottom In Sight

At press time, the good people who study these things anticipated a year-end country album sales figure somewhere around 60 million units. That precipitous 20% drop from 2006 (74.9m) is the lowest annual total in the SoundScan era (see graph), and is

Arbitron's long-awaited commercial rollout of the Portable People Meter debuted in 2007, first in Philadelphia and then Houston. Though Arbitron reminds broadcasters that comparing diary numbers to PPM figures are akin to apples and oranges, early findings from the PPM ratings reflect lower time spent listening but much higher weekly cume than indicated by diaries.

Beasley's Country **WXTU/Philadelphia**, for example, generated a 12+ cume of 428,000 in fall 2006, but with PPM scored a whopping 727,000 in September 2007. Meanwhile, CBS Radio's **KILT/Houston** soared from 440,000 in fall 2006 to 719,000 three months ago. Across



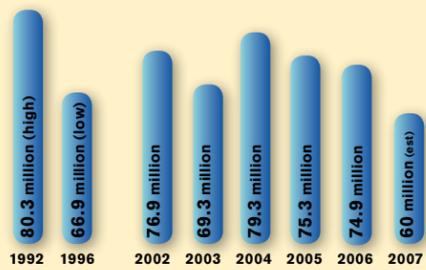
## 6 RATINGS: THE NEXT GENERATION PPM Shows Country's Strength

sizes among younger and ethnic demos, pushing rollouts to September 2008 and beyond. Regardless, PPM's deployment is destined to have a profound impact on the music industry as programmers begin to see more immediately the effect of specific songs and artists, in-studio artist visits, promotions and, of course, commercials.

town, Cox Country competitor **KKBQ** nearly doubled from 436,000 to 812,000.

The slow-moving train of radio support accelerated this year as more group owners climbed aboard, only to be recently delayed on its route to New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco and other major cities. Several key broadcasters and at least one radio trade group have issues with PPM sample

## Annual Country Unit Sales



significant enough to have even the most cheerful label staffer wondering if it's time to update the old resume. Unlike past downturns, this decline can't easily be attributed to variances in superstar release schedules or the relative appeal of country music and music in general.

In fact, audio with a beat seems to be as popular as ever, if the white earbuds sprouting from the public's craniums are any indication. But where are they getting all those tunes? Unlike past format conversions, consumers don't have to re-purchase their favorites, they can rip their CD collection right into their computers. Unfortunately, they can also rip their friends' discs.

Without question, the ability to cherry-pick singles and tracks has cut into a business built on the album model. And file-sharing remains a thriving outlet for music, particularly with a younger generation that seems to see labels as The Man with a lawsuit in his pocket. That can't be good.

## 7 GOIN' BACK TO CALI KKGO & KBWF Reclaim LA & SF

Just in time for CRS, the Country radio industry gave birth to twins in late February when Mt. Wilson Broadcasters seized an obvious opportunity and switched Classical KMZT/Los Angeles to **KKGO (Go Country 105.1)**, while Entercom ditched Adult Hits KMAX/San Francisco in favor of **KBWF (The Wolf 95.7)**. The moves put country music back on the airwaves in two of the top five markets.

By September, **KKGO OM** and 17-year company veteran **Mike Johnson** had advanced to Sr. Operations & Programming Manager, while APD/MD/mid-dayer and former 12-year **KZLA** staffer **Tony Campos** was named PD. Fueled by a big launch party and "Go Fest" show with **Brooks & Dunn** and **Alan Jackson**, **Go Country** notched a 1.8 in spring '07 and a 1.4 in summer, outperforming Emmis' new effort both books. **KBWF** gave the boot to Adult Hits by firing up 10,000 Country songs in a row under new PD and "Prime Minister of Twang" **Scott Mahalick**, who had built Entercom Wolf sister **KKWF/Seattle**. The Wolf posted a 2.2 in its first full book, easing to a 1.8 in summer. **CAC**



# EIGHT FOR '08

### 1 Let's Make A Deal:

Has the chart success of independent labels and indie promotion teams emboldened any big-name country artists to take a Madonna-like 360 deal with, say, Live Nation? Answer: If the price is right.

### 2 If We Can Make It There:

Could Country be movin' on up to the East Side? We hear it might take a move-in to get a Country stick in the Big Apple. You heard it here first.

### 3 Major Bummer:

The big-label model is getting squeezed more ways than a hillbilly singer's hand at a county fair. Hate to say, but we might lose a couple imprints. But it's just that much more talent – executive and artistic – for the indies to scoop up.

### 4 Old School, Baybee!

Country shocks the marketplace by breaking several new artists without the help of *American Idol*. Yeah, okay. Even we know that's far-fetched.

### 5 Dear Diary, You Suck:

The PPM's September rollout begins to shape programming decision-making in major markets. By this time next year, it's the buzz of the industry.

### 6 Feed Jake:

Broadcast performance royalties become a hot topic in Washington, with broadcasters and the music biz prepared for a final showdown. Oh, wait. It's an election year. Never mind.

### 7 Let's Do Launch:

Another heritage music delivery company steps out into the final frontier, giving the satellite radio space another competitor.

### 8 Daisy's Dukes:

Jessica Simpson becomes country's next big star, asks countdown host, "Who are you again?"

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# MOUNT ROCKMORE

## & OTHER SCENES FROM CMA NIGHT IN NASHVILLE



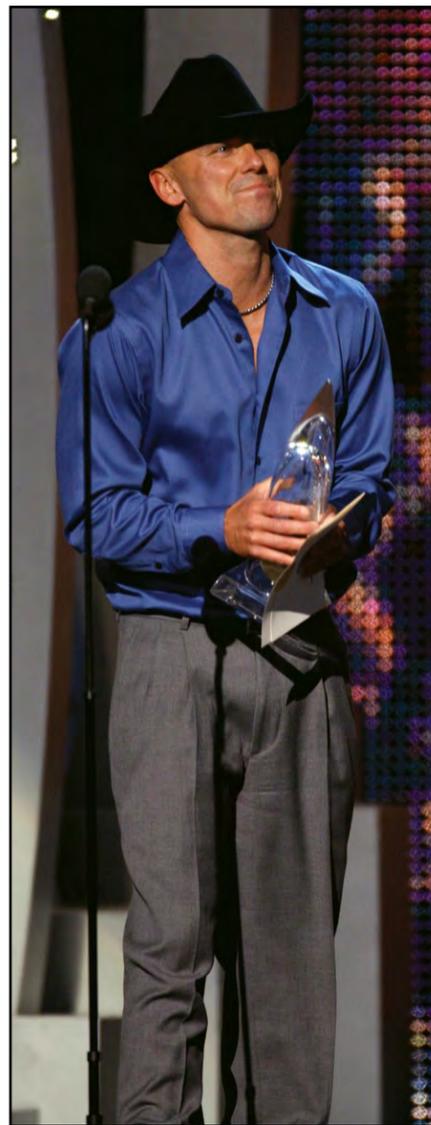
**T**he Eagles' first-ever awards show performance highlighted an entertaining and solidly rated 41st Annual CMA Awards Nov. 7 at Nashville's Sommet Center. Here's a look at some of the night's most memorable moments and people.



CLICK HEAR: Taylor Swift, Brad Paisley and Kellie Pickler during the "Online" performance.

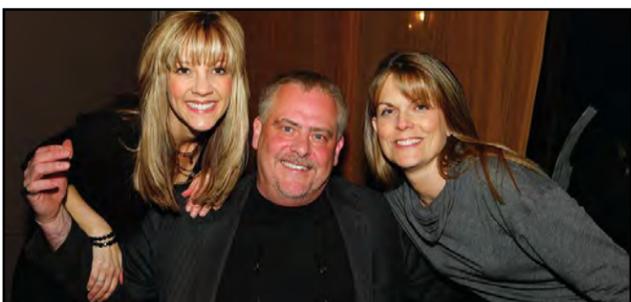


SHAKE & BAKE: George Strait & Tony Brown celebrate their Album of the Year win.



THE CHAMP: Entertainer of the Year Kenny Chesney shines again.

WE CAN MAKE IT IF WE TRY: Sugarland win Duo



A BEAUTIFUL THING: Industry vet Bobby Kraig visits with Universal South's Teddi Bonadies (l) and Rhonda Christensen during a party for radio at Phil Vassar's home.



HERO SANDWICH: Luke Bryan and Capitol's Mike Dungan shred for the camera.

## Quote Book

"I'd like to thank my ex-wife Amy...for being such a good mother to my daughter. She surely deserves half of this song and half of this award, too."

—**JAMEY JOHNSON** accepting Song of the Year for "Give It Away" along with co-writers Bill Anderson and Buddy Cannon

"I'm very thankful to you and Tim [McGraw] for being on this record."

—**TRACY LAWRENCE** to Kenny Chesney after winning Vocal Event

"This one was completely unexpected. I had already congratulated Randy Scruggs."

—**JERRY DOUGLAS** on his Musician of the Year win

"For those of you keeping score, it's been 13 years in this business, only one marriage and no arrests!"

—**LEANN RIMES** at the beginning of her segment as host

"This is definitely the highlight of my senior year."

—**TAYLOR SWIFT** accepting the Horizon Award

"I first met Kellie Pickler when she was out on the 'If you check her for ticks you're dead tour' with Brad."

—**KIMBERLY WILLIAMS PAISLEY** introducing Pickler's performance

"I want to thank my dad, who carried amplifiers and ran sound even though he didn't know what he was doing."

—**BRAD PAISLEY** accepting Male Vocalist

# THE WIN CROWD

Broadcast winners share their Awards week experiences



Lia Knight

**THE LIA SHOW, LIA KNIGHT, NATIONAL PERSONALITY:** “You get to hang out in the green room for a while, then there’s that moment of waiting,” Lia says. “After that, they hand you the award and take a picture of you staring out into space. You try not to be nervous or have jitters because there’s something so amazing about being able to walk out on that stage. The Awards have a very familial feeling – everyone coming together and celebrating the success of the format and the music. It’s such a cool experience.”

**CHRIS CARR, MAJOR MARKET PERSONALITY, KEYE/MINNEAPOLIS:** “The audience reaction has been incredible,” Carr says. “After Jason Aldean called me on-air, one woman called just bawling because she was so happy. I didn’t put it on the air because it seemed a little self-serving, but this win is very personal for people around here. I went on the air the day after the Awards – which, by the way, was a mistake – but people call and really take ownership of it. They even show up to appearances, and they say ‘Thank you,’ which is very interesting.”

**WKXC/AUGUSTA, GA SMALL MARKET STATION:** “The musical experience was incredible,” says PD **T. Gentry**. “We had our guitar pull when we got back, and as I introduced the airstaff I handed each of them the trophy,” Gentry says. “The audience went crazy. It’s almost bigger to the listeners. They see that crystal bullet and just flip.”

“That’s when it really sunk in that it was ours,” night jock Chris O’Kelley says. “Having that trophy in your hand is pretty incredible.”

CAC



Chris Carr

**JIM DENNY & FRIENDS JIM DENNY, DEBORAH HONEYCUTT, KEVIN FREEMAN, LARGE MARKET PERSONALITY, WFMS/INDIANAPOLIS:** “We talk to Country’s favorite stars every week, but sitting in the audience [near] Carrie Underwood and Rascal Flatts made us realize we’re fans, too,” Honeycutt says. “We had to laugh when Carrie walked by and we all grabbed our cell phones to text our friends at home. Something else that left a lasting impression was during the pre-telecast award presentation, we looked out from the stage and locked eyes with Martina McBride. She was one of the only stars who arrived early and she sat in the center of the front row clapping for each and every award winner. Class act.”



KYGO/Denver PD Joel Burke, GM Bob Call



Jim Denny, Deborah Honeycutt, Kevin Freeman

**DAN TOOKER IN THE MORNING DAN TOOKER, JON WATKINS, COLBY ERICSON, MEDIUM MARKET PERSONALITY, KFDI/WICHITA:** “The amazing thing about us winning is we’re not at the station anymore,” Tooker says. “That was what everybody wanted to talk about, to the point it was almost comical. What’s really cool is hearing from people I haven’t heard from in 20 years. I don’t think you realize what a big award it is until other people let you know what a big award it is. Businesses in Wichita have congratulations signs up. Local TV stations covered it. We almost didn’t go because it was a little bittersweet, but we’re really glad we went.”



WMIL/Milwaukee PD Kerry Wolfe

**GATOR & THE STYCKMAN SMALL MARKET PERSONALITY, WGSQ/COOKEVILLE, TN:** “So I gotta go to the bathroom before the show,” Styckman says. “I line up at the urinal, look up, and realize that Whispering Bill Anderson’s on my left and Randy Travis is on my right. Peeing with the legends. That was my CMA magical moment.”

“We had better seats than Rascal Flatts watching the freakin’ Eagles onstage at the CMAs,” Gator says. “And at one point Martina McBride looked into my eyes and said, ‘Excuse me.’ To be honest, I peed my pants a little.”



KXKT/Omaha (former PD) Tom Goodwin, Interim PD Craig Allen



Colby Ericson, Dan Tooker, Jon Watkins

**KYGO/DENVER, MAJOR MARKET STATION:** “I was standing onstage as Emerson Drive announced the winners, and had this random rhetorical question pop into my head – ‘How did I end up here?’” PD **Joel Burke** says. “It was incredibly exciting and at the same time humbling for both myself and GM Bob Call to represent the people who work here now and everyone who’s worked here over the last 28 years. We stand on their shoulders and would not be having this success if they hadn’t laid the foundation.”



Gator Harrison, Greg “Styckman” Owens

**WMIL/MILWAUKEE, LARGE MARKET STATION:** “We’ve been nominated six times and this was our first win,” says PD **Kerry Wolfe**. “Being able to stand on that stage and hold a CMA award felt great. But my favorite memory from the week might be walking down to the Hilton, where we were doing the broadcast, and hearing someone scream, ‘Kerry Wolfe rocks!’ I turn around and see Taylor Swift hanging out the window of an SUV like she’s on the front of the Titanic.”



WKXC/Augusta, GA VP/MM Kent Dunn, OM/PD T Gentry

**KXKT/OMAHA, MEDIUM MARKET STATION:** “I felt like a kid in a candy store,” interim PD and morning co-host **Craig Allen** says. “We’ve been nominated for both personality and station several times and I thought we were just going to be a perpetual Susan Lucci – never winning. The whole thing was a blur and, honestly, pretty surreal. I do remember watching Luke Bryan play *Guitar Hero* and giving it probably the worst performance I’ve ever seen in my life.”

# LABEL OF THE YEAR

## ARISTA

the year in music

2007 TOP TEN LABELS

1  
ARISTA  
NASHVILLE  
14.7%

2  
Capitol  
RECORDS NASHVILLE  
9.5%

3  
CURB  
RECORDS  
curb.com  
8.7%

4  
LYRIC STREET  
RECORDS  
7.9%

5  
MCA  
NASHVILLE  
A UNIVERSAL MUSIC COMPANY  
7.85%

6  
BNA  
BNA RECORDS LABEL  
7.2%

7  
Mercury  
RECORDS  
A UNIVERSAL MUSIC COMPANY  
6.5%

8  
BIG  
MACHINE  
RECORDS  
5.5%

9  
BBR  
5.1%

10  
RCA  
RECORDS LABEL  
NASHVILLE  
5.08%

**F**or the second straight year, Arista/Nashville owns the largest chart share – 14.7% – in country music. The numbers are indisputable: 12 tunes in the Top 100, three in the Top 10, four in the Top 20 and 10 in the Top 50.

VP/Promotion Skip Bishop sees his team as “soldiers on the front lines protecting God’s universal language. There’s a remarkable combination of creative madness and rigid discipline that makes this group untouchable. We know we’re blessed with incredible music and gifted artists, and that manifests a sense of responsibility that we carry proudly.”

Looking back at an exceptionally successful year, we asked the Arista folks for their snapshot memories of ‘07. “Brad [Paisley] and Kim had a baby and named him Huckleberry, and that’s hard to beat,” Bishop says. “Lesly Somerville got married and the after-party is still going on. Jason Michael had two huge smashes. Bryan Frasher won a world grappling tournament and a BBQ cook-off in one year. Ronnie and Kix somehow became 10 years younger, had more fun and sold more records. John Sigler came out of his hippie commune in Woodstock and drove an old truck to Nashville. And Alan Jackson just delivered the most stunning album of his life. It’s been quite a year!”

Indeed. Here’s what the rest of the team had to say:

### BRYAN FRASHER, NATIONAL

“We got together at Skip’s house periodically for what we call ‘Arista Jam Sessions,’” Frasher says. “Skip cooks – more important, his wife Diane cooks – and we hang by the outdoor fireplace and pool and just start throwing ideas around. We play music, brainstorm and it gets rowdy. It gets ridiculous. But we always come away with something worthwhile. More than that, we come away knowing each other a little better each time. It accelerated the bonding experience and by the end of the year, I think we all knew we could lean on each other at any time.”

### JOHN SIGLER, NORTHEAST

“Skip and I took Carrie Underwood on a jet tour for her album launch,” Sigler says. “We had events in Boston, Philadelphia, DC and Baltimore in one day. There was a multitude of details to cover and it was a tremendous amount of work, but it had tremendous impact. I’ve done alternative rock promotion for 17 years and have been impressed at how well-educated new country artists are about the business. The other encouraging thing is how many young people I’ve seen at country shows. There’s a whole new generation coming up that loves this music.”

### ALEX VALENTINE, SOUTHWEST

“Seeing two giants like Alan Jackson and Brooks & Dunn take the stage on one tour was pretty special,” Valentine says. “I’ll always carry with me that memory of standing on the side of the stage watching these two great artists and thinking, ‘Holy smokes, these guys are country

music!’ I’m in awe that I get to learn this format on a label like Arista and at a company like Sony BMG. I sometimes can’t believe I get to do this every day with these people.”

### JERI DETWEILER-COOPER, SOUTHEAST

“In May, we had a seven-course meal at the Sunset Grill to learn all about etiquette from our friend Kim Goddard, and it was hilarious,” Detweiler-Cooper says. “Imagine Tom Baldrice trying to find the right fork or Bryan Frasher trying to find a polite place to put his empty sugar packet. A couple of sad events for me personally were having Phil Vassar and Keith Anderson leave Arista. I worked Phil’s first No. 1 song and miss having the day-to-day with him. Same with Keith, even though he’s just down the hall. Personal highlights include seeing my son Luke walk and talk. He loves music, but until Brooks & Dunn do a version of ‘Wheels On The Bus,’ they won’t be superstars in his eyes.”

### LESLY TYSON, MID-SOUTH

“Jason Michael Carroll wrote ‘Livin’ Our Love Song’ with his guitar players Tim Galloway and Glen Mitchell during a radio tour,” Tyson recalls. “We were on a bus between Memphis and Nashville at easily 1am, but had to catch a flight to Atlanta later that morning. They were sitting up and singing the song over and over. I finally had to say to them, ‘That’s one of the best hooks I’ve ever heard, but you’ve got to stop singing! You’ve got to sing at an event in the morning!’

“The other fun experience was a cooking class we all took in Franklin with Carrie Underwood as we were getting ready for the launch of her new album. It was a great opportunity to spend time together and hear her enthusiasm for the record. She was so fired up about the writing process.”

### LORI HARTIGAN, WEST COAST

“The first single for JMC was supposed to be ‘Looking At You,’” Hartigan says. “I had the ‘marketing genius’ idea of having laminates made with a sheep on them that read ‘Looking At Ewe.’ Following the theme, I worked out a promotion with KMPS/Seattle that invited listeners to hear an emerging star at the Puyallup Fair in, of all places, the petting zoo.”

“JMC and two players performed for sheep, goats, pigs and birds, along with radio staff, Skip and about 20 listeners. One off-key bird squawked the entire way through ‘Alyssa Lies.’ I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry, but Jason pulled it off and had fun. Everyone was impressed. Seven months later he returned to play for an SRO crowd of 2,000. I sat in the bleachers and remembered back to humble beginnings at the petting zoo.”

### KATES ROGERS, COORDINATOR

“Our late-night event at the Arista CRS suite was memorable for the road stories artists and regionals were telling,” Rogers says. “Skip shared his experiences in pop and how he and Butch Waugh first came to know each other. I don’t think I was born then. Bryan Frasher made us laugh with tales from the road and Arista forefather Bobby Kraig dazzled us with magic and card tricks. Also this year, Lesly got married and the entire staff was in attendance. Let me tell you, Arista can dance!”

Reiterating the top-to-bottom strength of his staff, Bishop says, “If a meteor landed on me today, any one of them could take my place. This team is never out of touch, never breaking from the task and always thinking far beyond the reach of the headlights. We’re never far away from each other. Even when we’re apart, we’re together.”

CAC

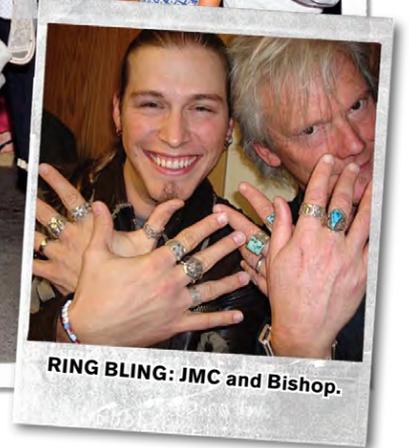


**POT-STIRRERS:** The Arista crew cooks with Carrie. Pictured (l-r) are Alex Valentine, Lori Hartigan, John Sigler, Carrie Underwood, Skip Bishop, 19 Management’s Ann Edelblute, Kates Rogers, Bryan Frasher, Lesly Tyson and Jeri Cooper.

**WEDDING BELLE:** Lesly Tyson with Arista and Sony BMG staffers at her reception.



**GOAT OF MANY COLORS:** Pictured (l-r) are KMPS/Seattle’s Tony Thomas, Arista’s Lori Hartigan, Jason Michael Carroll, KMPS’ Becky Brenner and Arista’s Skip Bishop.



**RING BLING:** JMC and Bishop.

**A**rista repeats on the strength of an amazing 18 charted records, proving that last year’s dizzying 14.8% chart share wasn’t a fluke. Arista posted 11 Top 15 hits and three No. 1s that spent five weeks at the top. Sony BMG’s four imprints – Arista, BNA, Columbia and RCA – amassed a 31.4% chart share in 2007. Collectively, they had seven No. 1s that were good for 20 weeks at the peak. Leading that charge was Kenny Chesney, who had three No. 1s that ruled for a total of 14 weeks.

Capitol captures the No. 2 spot again this year, propelled by 17 charted records. Of those, seven hit the Top 15 including Trace Adkins’ “Ladies Love Country Boys, which spent two weeks at No. 1.

Curb leaps from sixth in ‘06 to third thanks to 11 charted tunes, among them six Top 15s and three No. 1s including the most-heard song of 2007, Rodney Atkins’ “Watching You.”



Rodney Atkins

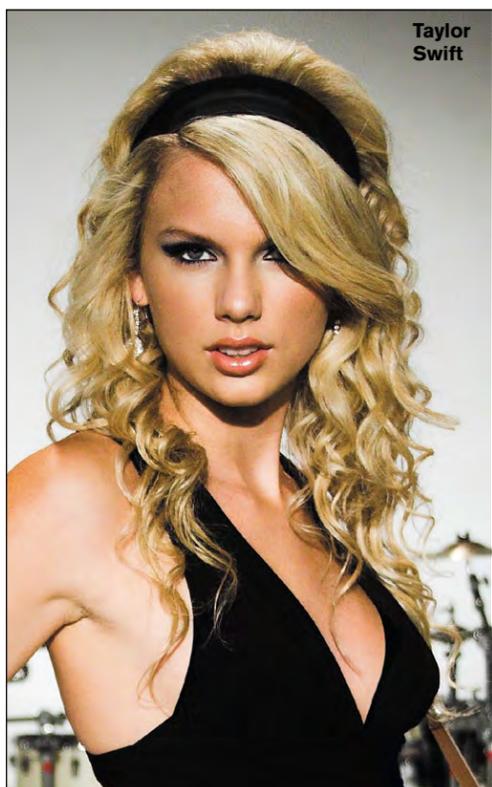
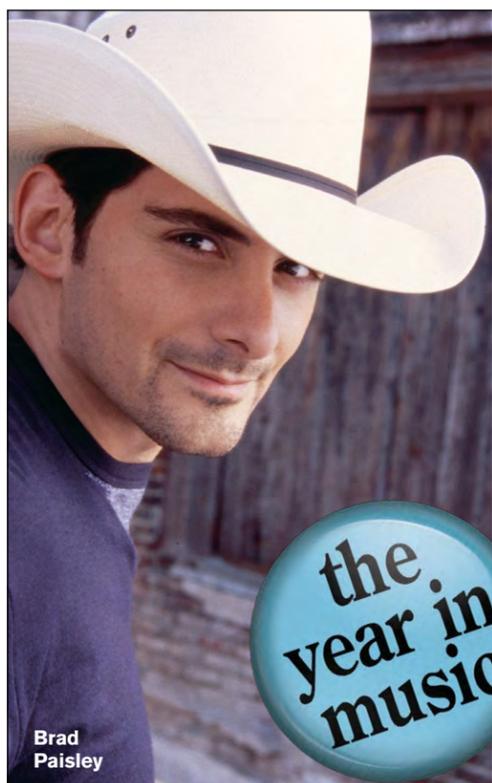
the year in music

# TOP 100 OF 2007

MEDIABASE

1	RODNEY ATKINS	Watching You	(Curb)	51	TIM MCGRAW W/ FAITH HILL	I Need You	(Curb)
2	BILLY CURRINGTON	Good Directions	(Mercury)	52	TAYLOR SWIFT	Tim McGraw	(Big Machine)
3	TRACY LAWRENCE	Find Out Who Your Friends Are	(Rocky Comfort/CO5)	53	GARTH BROOKS	More Than A Memory	(Pearl/Big Machine)
4	BRAD PAISLEY	She's Everything	(Arista)	54	JOSH TURNER	Me And God	(MCA)
5	CARRIE UNDERWOOD	Wasted	(19/Arista)	55	BLAKE SHELTON	Don't Make Me	(Warner Bros.)
6	EMERSON DRIVE	Moments	(Midas)	56	TRENT TOMLINSON	One Wing In The Fire	(Lyric Street)
7	TRACE ADKINS	Ladies Love Country Boys	(Capitol)	57	KELLIE PICKLER	I Wonder	(19/Arista)
8	KENNY CHESNEY	Beer In Mexico	(BNA)	58	JOSH TURNER	Firecracker	(MCA)
9	SUGARLAND	Settlin'	(Mercury)	59	SUGARLAND	Everyday America	(Mercury)
10	RASCAL FLATTS	Stand	(Lyric Street)	60	MIRANDA LAMBERT	Famous In A Small Town	(Columbia)
11	CARRIE UNDERWOOD	Before He Cheats	(19/Arista)	61	KENNY CHESNEY	You Save Me	(BNA)
12	MONTGOMERY GENTRY	Lucky Man	(Columbia)	62	MONTGOMERY GENTRY	Some People Change	(Columbia)
13	BIG & RICH	Lost In This Moment	(Warner Bros.)	63	BROOKS & DUNN	Hillbilly Deluxe	(Arista)
14	RODNEY ATKINS	These Are My People	(Curb)	64	GEORGE STRAIT	How 'Bout Them Cowgirls	(MCA)
15	RASCAL FLATTS	My Wish	(Lyric Street)	65	SARA EVANS	You'll Always Be My Baby	(RCA)
16	GEORGE STRAIT	It Just Comes Natural	(MCA)	66	ERIC CHURCH	Guys Like Me	(Capitol)
17	MARTINA MCBRIDE	Anyway	(RCA)	67	SARA EVANS	As If	(RCA)
18	GEORGE STRAIT	Wrapped	(MCA)	68	JACK INGRAM	Lips Of An Angel	(Big Machine)
19	ALAN JACKSON	A Woman's Love	(Arista)	69	JOE NICHOLS	Another Side Of You	(Universal South)
20	TIM MCGRAW	Last Dollar (Fly Away)	(Curb)	70	LITTLE BIG TOWN	A Little More You	(Equity)
21	BRAD PAISLEY	Ticks	(Arista)	71	LEANN RIMES	Nothin' Better To Do	(Curb/Asylum)
22	TAYLOR SWIFT	Teardrops On My Guitar	(Big Machine)	72	WRECKERS	My, Oh My	(Warner Bros.)
23	BUCKY COVINGTON	A Different World	(Lyric Street)	73	JACK INGRAM	Measure Of A Man	(Big Machine)
24	KENNY CHESNEY	Never Wanted Nothing More	(BNA)	74	MARTINA MCBRIDE	How I Feel	(RCA)
25	JAKE OWEN	Startin' With Me	(RCA)	75	MONTGOMERY GENTRY	What Do Ya Think About That	(Columbia)
26	JASON ALDEAN	Amarillo Sky	(BBR)	76	KEITH URBAN	Everybody	(Capitol)
27	CRAIG MORGAN	Little Bit Of Life	(BBR)	77	TAYLOR SWIFT	Our Song	(Big Machine)
28	JOE NICHOLS	I'll Wait For You	(Universal South)	78	TRENT TOMLINSON	Just Might Have Her Radio On	(Lyric Street)
29	SUGARLAND	Want To	(Mercury)	79	LONESTAR	Mountains	(BNA)
30	KEITH URBAN	I Told You So	(Capitol)	80	CLAY WALKER	'Fore She Was Mama	(Curb/Asylum)
31	TOBY KEITH	High Maintenance Woman	(Show Dog)	81	COLE DEGGS & THE LONESOME	I Got More	(Columbia)
32	KEITH URBAN	Stupid Boy	(Capitol)	82	DARRYL WORLEY	I Just Came Back From A War	(903 Music)
33	DIERKS BENTLEY	Free And Easy (Down The Road...)	(Capitol)	83	KELLIE PICKLER	Red High Heels	(19/BNA)
34	TOBY KEITH	Love Me If You Can	(Show Dog)	84	TRISHA YEARWOOD	Heaven, Heartache And The...	(Big Machine)
35	JASON ALDEAN	Johnny Cash	(BBR)	85	GARY ALLAN	Watching Airplanes	(MCA)
36	LUKE BRYAN	All My Friends Say	(Capitol)	86	PAT GREEN	Dixie Lullaby	(BNA)
37	RASCAL FLATTS	Take Me There	(Lyric Street)	87	LITTLE BIG TOWN	Good As Gone	(Equity)
38	TIM MCGRAW	If You're Reading This	(Curb)	88	BLAKE SHELTON	The More I Drink	(Warner Bros.)
39	JASON MICHAEL CARROLL	Livin' Our Love Song	(Arista)	89	SUGARLAND	Stay	(Mercury)
40	BROOKS & DUNN	Proud Of The House We Built	(Arista)	90	PHIL VASSAR	The Woman In My Life	(Arista)
41	REBA MCENTIRE F/K. CLARKSON	Because Of You	(MCA)	91	CAROLINA RAIN	Isn't She	(Equity)
42	BRAD PAISLEY	Online	(Arista)	92	TRACE ADKINS	I Wanna Feel Something	(Capitol)
43	TIM MCGRAW	My Little Girl	(Curb)	93	JOSH GRACIN	I Keep Coming Back	(Lyric Street)
44	JASON MICHAEL CARROLL	Alyssa Lies	(Arista)	94	EAGLES	How Long	(ERC/Mercury/Lost Highway)
45	CRAIG MORGAN	Tough	(BBR)	95	CHUCK WICKS	Stealing Cinderella	(RCA)
46	CLAY WALKER	Fall	(Curb/Asylum)	96	RASCAL FLATTS	Winner At A Losing Game	(Lyric Street)
47	CARRIE UNDERWOOD	So Small	(19/Arista)	97	LEE	She Ain't Right	(Curb/Asylum)
48	DIERKS BENTLEY	Long Trip Alone	(Capitol)	98	PAT GREEN	Way Back Texas	(BNA)
49	KENNY CHESNEY	Don't Blink	(BNA)	99	WHISKEY FALLS	Last Train Running	(Midas)
50	GARY ALLAN	A Feelin' Like That	(MCA)	100	TRAVIS TRITT	You Never Take Me Dancing	(Category 5)

# TOP 15<sup>S</sup> OF 2007



	Artist	Title	Label	Peak Position (wks. at No.1)	Peak Date	Wks. on Chart	2007 Rank
A	TRACE ADKINS	Ladies Love Country Boys	(Capitol)	1 (2)	2/26/07	16	7
	JASON ALDEAN	Amarillo Sky	(BBR)	4	1/16/07	11	26
	JASON ALDEAN	Johnny Cash	(BBR)	6	7/23/07	26	35
	GARY ALLAN	A Feelin' Like That	(MCA)	12	4/2/07	22	50
	RODNEY ATKINS	Watching You	(Curb)	1 (5)	1/16/07	13	1
	RODNEY ATKINS	These Are My People	(Curb)	1 (2)	8/27/07	27	14
B	DIERKS BENTLEY	Long Trip Alone	(Capitol)	10	3/26/07	25	48
	DIERKS BENTLEY	Free And Easy (Down The Road...)	(Capitol)	2	10/22/07	26	33
	BIG & RICH	Lost In This Moment	(Warner Bros.)	1 (2)	7/9/07	24	13
	GARTH BROOKS	More Than A Memory	(Pearl/Big Machine)	3	11/19/07	13	53
	BROOKS & DUNN	Hillbilly Deluxe	(Arista)	13	3/12/07	17	63
	BROOKS & DUNN	Proud Of The House We Built	(Arista)	2	9/10/07	20	40
	LUKE BRYAN	All My Friends Say	(Capitol)	5	9/17/07	34	36
C	JASON MICHAEL CARROLL	Alyssa Lies	(Arista)	5	2/12/07	14	44
	JASON MICHAEL CARROLL	Livin' Our Love Song	(Arista)	5	11/5/07	36	39
	KENNY CHESNEY	You Save Me	(BNA)	5	12/4/06	2	61
	KENNY CHESNEY	Beer In Mexico	(BNA)	1 (3)	3/12/07	15	8
	KENNY CHESNEY	Never Wanted Nothing More	(BNA)	1 (5)	7/23/07	14	24
	KENNY CHESNEY	Don't Blink	(BNA)	1 (6)	10/15/07	14	49
	BUCKY COVINGTON	A Different World	(Lyric Street)	5	8/6/07	31	23
	BILLY CURRINGTON	Good Directions	(Mercury)	1 (3)	5/14/07	28	2
E	EMERSON DRIVE	Moments	(Midas)	1 (1)	6/4/07	27	6
	SARA EVANS	You'll Always Be My Baby	(RCA)	12	3/12/07	17	65
	SARA EVANS	As If	(RCA)	12	10/29/07	23	67
I	JACK INGRAM	Lips Of An Angel	(Big Machine)	14	3/26/07	20	68
J	ALAN JACKSON	A Woman's Love	(Arista)	4	6/11/07	25	19
K	TOBY KEITH	High Maintenance Woman	(Show Dog)	3	5/14/07	18	31
	TOBY KEITH	Love Me If You Can	(Show Dog)	1 (1)	10/8/07	20	34
L	MIRANDA LAMBERT	Famous In A Small Town	(Columbia)	13	11/5/07	34	60
	TRACY LAWRENCE	Find Out Who Your Friends Are	(Rocky Comfort/CO5)	1 (2)	6/11/07	31	3
	LONESTAR	Mountains	(BNA)	10	11/27/07	5	79
M	MARTINA MCBRIDE	Anyway	(RCA)	4	3/5/07	21	17
	TIM MCGRAW	My Little Girl	(Curb)	3	12/11/06	6	43
	TIM MCGRAW	Last Dollar (Fly Away)	(Curb)	1 (1)	4/2/07	16	20
	TIM MCGRAW W/FAITH HILL	I Need You	(Curb)	7	8/20/07	22	51
	TIM MCGRAW	If You're Reading This	(Curb)	3	10/15/07	25	38
	REBA MCENTIRE F/K. CLARKSON	Because Of You	(MCA)	3	8/20/07	18	41
	MONTGOMERY GENTRY	Some People Change	(Columbia)	6	12/11/06	5	62
	MONTGOMERY GENTRY	Lucky Man	(Columbia)	1 (1)	6/25/07	24	12
	MONTGOMERY GENTRY	What Do Ya Think About That	(Columbia)	10	11/19/07	17	75
	CRAIG MORGAN	Little Bit Of Life	(BBR)	7	2/5/07	14	27
CRAIG MORGAN	Tough	(BBR)	9	8/6/07	25	45	
N	JOE NICHOLS	I'll Wait For You	(Universal South)	7	3/26/07	21	28
O	JAKE OWEN	Startin' With Me	(RCA)	6	7/9/07	35	25
P	BRAD PAISLEY	She's Everything	(Arista)	1 (1)	1/8/07	9	4
	BRAD PAISLEY	Ticks	(Arista)	2	6/4/07	16	21
	BRAD PAISLEY	Online	(Arista)	2	9/17/07	16	42
	KELLIE PICKLER	Red High Heels	(19/BNA)	13	1/16/07	10	83
	KELLIE PICKLER	I Wonder	(19/BNA)	13	8/6/07	28	57
R	RASCAL FLATTS	My Wish	(Lyric Street)	1 (2)	12/4/06	6	15
	RASCAL FLATTS	Stand	(Lyric Street)	1 (1)	4/30/07	18	10
	RASCAL FLATTS	Take Me There	(Lyric Street)	1 (4)	9/10/07	15	37
	RASCAL FLATTS	Winner At A Losing Game	(Lyric Street)	12	11/26/07	7	96
	LEANN RIMES	Nothin' Better To Do	(Curb/Asylum)	15	10/29/07	24	71
S	BLAKE SHELTON	Don't Make Me	(Warner Bros.)	11	5/14/07	28	55
	GEORGE STRAIT	It Just Comes Natural	(MCA)	1 (1)	2/20/07	14	16
	GEORGE STRAIT	Wrapped	(MCA)	1 (1)	7/2/07	19	18
	GEORGE STRAIT	How 'Bout Them Cowgirls	(MCA)	4	11/26/07	16	64
	SUGARLAND	Want To	(Mercury)	1 (1)	12/18/06	6	29
	SUGARLAND	Settlin'	(Mercury)	1 (1)	5/7/07	20	9
	SUGARLAND	Everyday America	(Mercury)	9	8/27/07	17	59
	SUGARLAND	Stay	(Mercury)	11	11/26/07	11	89
	TAYLOR SWIFT	Tim McGraw	(Big Machine)	5	1/16/07	10	52
	TAYLOR SWIFT	Teardrops On My Guitar	(Big Machine)	2	8/6/07	27	22
TAYLOR SWIFT	Our Song	(Big Machine)	9	11/12/07	13	77	
T	TRENT TOMLINSON	One Wing In The Fire	(Lyric Street)	10	2/5/07	12	56
	JOSH TURNER	Me And God	(MCA)	14	4/30/07	24	54
	JOSH TURNER	Firecracker	(MCA)	5	11/12/07	21	58
U	CARRIE UNDERWOOD	Before He Cheats	(19/Arista)	3	12/4/06	1	11
	CARRIE UNDERWOOD	Wasted	(19/Arista)	1 (3)	4/9/07	20	5
	CARRIE UNDERWOOD	So Small	(19/Arista)	1 (1)	11/26/07	17	47
	KEITH URBAN	Stupid Boy	(Capitol)	2	3/5/07	17	32
	KEITH URBAN	I Told You So	(Capitol)	2	7/23/07	18	30
	KEITH URBAN	Everybody	(Capitol)	10	11/12/07	14	76
W	CLAY WALKER	Fall	(Curb/Asylum)	6	11/5/07	34	46
	DARRYL WORLEY	I Just Came Back From A War	(903 Music)	15	1/16/07	11	82
	WRECKERS	My, Oh My	(Warner Bros.)	8	1/16/07	10	72

# KENNY, CARRIE, THE FLATTS AND BUCKY LEAD 2007 PACK



**K**enny Chesney is Country radio's Most Heard artist and the format's Top Male Performer for the third time in the last four years. The reigning CMA and ACM Entertainer of the Year dominated the top of the charts in 2007 with three singles that spent an almost-unheard-of 14 weeks at No. 1 – almost 30% of the entire chart year.

Throw in his appearance on buddy Tracy Lawrence's "Find Out Who Your Friends Are," which also went No. 1, and his duet with George Strait "Shiftwork" and you'll understand more fully why Kenny continues as reigning king of Country radio.

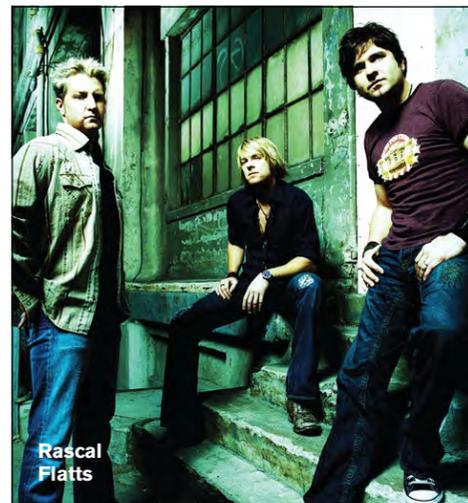
And that makes Carrie Underwood the queen. She's our Top Female performer for the second consecutive year, having released five singles in her short career, all reaching No. 1. Two peaked in 2007, "Wasted" and "So Small."

Rascal Flatts are Country's top airplay Duo/Group for the fifth consecutive year. And, they weren't far behind Chesney, nabbing runner-up status, as in '06. The Flatts boys had three No. 1s that held the summit for a combined seven weeks.

*American Idol* played VP/A&R for country this year, serving up two of the top three newcomers. Bucky Covington led new artist airplay while Kellie Pickler placed third.

A total of 190 songs charted in 2007, with 77 songs reaching the Top 15 and 23 of them ascending all the way to the top. Fifteen artists posted No. 1 hits in 2007, with eight of them having multiple-week No. 1s a total of 41 weeks.

This year's Cinderella story belongs to Emerson Drive, who scored a huge smash with "Moments," reminding us all that almost every artist is just three minutes away from stardom. And comeback story of the year goes to Tracy Lawrence, who notched a two-week No. 1 hit on his own label with a song that rang true on so many levels. It was great to have him back at the top of the charts.



## Country Radio's Top 2007 Performers

### OVERALL

1. **Kenny Chesney** (BNA)
2. **Rascal Flatts** (Lyric Street)
3. **Tim McGraw** (Curb)
4. **Carrie Underwood** (19/Arista)
5. **Brad Paisley** (Arista)
6. **Sugarland** (Mercury)
7. **Rodney Atkins** (Curb)
8. **George Strait** (MCA)
9. **Keith Urban** (Capitol)
10. **Montgomery Gentry** (Columbia)

### MALE

1. **Kenny Chesney** (BNA)
2. **Tim McGraw** (Curb)
3. **Brad Paisley** (Arista)
4. **Rodney Atkins** (Curb)
5. **George Strait** (MCA)
6. **Keith Urban** (Capitol)
7. **Jason Aldean** (BBR)
8. **Toby Keith** (Show Dog)
9. **Craig Morgan** (BBR)
10. **Dierks Bentley** (Capitol)

### FEMALE

1. **Carrie Underwood** (19/Arista)
2. **Taylor Swift** (Big Machine)
3. **Martina McBride** (RCA)
4. **Sara Evans** (RCA)
5. **Kellie Pickler** (19/BNA)
6. **Reba McEntire** (MCA)
7. **Miranda Lambert** (Columbia)
8. **LeAnn Rimes** (Curb/Asylum)
9. **Trisha Yearwood** (Big Machine)
10. **Faith Hill** (Warner Bros.)

### DUO/GROUP

1. **Rascal Flatts** (Lyric Street)
2. **Sugarland** (Mercury)
3. **Montgomery Gentry** (Columbia)
4. **Emerson Drive** (Midas)
5. **Brooks & Dunn** (Arista)
6. **Big & Rich** (Warner Bros.)
7. **Little Big Town** (Equity)
8. **Wreckers** (Warner Bros.)
9. **Lonestar** (BNA)
10. **Cole Deggs & The Lonesome** (Columbia)

### NEW ARTIST

1. **Bucky Covington** (Lyric Street)
2. **Jake Owen** (RCA)
3. **Kellie Pickler** (19/BNA)
4. **Luke Bryan** (Capitol)
5. **Cole Deggs & The Lonesome** (Columbia)
6. **Lee Brice** (Curb/Asylum)
7. **Chuck Wicks** (RCA)
8. **Sarah Buxton** (Lyric Street)
9. **Whiskey Falls** (Midas)
10. **Dusty Drake** (Big Machine)

## TOP 15

# 1<sup>st</sup>

## TIMERS

2007 was a pretty tough year to be a new artist. Only five acts – two of whom were propelled by *American Idol* – managed to post a Top 15 record for the first time this year. It's only the first time since 1987 that fewer than six artists cracked the Top 15 for the first time. Only Jason Michael Carroll and Kellie Pickler were able to post two tunes inside the Top 15. None of the new acts managed to score a No. 1 hit. And, a shout-out to Sony BMG, which has three of the five acts listed below – nicely spread out among three of its imprints.

**Bucky Covington**  
(Lyric Street)

**Luke Bryan**  
(Capitol)

**Jason Michael Carroll**  
(Arista)

**Jake Owen**  
(RCA)

**Kellie Pickler**  
(BNA)



# 2007 MEMORIES

## Industry Execs Share Their Stories

In our “Top 7 Of ‘07” story that opened this publication, we covered the year’s biggest stories. Now it’s time to find those personal perspectives on the year – memorable moments ranging from the ridiculous to the heart-rending. Read on.

### SCOTT SIMAN RPM MANAGEMENT

“Tim McGraw and the Warren Brothers had written ‘If You’re Reading This’ a few weeks prior to the ACM show. It was inspired by a book Tim had read about letters from soldiers. Tim performed the song at a private show in April, and needless to say it received an incredible response. At that point, Tim took the initiative and decided to debut the song on the ACM Awards.

“He developed the concept and worked with [rpm VP and tour manager] Robert Allen on the logistics. Producer Rac Clark and ACM’s Bob Romeo worked with us to keep it a secret, even going so far as to have the first closed rehearsal in ACM history. Except for a handful of folks at that rehearsal, no one knew what Tim was going to perform – not the families, not the audience, not even Faith.

“At the commercial break following the performance, we walked the families back through the audience. It was a standing ovation and not a dry eye in the house. Tim has remained committed to those families, and many of them were able to come to Soul 2 Soul II shows, courtesy of Tim and Faith. Based on all the stories we received, Tim established a section of his website where families can post stories and pictures of their loved ones who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms. Country radio picked up on the moment and made it Tim’s second live TV performance to chart – ‘Things Change’ being the first.”

### DAN ANDERSON, BNA

“Kellie Pickler was supposed to perform on the Sony BMG boat at CRS, but a week out *American Idol* called. It was a difficult choice, but *Idol* was



WATER WORKS: Kellie Pickler’s *American Idol* performance.

the vehicle that launched her. We wanted to find a way to get her broadcast appearance live on the boat, and asked about satellite capabilities, but the only way to do satellite was if the boat was sitting still. The weather that night was bad, and at first we didn’t even know if we’d be able to sail, but we did.

“Our backup plan was to TiVo it, burn it to DVD, race it to a security guard at Opryland, then have a cigar boat pass it off to us on the General

Jackson as we turned around a bend in the river. We didn’t know the time she would be on until the day of show. Wes Vause was with Kellie in L.A., emailing us updates as to when it was going to air. We had to be in contact with everyone, the General Jackson and the Coast Guard. It was wild once it got to the boat, as no one had seen it. Wes was emailing, saying it was good and we should air it. The turnaround from when it aired on TV to when it aired on the boat was just at an hour.”

### GRACE REINBOLD WHAT A TRIP!

“We took 500 CMA Awards radio station trip winners to see Marty Stuart’s *Sparkle & Twang* exhibit at the Tennessee State Museum. Marty greeted every person individually and then escorted us through the exhibit. He introduced the group to dimensions of country they had never seen, and it was so wonderful to observe what’s special about this music through his eyes.

“When we took them to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum for dinner and a tour, we were led by Hall docents. All of a sudden, Trisha Yearwood appeared and reprised her early Nashville gig as a Hall of Fame tour guide. She had just come back from Kansas City to launch her new album and the crowd went absolutely wild. It was so awesome to see a celebrity of her status – someone who is so incredibly busy – do that. Both events really embodied the entire spirit of country music.”

### JIMMY HARNEN, CAPITOL

“Keith Urban didn’t think he’d be in town for CRS, but he was and contacted us at the last minute about doing a show. We had about 48 hours to put it all together. Staffers from Capitol and Borman Entertainment were running and gunning in all directions. Total fun. Total adrenaline rush. And the show was just killer – he

played for almost three hours and then came out to meet folks. It was like a concert right in your living room.

“This was also the year that my seven-year-old son Luke started playing guitar. As a musician, to see your son jamming away on a guitar was beyond cool. It’s kind of the full circle thing and really made me proud. It also made me realize how darn old I am!”

### JOE GALANTE, SONY BMG

“During the BMI Awards dinner, I saw Lon Helton at another table and said, ‘Please come with me. I want to introduce you to Jessica.’ He says it was just, ‘Come with me – I want you to meet someone,’ but we know he can’t hear – hasn’t for years.

So I got Jess and said, ‘I would like you to meet Lon Helton. He has a countdown show and you will be talking with him when your single comes out.’ Lon looked directly at her and said, ‘I’m sorry. What’s your name?’ Very sweetly, she said, ‘Jessica Simpson.’ Lon turned red, and said, ‘Of course. And now Joe will kill me.’”



DO YOU KNOW THIS WOMAN? Lon Helton with Jessica Simpson at the Sony BMG CMA Awards after-party.

### JUDY SEALE

### JUDY SEALE INTERNATIONAL

“While on a Stars For Stripes Thanksgiving tour with Aaron Tippin, we went to the Balad air base hospital in Anaconda, Iraq to visit wounded and sick troops. We saw an injured 10-year-old Iraqi boy whose entire family was thought to

# Families of Fallen Heroes



DRAMATIC READING: Tim McGraw’s ACM Awards performance of “If You’re Reading This” brought the crowd to its feet.

LOVE EVERYBODY: Big Kenny in Sudan.



# THE YEAR IN MEMORIES

have been killed by an IED blast. He was alone and pretty beat up – one eye was sewn shut and the other was cloudy. No one was sure if he was blind or not.

“I sat on the floor next to him and via an interpreter said I had a picture for him, and called Aaron over. The boy obviously didn’t know who Aaron was, but managed to stand up, put his arms around Aaron and hug and kiss him. The nurses and some big men were crying.

“The boy laughed at things Aaron said as if he really understood him. His name was Saddam and I asked Aaron, “Did you ever think you’d be in Iraq comforting a little boy named Saddam?” Aaron has two young sons around that age, and he wanted to bring the kid home with him. Remarkably, his mother, who survived the attack but thought her son was dead, was located and the two are now together.

“Aaron signed 4,500 t-shirts, caps and guitars on that tour. Every single soldier got to meet him. That contact is more important than the

performance. When it was over we took an ‘angel flight’ with draped coffins of fallen heroes at our feet the whole way home.”

## BIG KENNY ALPHIN BIG & RICH

“The trip to bring medicine and supplies to Akon, Sudan was quite an undertaking. Half the people that were originally going with me dropped out a week before we took off. Miraculously, some people just stepped up out of the blue. But it had taken us months to get these visas, so we were worried. Luckily, the relationships we had made along the way at the embassy in Sudan helped us get new visas.

“The cargo plane we chartered in Nairobi, Kenya lost its left engine cover right after takeoff. We had to turn around and wait another day to leave, but everything happens for a reason. **Achol Cyier Rehan**, the commissioner of Gogrial County, where we were going, was in Nairobi

and able to fly with us to Akon the next day.

“When our plane finally landed, 500 people who had been waiting more than a day for us were standing on the dirt runway. They were singing, marching in line and chanting. Some men wrestled a ceremonial calf to the ground and stretched it out for us to jump over as a blessing to us. It was a surreal experience. They were full of so much appreciation and joy it gave me great hope. I will never forget opening those doors and seeing all those people and hearing the power of those voices singing.”

## TONY RANDALL KUSS/SAN DIEGO

“During San Diego’s fires my co-host **Kris Rochester** and I got a call from a listener, **Dr. Matt Hubbard**, who was working with firefighters in a staging area who hadn’t eaten in 24-36 hours. We made a quick call to our friend and diner owner **Stu Segall** asking if he could help. They loaded up a truck full of hot coffee and food and set out to find these guys out in the middle of nowhere. The firefighters were risking their lives, and no one thought to feed them.”

## LANEY LAWRENCE ROCKY COMFORT RECORDS

“We knew ‘Find Out Who Your Friends Are’ would hit No. 1 on Saturday, but we didn’t want to celebrate until we saw the printed chart on Tuesday. **Tracy** and I talked to the staff at CO5 and a lot of other people who helped make this happen. We went into it saying we’d just be happy to make the top 30, and even just charting was exciting. It didn’t sink in until we had our No. 1 party. This has exceeded everything we thought.”

## SUZANNE DURHAM SHOW DOG

“My dad passed at the end of July, and everyone – **Toby Keith**, the Show Dog family,

Paradigm, TKO, **Flynnville Train** – has been so supportive. Toby and Show Dog covered trips home for six months while he was in hospice and everyone sent flowers at the funeral. Toby was playing in my hometown of Boston at the Tweeter Center September 22, and my whole family was given tickets and backstage passes.

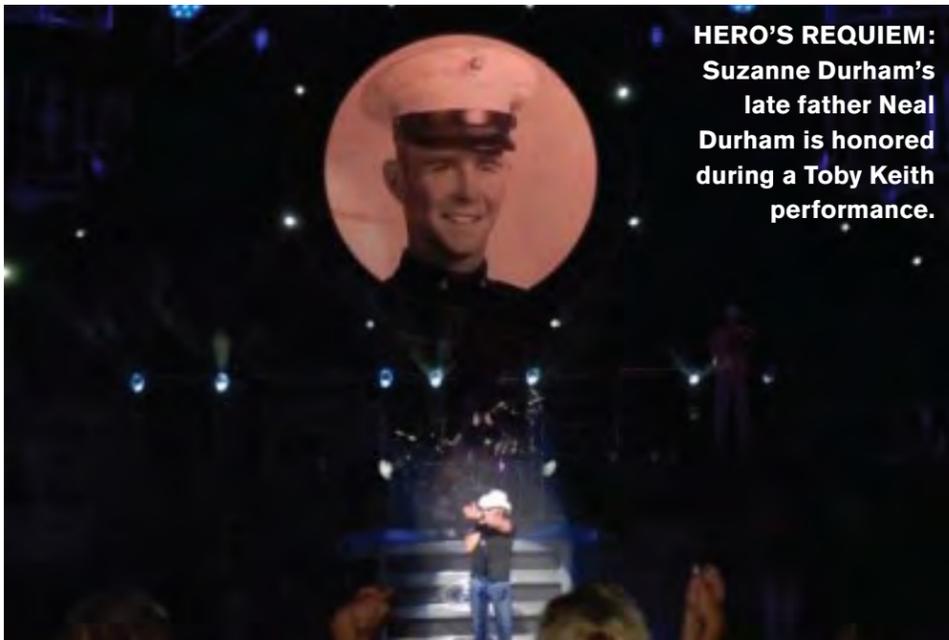
“During the encore, which was “American Soldier,” Tour Manager **David Milam** and video guys **Lee** and **Kevin** surprised us by putting my dad’s Marine photo on the stage screen,



FRIENDS: Celebrating the No. 1 ascension of “Find Out Who Your Friends Are” are (clockwise from top left) Tracy Lawrence, Joe Diffie, George Jones and Kenny Chesney.

superimposed with a color shot of the American flag. The crowd went crazy, because they knew it was someone important to Toby. I don’t think they know what a special moment they gave to my family. My uncle **Tony** and brother **Joe** both had tears in their eyes. It was the first concert Tony had seen since the ‘60s, and he said, ‘It was worth the wait.’”

CAC



HERO’S REQUIEM:  
Suzanne Durham’s late father Neal Durham is honored during a Toby Keith performance.

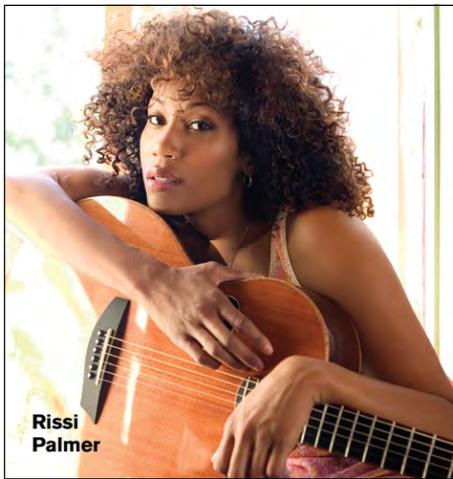
# OFF TO A GR8 START

## First Quarter Music Preview

**D**ire predictions for the music business aside, the flow of new music and the need for fresh sounds on radio are inevitable. So as labels seek a needle-moving artist or project and radio searches for that next big smash, we offer our customary preview of the upcoming quarter's single and album releases. Here's to a 2008 that defies the forecasts!

### 1720 ENTERTAINMENT

From the veep seat, **Bill Macky** says **Rissi Palmer**'s follow-up single to "Country Girl" is on deck. The song is "Hold On To Me," and it was



Rissi Palmer

written by Palmer, Shaye Smith and Ed Hill. "The song was recorded by Faith Hill for her *Fireflies* CD, but when John Rich came on board to produce with Faith, the album went in a different direction and they wound up giving it back to Rissi," Macky says. "Carrie Underwood also had this song on hold at one time." The cut is from Palmer's self-titled debut, for which she wrote or co-wrote nine of 12 tracks.

### ARISTA

National **Bryan Frasher** uses Arista's slot to highlight the label's early 2008 offerings – one single, one album. First up is **Jypsi**'s "I Don't Love You Like That," bowing in January. "It's exciting that radio is already starting to play this track from the sampler we sent out in the fall," he says. "Jypsi's music is as new and fresh as the band is authentic and visually stunning. They exemplify truth in music and are right for Country radio right now."

**Alan Jackson**'s new single "Small Town Southern Man" is already spinning at radio in advance of a street date expected in the first part of the year. "Alan is the consummate singer-songwriter-performer, and it's amazing how he can produce such quality work time and time again," Frasher says.

### BIG MACHINE

The Purcell/Zarling tag team offer this take on the Big Machine's early '08 releases: "Once 'Our

Song' peaks, **Taylor Swift** will follow up three consecutive Top 10 hits with 'Picture To Burn,' the fourth single from her platinum-plus self-titled debut. The deluxe limited-edition release, along with her Target-exclusive holiday package, will be impacting retail through the holidays.

"**Garth Brooks** will follow up his record-breaking No. 1 hit 'More Than A Memory' with 'Workin' For A Livin',' the duet with Huey Lewis. This is the second single release from his Pearl Records collection *The Ultimate Hits*."

"**Trisha Yearwood** returned this fall with her critically acclaimed Big Machine debut *Heaven, Heartache And The Power Of Love*. The yet-to-be-determined follow-up to the hit title track will be impacting radio beginning in January.

"As **Jack Ingram** joins Martina McBride's arena tour in January, his single 'Maybe She'll Get Lonely' will remain a priority throughout the first half of '08. Also on deck is a new single from **Danielle Peck** and the launch of **Fisher Stevenson** in the spring."

### BNA

The BNA focus for Q1 will be new singles from **Pat Green**, **The Lost Trailers** and **Terri Clark**. For Green and The Lost Trailers, these are lead singles from new albums that will hit later in the year. Clark's tune is "In My Next Life," which is from her debut BNA album *Next Life*, set for release later in '08.

Back to first quarter, which will see a second **Sarah Johns** single and a third from **Kenny Chesney**'s current album *Just Who I Am: Poets & Pirates*.

### BROKEN BOW

New veep **Lee Adams** takes her turn in the quarterly preview, saying, "BBR welcomes a new year with two big hits. **Craig Morgan**'s 'International Harvester' and **Jason Aldean**'s 'Laughed Until We Cried.' Jason will be hitting the road with another major Country superstar act. Big announcement coming soon.

"We continue to break **Crossin Dixon** with their current single 'Make You Mine.' **Lila McCann** is making waves with a perfect song for the season, 'That's What Angels Do.' And **Megan Mullins** is in the studio with Buddy Cannon sounding better than ever.

"BBR is also very excited to introduce our 2008 new artist **Dean Brody**. A prolific, young, singer/songwriter – arriving in a minivan to your radio station soon."

### CAPITOL

"**Keith Urban**'s 'Everybody,' **Chris Cagle**'s, 'What Kinda Gone,' **Lady Antebellum**'s 'Love Don't Live Here' and **Luke Bryan**'s 'We Rode In Trucks' all roll on in 2008 climbing the charts," raves Senior Veep **Jimmy Harnen**.

Additionally, **Trace Adkins**' new single "You're Gonna Miss This" from his *Greatest Hits Volume II, American Man* CD ships to radio Jan. 2 and impacts Jan. 14. Look for Cagle's as-yet untitled CD to hit retail Feb. 26.

### CATEGORY 5

**Alan Fletcher** delivers the Category 5 game plan. "**Shauna Faegan** is a critically acclaimed newcomer who Nashville's 'best of the best' studio musicians are raving about," he says. "The label will release her debut single in Q1, with an album slated for Q3."

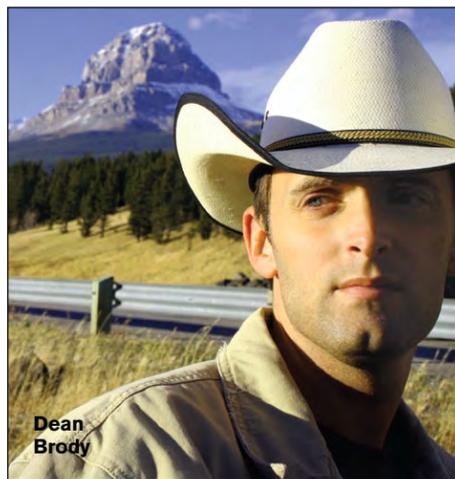
### COLUMBIA

**Jimmy Rector** and the Columbia promo staff open the new year with **Miranda Lambert**'s "Gunpowder & Lead." Fresh off her dynamic CMA Awards performance of the song, Rector says the tune is "the absolutely great, ass-kicking music we have come to love from this emerging superstar. Translates the energy you see live and just makes you want to turn up the radio."

And with a Jan. 28 add date, **Keith Anderson** brings "I Still Miss You." "It's what Keith does best, and we couldn't ask for a better song for his Columbia debut," Rector says. "One of the most-loved young acts out there and the perfect way to fall in love with the new album, coming in Q2."

### COUNTRY THUNDER

It's a triple play for VP **Doc Gonzales** and the Country Thunder team, with new albums from **Heartland**, **Jamie Lee Thurston** and **Bluefield**. Thurston's disc is titled *Do My Thing*, and the other



Dean Brody

two are still TBA. Each will be advanced by a Q1 single, also yet to be determined. Stay tuned.

### CURB – CURB/ASYLUM

SVP **Carson James** promises a strong commitment to great music from the Curb and Curb/Asylum teams. Look for a new single from **Steve Holy** titled "Cliff In Colorado" that James says is the first story song Holy's ever done. A new **Clay Walker** single will be rolled out once "Fall" finishes its strong run at radio.

"We'll be introducing **Ashley Gearing** to radio next year," James says, noting that **Byron Galimore** is producing her album. "She'll play our CRS lunch performance with **Rodney Atkins**."

Late rollouts in Q407 include **Rio Grand**'s "Storm Inside Of Me" and **Tim McGraw**'s "Suspicions," both of which will roll deep into Q108. Newcomer **Star De Azlan** remains a focus, as does **Cowboy Crush** and their single "Miss Difficult."

### DOLLY

Not too hard to figure the priorities for Dolly Records. Honcho **Bruce Reiner** says the priority is building toward an early February release of **Dolly Parton**'s *Backwoods Barbie*, her first mainstream album in 17 years. The single, of course, is "Backwoods Barbie."

"Expect a massive media appearance campaign coinciding with the album releases," Reiner says.



Keith Anderson

"Major TV coverage from every outlet known to man, as you'd expect of someone at Dolly's iconic level."

The follow-up single will be "Jesus & Gravity," a tune Reiner says is a "different level of song." Look for it some time in the first quarter.

### EQUITY

Follow the path of (**David**) **Haley**'s Comment for the full scope of Equity's first-quarter offerings. "**Little Big Town**'s CDA *Place To Fall* continues riding a wave at retail," Haley says. "Their current single 'I'm With The Band' is still showing growth."

"**Laura Bryna**'s debut album *Trying To Be Me* releases Jan. 22 on the heels of an unprecedented multi-million-dollar multi-media and publicity campaign in Las Vegas. The video for her single 'Make A Wish' will play continuously across 35 flat screen monitors at the Luxor and Excalibur hotels throughout the month of December," he continues. Two 10,000-square-foot images of Laura will be displayed on the Luxor Tower, and her video will be seen regularly on four huge



Laura Bryna

video screens in front of the Fashion Show Mall on the Las Vegas Strip.

"She will also do a full band performance at LAX nightclub in Vegas in January. She'll be the first country act to play the venue, which has hosted Usher and Britney Spears, among others."

"Finally, **Clint Black**'s 'The Strong One' is paving the way for a first quarter album release." The title is still TBA.



Jypsi

# OFF TO A GR8 START

## LOFTON CREEK

Big Poppa (**Mike Borchetta**) says **Mark Chesnutt's** *Rollin' With The Flow* album will street Feb. 15. Single releases upcoming include **Kristina Cornell's** "Ordinary Girl" March 1 and **Carmen Rasmusen's** "Shine" a month later. No foolin'.

## LYRIC STREET

**Kevin Herring** and his team will be directing radio programmers to Lyric Street to hear new sounds from, among others, **Marcel**. His "I Love This Song" will be out in Q1 in advance of a summer album, if all goes as planned. "It's about time he started singing his own hits," Herring says.

**Josh Gracin's** "We Weren't Crazy" will be at the center of the label's efforts throughout the winter, with the album due in March. Accomplished songwriter **Brett James** produced the single, and splits production credit on the album with **Marty Williams**.

There will be a third single from **Rascal Flatts'** latest album *Still Feels Good* once "Winner At A Losing Game" finishes its chart run. And Herring says to expect a follow-up to **Bucky Covington's** "It's Good To Be Us" at the appropriate time.

And the **Billy Ray Cyrus** single "Ready, Set, Don't Go" featuring his daughter **Miley** will be a priority through Q1 as well.

## MCA

**Katie Dean** reports that the folks working for MCA will continue bringing traditional singer/songwriter **Ashton Shepherd** to radio in support of her debut single "Takin' Off This Pain." Look for her debut album to bow in March.



David Nail

Expect a second single from multi-platinum new Grand Ole Opry member **Josh Turner** right after the holiday break, and a **George Strait** single is also slated for first quarter. "We'll carry a few current singles into 2008," Dean reports. These include "The Only Promise That Remains" by **Reba** with **Justin Timberlake** from her platinum-certified *Reba Duets* album. **Gary Allan's** "Watching Airplanes" will also carry over. And wrapping the Q1 priorities is the launch of **David Nail's** MCA debut single "I'm About To Come Alive."

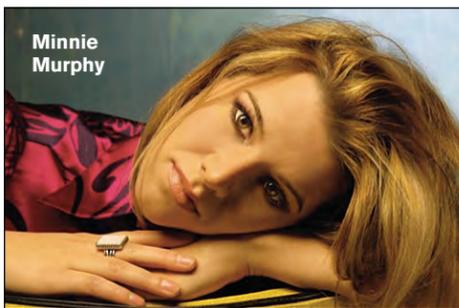
## MERCURY

For the Mercury crew and VP **Bruce Shindler**, the Q1 priorities are continuations of Q4 priorities: "We'll keep working **Sugarland's** 'Stay,' the **Eagles'** 'How Long,' **Halfway To Hazard's** "Devil And The Cross" and "Til We Ain't Strangers Anymore" from **Bon Jovi** and **LeAnn Rimes**.

## MONTAGE

The **Mike Wilson**-led promotion force at Montage will be working hard to launch two new acts as 2008 breaks. Already out and about on radio tours and the road are **The Road Hammers**, whose single is "Don't Know When To Quit." The album *Blood, Sweat & Steel* is due sometime in the second quarter.

Montage's other new artist is **Minnie Murphy**, who will be introduced to Country radio beginning in February. The label is setting up for an April single. "She's a great singer, writer and piano player," Wilson says. "Plus, she's 24

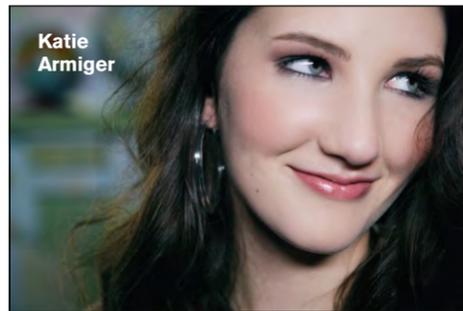


Minnie Murphy

years old and just beautiful. She's actually **Jamie O'Neal's** sister."

## NINE NORTH

El Presidente **Larry Pareigis** forecasts "quality acts and killer music" for the new year, including Cold River Records' **Katie Armiger**. Her new Cold River/Nine North/Quarterback single "Make Me Believe" has him believing the song will "be



Katie Armiger

the breakthrough with mainstream Country radio for this youthful winner of KKBQ's 'Houston's Best Country Singer' contest."

The **Bellamy Brothers** return with the "cleverly worded" single "Drug Problem" from their latest CD *Jesus Is Coming*. "There's plenty there to get hooked on – pun intended – especially for Country morning shows," Pareigis says.

Nine North is partnering with Sassy Angel and New Revolution on the launch of native Californian **Emma Mae Jacob** and her single "What If We Fly."

"**Jason Meadows** made a big mark for himself in 2007 with '100% Cowboy' and '18 Video Tapes,'" Pareigis says, "so it's natural for him to return as a 'Big Shot.'" The song is Meadows' first Baccarstick/Nine North release.

"**The Roys** return with the song that everyone on their 2007 radio tour clamored for – and just to show that we heard you loud and clear – here comes the charming, touching 'Grandpa's Barn,'" Pareigis says.

DM/Nine North bring **Shannon Walker** and his mainstream Country debut "That's Why God Made Me."

"Finally, from the Nine North family to yours, good wishes for the happiest and healthiest of holiday seasons," Pareigis says. "See you in '08!"

## PARALLEL

**Aaron Broucher** checks in with the scoop on **Jeremy McComb**, whose next single is the Liz



Jeremy McComb

Rose/Jimmy Yeary-penned "This Town Needs A Bar." The song impacts Feb. 18, shortly after the Feb. 5 street date for McComb's album *My Side Of Town*.

## QUARTERBACK

Head coach **Chris Allums** says his team is still focused on building **Stephen Cochran's** single "Everything We Knew" at radio. **Trent Willmon's** next album is due in stores Feb. 26 on *Compadre*, and title track "Broken In" is the lead single. Look for it in January. Finally, a follow-up to **Katie Armiger's** debut single "17 In Abilene" is on the ramp (as noted above), and the album lands in the spring.

## RCA

**Doug Baker** serves the RCA scoop, starting with the debut album from **Chuck Wicks**, which he calls "phenomenal." Wicks wrote or co-wrote 10 of 11 for the disc, titled *Starting Now*. The single, still building at radio, is "Stealing Cinderella."

Also in the first quarter, RCA will introduce **Crystal Shawanda** and her debut single. "We just started playing stuff for people before the end of



Rockie Lynne

the year," Baker says. "She's a very unique singer – fiery, emotional and such a strong vocalist." Scott Hendricks is producing.

RCA also has the first single from the second **Chris Young** album. **James Stroud** is producing and a single is due toward the end of Q1.

## ROBBINS/NASHVILLE

The country division of this 12-year-old independent label bows with a new single from **Rockie Lynne**, "I Can't Believe It's Me." Promoveep **Tony Benken** calls it "a powerful song destined to become the wedding hit of the spring season." Add date is Jan. 14. Lynne has spent the better part of 2007 touring and writing songs for his upcoming release.

## SHOW DOG

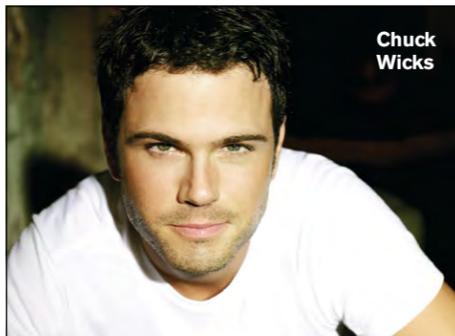
"We'll start the year with **Toby Keith's** 'Get My Drink On' in strong rotation at radio," says VP **Tom Moran**. "This is the third smash off the *Big Dog Daddy* album. Toby's incredible career is flying high and will only get stronger with the release of his second feature film *Beer For My Horses*. Toby co-wrote it with buddy **Rodney Carrington**. The soundtrack will also be a huge part of our 2008 plans."

Moran and the Dog Pound promo staff will also look to build on the inroads made by **Flynnville Train** in 2007, continuing with "Tequila Sheila." **Carter's Chord**, produced by Keith, are also front and center at Show Dog. Their extensive radio tour continues through the Feb. 18 add date for their debut single "Young Love." "They're where the format is headed," Moran says.

Also in the early '08 plan is **Mica Roberts**, a longtime Keith band member. "Her vocal prowess is well known, and now Toby will produce her long-awaited first album," Moran says.

## UNIVERSAL SOUTH

**Teddi Bonadies** and her promo staff are touting a new **Joe Nichols** single titled "It Ain't No Crime." The **Mark Nesler/Tony Martin/Tom Shapiro** co-write is "very different," Bonadies says. "It's about a young, single guy sitting in a



Chuck Wicks

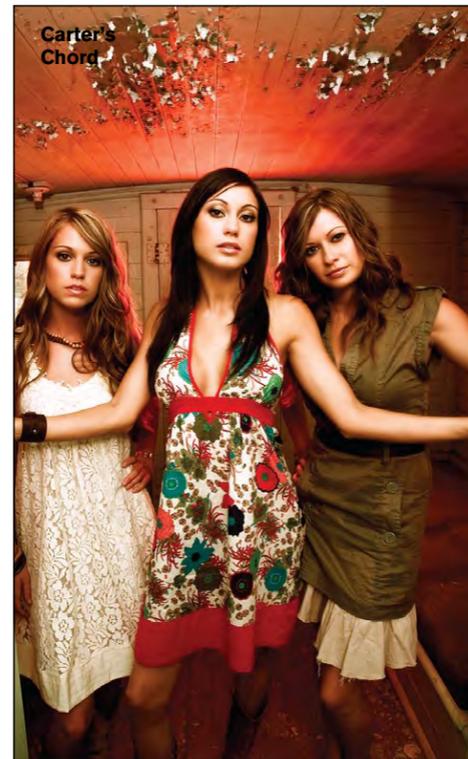
lawn chair in a baby pool in his yard. Going for immediate impact in January."

**Phil Vassar's** "Love Is A Beautiful Thing," a **Jeffrey Steele/Craig Wiseman** co-write, is a focus

for Q1, and **Bonadies** says the label expects to have new music from **Jennifer Hanson** sometime in the quarter, too.

## VALORY MUSIC CO.

The new kids on the block are promising an extensive radio set-up for **Jewel's** first single – also the label's debut – due before CRS. "The transition to Country radio should be a natural one for the Grammy-nominated artist who cut four of her six studio albums in Nashville, grew up on a farm in Alaska and currently lives on a ranch with PBR World Champion Bull Rider **Ty Murray** in **Stephenville, TX**," Loba says.



Carter's Chord

Valory will also begin introducing new artist **Justin Moore**, for whom the label has already secured an opening slot on the **Trace Adkins** tour starting in January. "Look for an intensive viral campaign before his big introduction at CRS, followed by a thorough radio tour," Loba says.

**Jimmy Wayne** moves over from sister imprint **Big Machine** and is in the studio. "One of the pleasant surprises since I have been working with Jimmy is discovering the amount of goodwill out there for him," Loba says. "It's just a matter of getting the right songs – and we will."

## WARNER BROS.

"We continue to focus on breaking **James Otto** with his Warner debut single 'Just Got Started Lovin' You,'" says VP **Nancy Tunick**. Concurrently, the WB team is focused on the current releases **Faith Hill** ("Red Umbrella"), **Big & Rich** ("Loud") and **Blake Shelton** ("The More I Drink").

CAC

# SCOTT BORCHETTA

## Gearing Up For The Revolution

**H**e knows one way to do things – full speed. Whether it's record promotion, running his own label or Super Truck racing, it's pedal to the metal. Get on board or get run over.

**After more than 20 years promoting records independently and as an executive with MTM, MCA, DreamWorks and UMG/Nashville, Borchetta cranked the engine on Big Machine Records in September 2005.**

**The label has run wide-open for two years, and was recently rewarded with a double-platinum certification on Taylor Swift's self-titled debut album. Next to the starting line is Big Machine sister The Valory Music Co., which rolls with the country debut of Jewel as its first release. Borchetta and his team are moving fast. Don't blink.**

**CA: There's been much industry discussion about a new independent business model. What was Big Machine's original model and how has it changed?**

**SB:** The idea was to be as lean and mean as possible. We wanted to have just enough [staff] to be able to compete – and we're still operating with that mentality two years later. But the success we've had with Taylor Swift – and now Trisha and Garth – has allowed us to get bigger. As I look across 19 employees and two labels, I still think we're incredibly lean.

We have to continue to watch every dollar. We've had a great year, but so what? I look around and see major labels trying to figure out how to get smaller. It's up to me and my executive team to make sure we stay small. These are very tough times and we don't take any of this for granted. We've hit on a few things that are really working and we're going to continue this same underdog mentality of being giant-slayers.

**Does Big Machine participate in other areas of revenue – merchandising, publishing, touring – with its artists?**

Every deal is different and they're all partnerships. We do share in all that and in corporate initiatives that we bring to the table. We have to. Our company is a branding and marketing company and we build value in these artists as brands.

I preface every signing with, "If we both do our job properly..." Because if we do that, several years from that first meeting that artist can look me in the eye with their balance sheet in front of them and say, "Okay, my record company income is No. 5. I made more money on touring, merch, songwriting and corporate sponsorships. I'm valuable now. And it started from nothing. You laid this out clearly, and I'm not pissed off like the Dixie Chicks. (Laughs.) I'm not pissed off like Toby Keith. I get it. You told me what it was going to look like. Thank you."

We've hit on some things that make sense in partnership with our artists, but if we want to continue in business together, sometimes there will have to be adjustments. The artists who will stay here will be the ones who want to grow and embrace change. And that's every reason why I've been fired before. People didn't want to continue to grow. I'm not good at sitting still.

**You launched in September 2005. Is Big Machine in the black?**

We broke even our first year and we're very black. We're beautifully black.

**A large vat of that black ink is courtesy of Taylor Swift, whose debut CD was just certified double-platinum. Could you ever have expected to be at this point so soon?**

Putting this together I did three projections – a disaster plan, a survival plan and an aggressive plan. Taylor has hit the aggressive plan – touchdown. We absolutely planned for success. But did I write down that we'd be double-platinum? No. It hasn't totally sunk in that she

just won the CMA Horizon Award, the record's double-platinum, she has a major tour for next year and her next 18 months are done. I'm just happy that we were able to deliver for the artists and label staffers who trusted that we could do this. That's the most gratifying thing.

**What's the hardest thing about running a label?**

Getting respected. Being treated like we're supposed to be here. A lot of our friends at radio knew me, [VP/Promotion] Jack Purcell and some of our other great promotion people, so radio was the first to have a feeling we might have a chance to be successful. The difficult part was at retail and at distribution. We were just another label – and indie labels go under all the time. There wasn't a lot of belief that we would make it, and I could feel that.

But I have to say that the day we opened, [Universal Distribution head] Jim Urie called and said, "I'm glad to be back in business with you. Call me if you need anything." And that first year, I called him – a lot. I know where all the buttons are in promotion; I didn't know where any of them were in distribution.

A big part of my education was understanding what distribution can and can't do. And they can do a lot. But it's one thing for Jim to acknowledge that we're here. It's an entirely different situation for the company to understand – for the CFO to care about us in the sense of making sure things get done, for example. So there were some people within the system who I'd been successful with before, who I helped make a lot of money for at MCA and DreamWorks. But there was a whole other level of uncertainty, and I felt it in a big way.

**Was there an early wake-up call?**

You assume that shipping 100,000 units will enable you to walk into a Borders in Phoenix the day it's released and buy your record with your artist. It was pretty embarrassing when the record wasn't there. And that was just because people didn't know who the hell we were. And they didn't care. They've got a lot of records to put out. Who's Big Machine? Just because we shipped all that product didn't mean it ever made it out of the back room. I had to go back to Jim and say, "Jim, please push the button on this. It's not going to be the biggest record of the year, but I promise you we're going to be clean on it."

Our overall distribution return percentage is single digits, and that's what every label head in town prays for. But it took that extra day and night of pounding it and pounding it and pounding it. We have a lot of great friends now at retail, and Taylor's the reason. We

promised them that this was going to be a big record. I said, "Guys, you don't have any basis to trust me, but trust me." And even though we had enough people who stepped up, we still didn't get enough shipped that first week. But ever since October 24, 2006, there has not been a week where Taylor Swift did not have a reorder. Reorders are beautiful, and they continue to be beautiful.

**Where did you think you could save money that you haven't?**

We thought we could make good, inexpensive videos. The first videos we did on Danielle Peck and Jack Ingram were low-budget videos and they looked low-budget. I learned I can't do that and now I'm not willing to cut corners there. Videos are really important to great-looking artists, so we're spending major-label dollars on our videos because they come back to us. Jack, Danielle and Taylor are video stars.

**Where have you been able to do things differently from a major label and save?**

We make records a lot cheaper. That's an area that producers

and musicians in town are starting to wake up to. We don't do double-scale sessions. I've told musicians who've actually brought it up that my goal is to have them make 50 records for me. If I have to pay them double-scale, I may only be able to make one with them. I'd rather be in business with them for 10 or 15 years, but if I'm not in business I'll just have to hear them on the radio.

I've had a major producer tell me, "Scott, I know what you're doing with your business model. I want to be part of what you're doing. Let's do something together. We'll find a way to make the right record together. Don't let old business practices scare you away from calling me."

**What's another example of doing business differently from the majors?**

Royalty accounting is a nonstop education and it's something we're trying to revolutionize. I'm tired of artists getting ripped off. All the deductions drive me nuts. Labels tell acts, "We'll pay 85% of this, and for packaging we take this deduction, etc." I tell our artists that for each dollar that comes in, I'm going to give them X, and we're going to forget about all these stupid deductions and do better for them by streamlining the deductions. I want to get it to a flat tax!

And, as we move more into a digital world, there are daily revelations about how a record company needs to be paid so we can pay our artists. One of the neatest things is the recent announcement of a portable Internet radio player. Hallelujah! Because the record companies actually did something right, we have a performance fee coming. And the performance fee is going to be coming for terrestrial [radio], too. Broadcasters don't want to talk about it, but, without apology, it's coming. We'll continue to spend millions in creating this content and branding, but there's a value to it.

**You've always wanted to be head a label. Why were you never given the opportunity at a major or start-up, especially after the success you enjoyed as head of promotion at MCA and Dreamworks?**

I was un-hire-able. (Laughs.) I know people thought – heck, they still think I'm crazy! Fortunately, I have other like-minded crazy people around me. The only way this was going to happen was for me to create it. There was a strong opportunity at one moment with Warner Bros., but Universal wouldn't let me out [of my contract] to talk to them. But it just wasn't

happening, so I decided that at the end of my Universal contract, come hell or high water, I was doing this.

**Did the fact you came from promotion and not sales hold you back?**

Oh, yeah. I had a situation where a major label executive was interested in being a partner and his boss said to him, "Well, we know he can get them played, but we don't know if he can sell them. We don't know if he's a good A&R guy." It was another vote of no-confidence. One of my favorite commercials of all time is Michael

COUNTRY RADIO IS STILL KING. BUT THEY MUST UNDERSTAND THAT OTHER MEDIA ARE NIPPING AT THEIR HEELS. DON'T LET 'EM CATCH YOU.

Jordan who says, "Keep telling me I can't slam." So keep telling me I can't do it. It just makes us work harder. But I don't feel like I have to prove anything to anybody. I don't do it for that.

**Really?**

No. I just felt I had to do this. People may not believe it, but I don't care about me. (Laughs.) Sometimes I get mistaken for being arrogant. It's just confidence. I have no fear of responsibility. I take responsibility for my actions, I cover my employees, I cover my artists. I just needed a little bit of money and support to see if we could do it. And the fact that I don't have to answer to New York or L.A. is just a dream come true.

**What's the best thing about heading a label?**

I kind of built my own club. I always wanted to build a label the same way we built promotion departments: No walls, no attitude or prejudice – the best idea wins. We're all on the same page. Here's the plan, execute. My responsibility is to hire people who I think are intelligent and hard-working and to sign artists whose music I love that I think can be successful. I've got great businesspeople to figure out the business side. But I get to do this thing, and I have people who share and add to the vision.

This isn't just about me; this is about us. I'm a team builder. One of the things that is a true gift is that I have the capability and the history of building winning teams. One of the things I'm proudest of is being able to find great people, fit them together and have them work in harmony.

**What qualities do you look for in people you hire?**

Truly, a light comes on when I meet somebody, and I park that in the back of my head. I look for individualism. There's also an intelligence factor and what I call a "now" factor – do they understand what the game is right now? And if they don't, are they capable of learning it and accepting it? And, is this a good person – someone I want to be around every day? I go mostly on my gut. I hang out with them a little bit, see what they're about, and decide if they fit in with my team. I've met incredibly intelligent people that just didn't fit here.

**What are your thoughts on the state of Country radio today?**

[Labels] still want Country radio to lead, but they've got to get out of this AC mentality. There are so many more things that we can do as brand builders to bring the audience to radio. It's always hard to make sweeping comments because they are great partners, but I'm amazed at the high level of people who are turning their heads and not embracing the opportunities out there – they're hurting us.

This is a current-based format, and the more you continue to shrink it, ultimately, the more you're hurting yourself, because we're going to find ways to keep this music alive. We've been through this before – like in the late '80s when you could just feel something was going to pop. I have all the confidence in the world that somebody, whether it's a Marc Chase or a Charlie Cook or whoever, will someday let programmers go crazy and create great content. They have to. And shame on Marc and Charlie if they don't.

**If you were the king of Country radio, what would you change?**

I would make every Country radio station in the top 125 or top 150 markets reporters, whether they wanted to be or not. That would force them to deal with what's happening today. If they wanted to participate in these fabulous artists, whether it's Garth or Kenny or Taylor or Sugarland or Carrie or whoever, they'd have

to be a participant. This is not one-way. And they'd see the investment pay off. But I fear a lack of investment and a vote of no-confidence in current artists.

There's going to be a huge battle for the car, especially after XM and Sirius merge. To compete with all the Country channels, five channels of any format, NASCAR, Howard Stern and people's favorite sports, radio had better be doing something engaging on their terrestrial signal. They have to win the car. If they don't, all of our attention, all of our media, all the things that we spend a lot of money on to bring this incredible music and these incredible stars to their listeners, will be going somewhere else. And I don't want to take it anywhere else.

The fact is, we [labels] want to do this with Country radio first. I can't scream that loud enough. Country radio is still king. But they must understand that other media are nipping at their heels. I would tell radio, "Don't let 'em catch you."

**What do you think made you such an effective record promoter through the years, and why do you have such a good relationship with Country radio?**

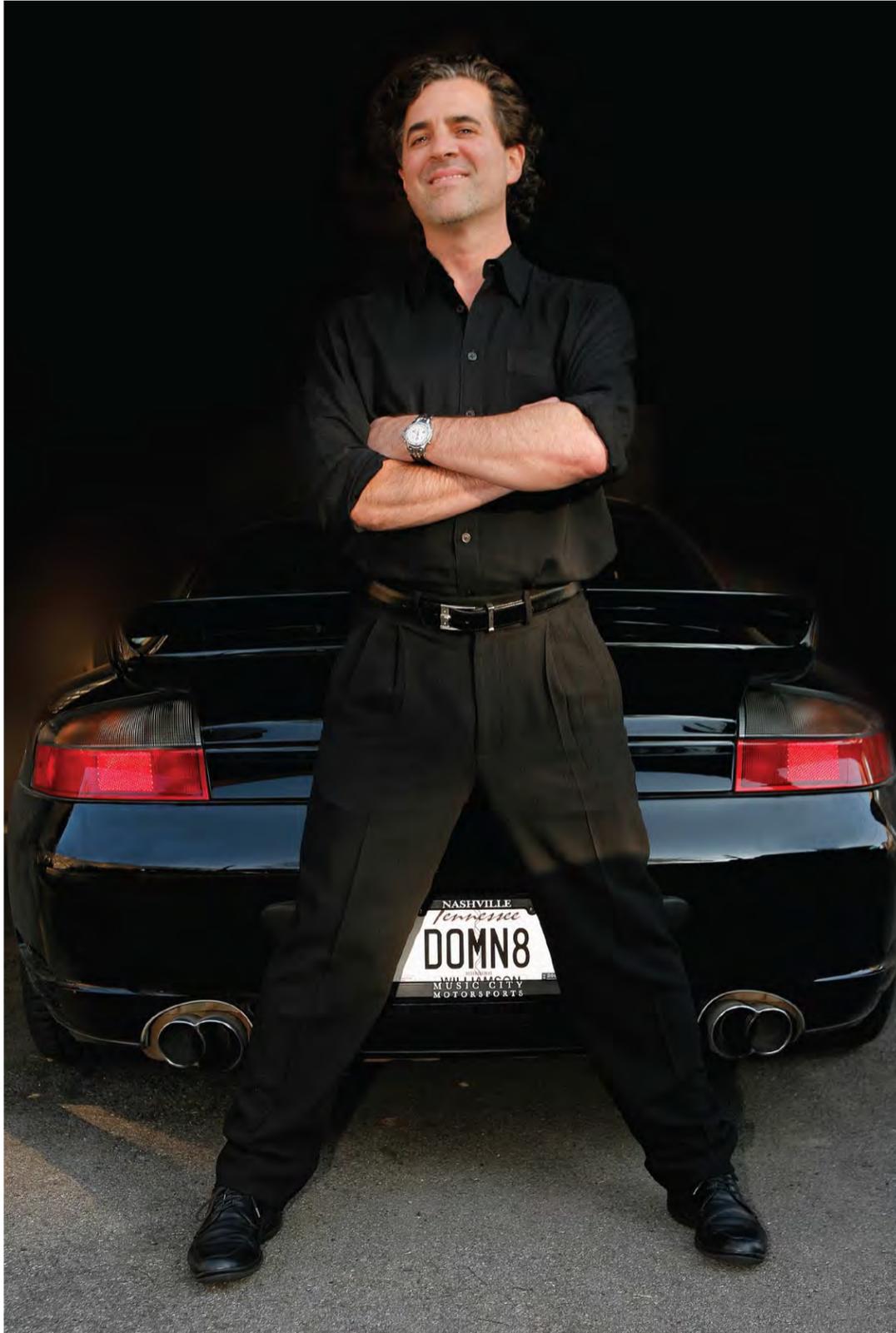
I believe in them and I want to be their best partner. And, we've proven that. When I'm presented with a plan, I always try to start with, "OK. How can we do this?" instead of, "Nah, we can't do that." I always try to get to the point I can say, "We can make that work. Here are the steps, and if you can do X, Y and Z, and make this happen and that happen, we can deliver our end." And that's not airplay-related, it's market-related.

**Last month you launched The Valory Music Co. When did you first think you needed to add a second imprint?**

About a year ago. It was frustrating to have a couple of artists in development and I couldn't get their records out. I'm not willing to sign something I really love and put it fifth or sixth in line. It really crystallized when the Garth conversations became very real. It was like, "OK, I gotta do this because it's the right thing for our company. But who loses? Who's going to have to sit down and wait even longer?" And then I had a couple of other meetings with artists and thought I either had to stop taking meetings or find a way to put some more music out. Ultimately, it came down to the fact that for not that much more investment and by adding just five more employees we could double our output.

**How did you get together with Garth?**

[Garth's manager] Bob Doyle first approached me two years ago to work "Good Ride Cowboy."



At that point we were with Toby [Keith] and there was no way that we could handle both Toby and Garth together. So I very reluctantly and humbly passed, and let them know that I was absolutely honored and disappointed. But they came back, and this time we were ready. We got the business stuff done before Garth and I really ever sat down. And once we sat down, sparks flew. It's been incredible. And those are fun moments, great conversations, and we're having a blast.

**What's been the biggest disappointment of the past two years?**

Anytime you have a record that doesn't work, it's a disappointment. I think that I probably misread a couple of things, like putting out a

Jimmy Wayne single without a six-month set-up and thinking we'd have a lot more open arms. It was a real wake-up call to have a really cool single go out that we'd been asked for, and not have it be accepted.

Jimmy believes so much in what we're doing here and he's such a great team player, my biggest disappointment is that we haven't had a chance to get him where I think he needs to be. So I'm thrilled that he's going to have another great opportunity with Valory.

**What's your long range plan?**

Right now it's a three-year plan. We put everything into motion that I had dreamed that we could put into motion for this year. Now it's about execution. We have Trisha. We're working with Garth. Taylor Swift is the biggest new thing in the business. We have a real shot with Jack Ingram. We have a wonderful new Danielle record coming in the first quarter. The Jewel record is amazing. The Valory crew is already getting great feedback on Justin Moore. So what's next for both imprints is execution.

And you're not going to hear from me for awhile. I've been way too visible. I'm going back underground. You won't see me. I don't like being this public, to be honest. I like my artists to be public, and I like me and my staff to keep our heads down and continue to be the underdogs that we are and just focus on the job. I want to retire from interviews for awhile. I feel like I've been talking too much. I just don't want to spend my days talking about what we do. I want to spend my days doing it.

CAC

**I ALWAYS WANTED TO BUILD A LABEL THE SAME WAY WE BUILT PROMOTION DEPARTMENTS: NO WALLS, NO ATTITUDE OR PREJUDICE – THE BEST IDEA WINS.**