

# CLOSE UP

CMA

WINTER 2017

*Maren  
Morris'*  
'TORNADO' OF A  
YEAR

**BILL SIMMONS**  
Steps up

**JUSTIN  
MOORE**  
KEEPS IT  
COUNTRY

GET TO KNOW  
(SCOTT)  
IGOE

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photo: courtesy Sony Music Nashville



photo: Heidi Gurman / ABC



photo: Terry Wyatt / Getty Images

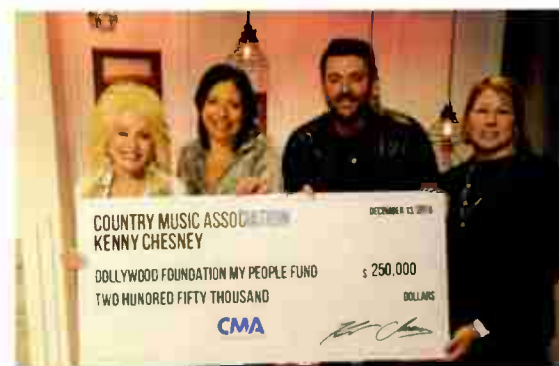


photo: Ed Rode for Webster Public Relations



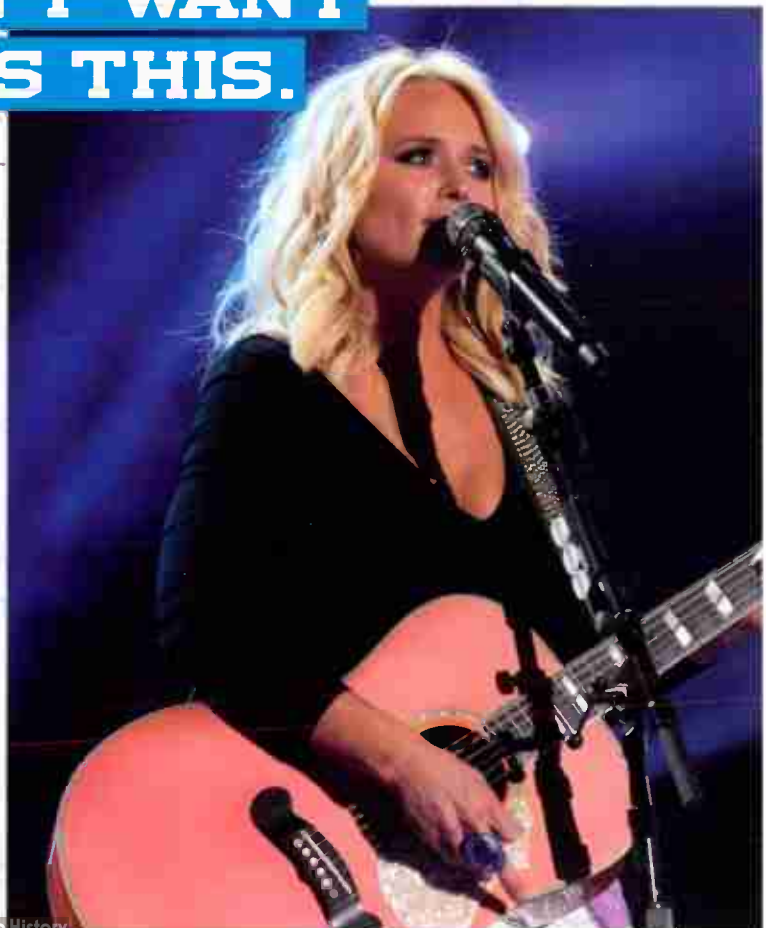
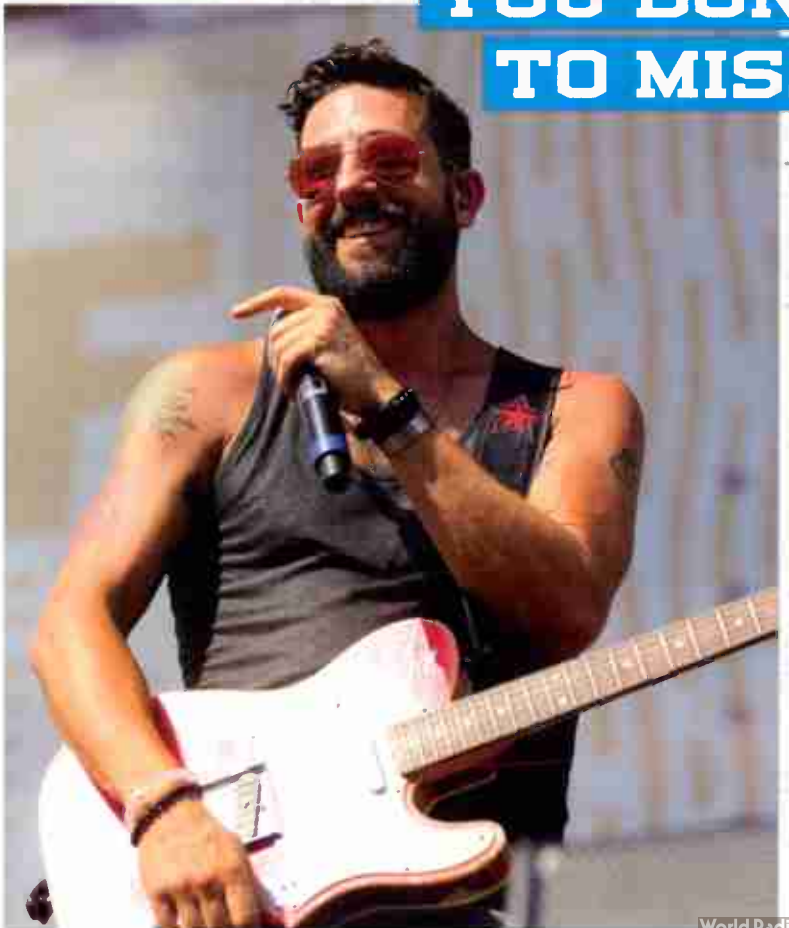
**CMA**

**MUSIC  
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JUNE 8 - 11 **2017** NASHVILLE

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**YOU DON'T WANT  
TO MISS THIS.**



# CMA Awards BY THE NUMBERS

Nearly  
**86 million** impressions on CMA social posts

CMA-related  
Twitter activity  
increased **29%** over 2015

**No. 1** worldwide trending topic

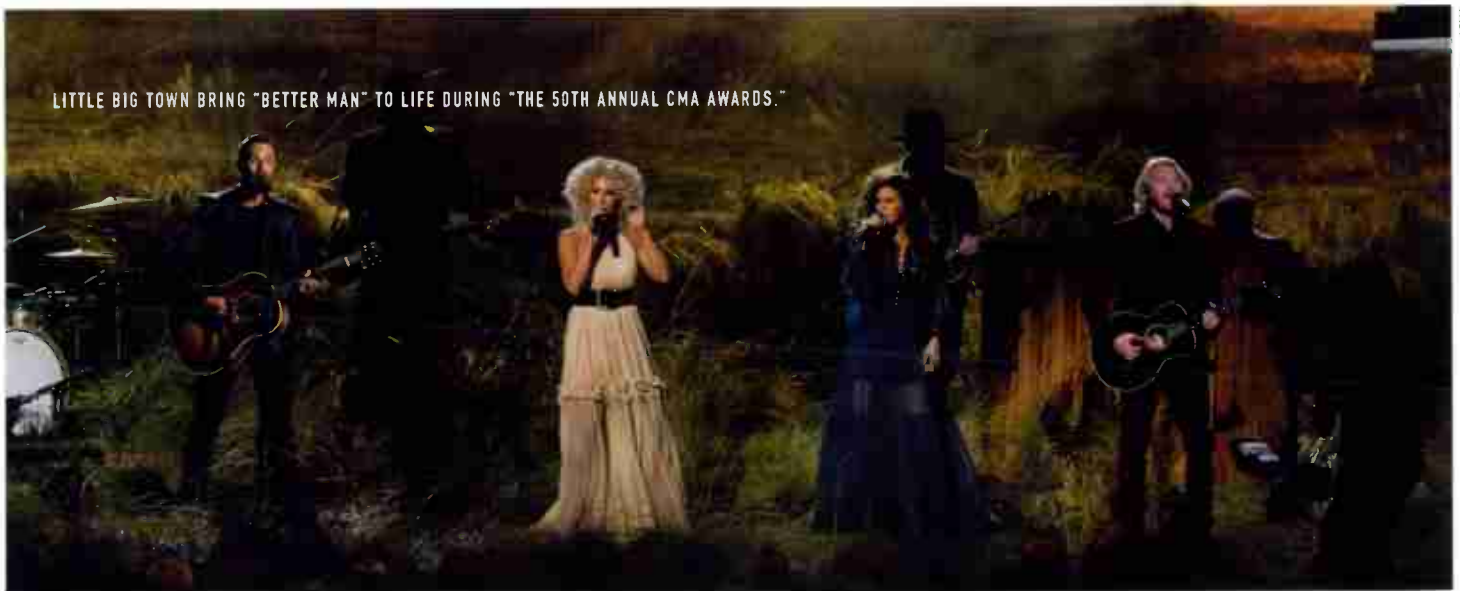
**130,000** new social followers  
gained on day of broadcast

**57.7 million** global Snapchat Story views



Against a  
history-making Game 7  
of the World Series,  
“The 50th Annual  
CMA Awards” retained

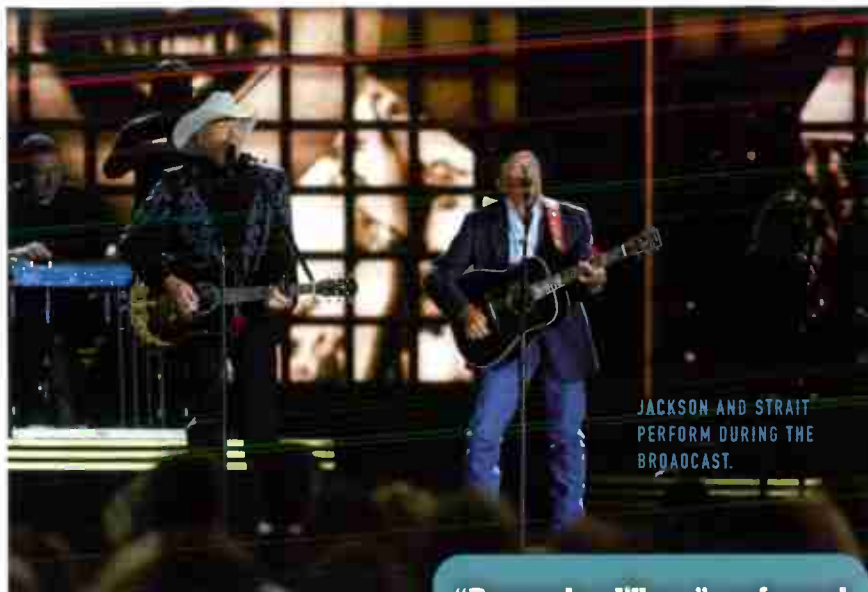
**93%**  
of year-to-year  
viewership



LITTLE BIG TOWN BRING “BETTER MAN” TO LIFE DURING “THE 50TH ANNUAL CMA AWARDS.”

Photo: Donn Jones / CMA

photo: John Russell / CMA



JACKSON AND STRAIT PERFORM DURING THE BROADCAST.



ABC's  
**No. 1**  
Wednesday  
of 2016

"Remember When," performed by Alan Jackson and George Strait during the ceremony, experienced a

**1400%**

post-show daily sales gain\*

"Better Man" by Little Big Town had largest sales increase with an

**829%**

post-show gain\*

Additional **2.8** million

Country Music streams per day compared to pre-show streaming, a 40 percent increase from pre-show averages\*

Overall post-show sales increase of

**418%**

for songs performed during the broadcast\*

**37%**

gain in overall post-show Country album sales\*

**47%**

increase in Country song sales\*

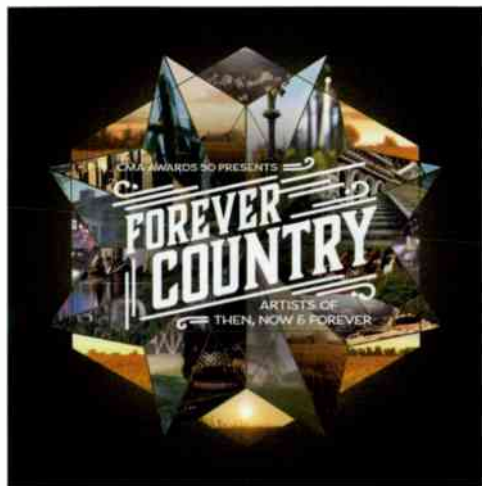
\*Source: BuzzAngle CMA Awards Analysis

photo: Derm Jones / CMA



**31** representatives from **24** brands, including Walmart, PepsiCo, American Airlines and Hallmark, among others, attended the 11th Annual CMA Brand Marketing Summit.

(continued on the next page)



Music video viewed **nearly 60 million** times

Debuted in **TOP 40** on Billboard Hot 100 chart

One of only **3 songs IN HISTORY** to debut at **No. 1** on the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart since the chart was created in 1958

Nearly **2 billion** media impressions

Audio streamed more than **18 million** times

Hit **No. 1** on iTunes all-genre chart in the U.S.

More than **300,000** tracks sold



**THEN.  
NOW.  
FOR  
EVER.**

Music video sold **EIGHT TIMES FASTER** than normal rate of sale in iTunes store



Photo: CMA

ARTISTS OF THEN, NOW & FOREVER.



Global phenomenon, posting on more than **25 international iTunes charts** and **18 international Spotify charts.** Hit **No. 2** on Spotify's Global Viral 50 chart.



# ABC TAKES OVER NASHVILLE IN SUPPORT OF CMA AWARDS

**A**BC Television Network seemed to take over Nashville last fall in support of "The 50th Annual CMA Awards." Several of the network's key shows and personalities came to town with full production crews to help create special programming and raise awareness for the landmark event, and Country fans turned out in force to support their efforts.

"Good Morning America" anchor Robin Roberts arrived in late October to tape her hourlong special, "All Access Nashville: Celebrating the CMA Awards," which aired on Halloween night. Roberts and her crew set up camp at the packed downtown bar Tootsies, where she conducted interviews and introduced performances from Dierks Bentley, Hunter Hayes, Lady Antebellum, Jake Owen, Brad Paisley, Cassadee Pope, Reba, and Carrie Underwood. Her show also featured historical clips from past CMA Awards and additional interview footage with lots more stars reflecting on their wins, as well as a special tribute to Dolly Parton.

A 6 a.m. call time didn't deter thousands from gathering on the Bridgestone Arena Plaza on Nov. 2 for an early morning performance by Bentley that was broadcast live on "Good Morning America." Anchor Lara Spencer was on hand to announce winners in two CMA Awards categories (including Bentley, who received the Musical Event of the Year trophy for "Different for Girls" featuring Elle King). It also marked the television premiere of Bentley's single, "Black," from his album of the same name, a contender in the Album of the Year category.

ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" also got in on the CMA action. Not only did the late-night program exclusively announce that Parton would receive the Willie Nelson Lifetime Achievement Award, but it also featured performances by nominees, including Maren Morris and Keith Urban, in the weeks leading into "The 50th Annual CMA Awards."

On Awards night, "Kimmel" featured Hunter Hayes performing



CMA AWARDS CO-HOSTS BRAD PAISLEY AND CARRIE UNDERWOOD SHARE A LAUGH WITH ABC'S ROBIN ROBERTS.

Photo: Chris Holte

with none other than ... Hunter Hayes. The former CMA New Artist of the Year hit the stage in front of a live audience at the CMA Theater in Nashville with holograms of himself playing various instruments, cleverly making up his own backing band. Kimmel dropped in as a hologram himself to chat with the star.

Following the Awards broadcast, "Kimmel" aired a new Country edition of its popular "Mean Tweets" segment, where Florida Georgia Line, Miranda Lambert, Little Big Town, Willie Nelson, Chris

Stapleton, and more cracked up reading demeaning Twitter comments. The Nov. 2 "Kimmel" was the No. 1-rated late-night program among adults age 18-49 for the evening.

On the morning of the Awards, CMA joined forces with the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp to host a breakfast at Bridgestone Arena's Welcome Center for ABC affiliate stations that were in town to cover the

anniversary ceremony. Three of the year's nominated songwriters were on hand to perform an acoustic set: busbee ("My Church"), Sean Douglas ("Die a Happy Man"), and Tyler Johnson ("Burning House"). All were first-time nominees in 2016.

Douglas shared the amusing story of writing "Die a Happy Man" with Thomas Rhett on the singer's tour bus, marking the first time Douglas had the twin experiences of sleeping in a bus bunk and "sitting around in our underwear" writing a song "people would play at their weddings." As the writer of such pop hits as Jason Derulo's "Wiggle" and "Talk Dirty," Douglas got a big laugh when he joked that he wrote "Die a Happy Man" as "penance to the larger human community, and also my wife, for all the objectifying phrases" in his previous hits.

**ABC.go.com**



KEITH URBAN PERFORMS ON "JIMMY KIMMEL LIVE!" NOV. 1, 2016. IN ADVANCE OF "THE 50TH ANNUAL CMA AWARDS."

Photo: ABC / Randy Holmes

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# ABC EXECUTIVE SCOTT IGOE Looks to Strengthen NETWORK'S TIES TO COUNTRY MUSIC

by TOM ROLAND

There was plenty to be happy about when "The 50th Annual CMA Awards" came to a close: Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood had delivered a funny, timely monologue, the Dolly Parton tribute was a winner, and Garth Brooks' Entertainer of the Year victory provided a joyful coda.

But nothing drew more chatter – on social media and around the office water cooler – than Beyoncé's surprise appearance with the Dixie Chicks. Two major acts from different worlds combined in a way that proved controversial. But for Scott Igoe, ABC's Vice President, Alternative Programming and Specials, that was a victory. The Chicago Cubs played, and won, a historic Game 7 in the World Series the same night, but there was so much conversation and debate about Beyoncé's CMA Awards performance that plenty of baseball viewers scoured the Internet in the aftermath, wanting to know what they'd missed.

"I loved it," Igoe said of the performance. "Did it hurt or help the ratings? I have no idea. It's music, it's subjective, some people are gonna love it, some people are gonna hate it. But it was trending on Twitter."

Beyoncé and the Chicks created a lot of passion, which is good for Country Music and for ABC. And Igoe, then just a few months into his ABC executive job, knows a thing or two about passion. He spent 13 years as the music booker for late-night talk show "Jimmy Kimmel Live!," whose host has made irreverence a calling card.

He's also developed a passion for Country Music itself. Not unlike many Country fans and industry insiders, Igoe didn't particularly appreciate it until he became an adult. Now, he's an unabashed believer in the genre – the music, the artists, and the work ethic behind it all.

Igoe is recognized as a TV executive who's tireless in doing his homework on musicians. "He's out all the time," said Cindy Mabe, Universal Music Group Nashville President. "He's always at a show, he's always at some event. I feel like he keeps himself very out front and on top of what's happening."

Igoe freely admits that working with Country Music was not his first calling. He grew up in the San Francisco Bay area, a region where the genre was once so out of the mainstream that Country station KNEW-AM ran contests encouraging listeners to "come out of the closet" as Country fans. He earned his B.A. in English at California State University-Northridge, then spent four years working with A&R executive Jimmy Iovine at Interscope Records, where the focus was on acts such as Snoop Dogg, Marilyn Manson, Eminem, and Nine Inch Nails – in short, everything but Country.

"I was into '80s rock," Igoe said. "Country Music really wasn't a part of my upbringing."

That time at Interscope, however, was vital to Igoe's future career, in great part because Iovine had a way of showing respect to artists, and demanding it in return.

"He was very instrumental in teaching me how to work with artists, how to be honest with them," Igoe noted. "At



the end of the day, it's 'Hey, you're the artist, and if that's your vision, then I'm going to do everything I can to support you. But if you're wrong, we're gonna have to do it my way next time.' That's just one of many, many lessons I learned from Jimmy."

Igoe subsequently worked at Palm Pictures, a film and music house launched by Island Records founder Chris Blackwell, before he landed the job with Kimmel in 2002. It became clear early in that television work environment that appealing to the audience in America's heartland would be key to any success. A big part of that audience, unlike the culture Igoe grew up in, liked Country. And they weren't seeing a whole lot of Country playing in other network forums.

He and Kimmel took what was perceived as a risk when they put artists such as Toby Keith and Kenny Chesney on the show's outdoor stage. And when those acts drew crowds, Kimmel and Igoe made Country an even more important part of the show's music mix.

"They were great people, they had great songs, and could play, and they were efficient, and on time, and a pleasure. Why not work with people like that?" Igoe said of the Country acts he booked. "Then you go outside and there's a thousand people waiting to see them play. You didn't have to hit me over the head with a hammer to get me to know that this is something real, and Jimmy saw it, too."

Igoe started booking new and developing Country acts on the show – not just the superstars. So when ABC hired him in 2016 as a Vice President, focused on the musical aspects of its entertainment shows and specials, the Country Music community viewed it as a positive.

"He was always supportive of Country artists, and I think he'll be a good asset for Country Music," said Iconic Entertainment President Fletcher Foster. "He loves music and stays on top of what's current and breaking."

Igoe reports to Rob Mills, ABC's Senior Vice President of Alternative Series, Specials and Late-night Programming, but because Igoe is music-focused, he's able to burrow into the details of CMA's annual music-centric specials – "The CMA Awards," "CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock," and "CMA Country Christmas" – earlier in the process. That's significant to the workflow, since it's better to know early in the production schedule if the network is onboard with a concept. But it's also telling that ABC wants to devote more

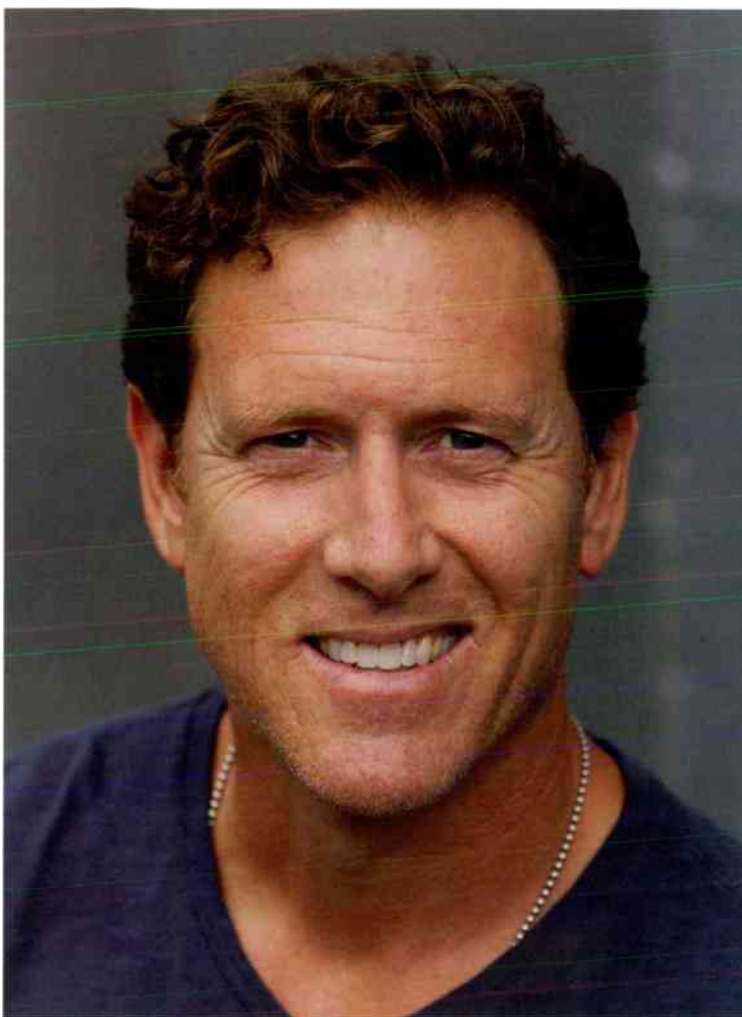


photo: courtesy Scott Igoe

attention to CMA content.

"CMA is an important partner to ABC in general," Igoe said.

Supporting that outlook, Igoe intends to strengthen the cross-promotional tie-ins in the future between CMA broadcasts and other ABC properties, particularly "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" and series that use music prominently, such as "Dancing with the Stars" and "The Bachelor/Bachelorette" franchise. Meanwhile, that Beyoncé-Chicks collaboration, like the Justin Timberlake-Chris Stapleton pairing in 2015, might provide a template for CMA specials' future direction, enhancing the lineup where appropriate by creating collaborations that get people talking at home and sharing on their socials. Making an impression is key to attracting — and holding — an audience, and Igoe is eager to make one himself.

"I couldn't be happier," Igoe said. "I'm really thrilled that I was given this opportunity to come over to ABC and see what I can make happen."

MORRIS HITS THE STAGE TO PERFORM "MY CHURCH" DURING "THE 50TH ANNUAL CMA AWARDS."

A photograph of Maren Morris performing on stage. She is in the center, wearing a patterned dress, holding a white acoustic guitar, and singing into a microphone. To her left, a man in a dark suit plays a red electric guitar. To her right, another man in a dark suit plays a drum set. The stage is lit with warm, golden lights, and the background is dark with many small, glowing lights. The audience is visible in the foreground, seen from behind.

# Maren Morris

## LOOKS AHEAD AFTER A BREAKTHROUGH YEAR

by DEBORAH EVANS PRICE

What a difference a year makes. Just ask Maren Morris.

During the 2015 CMA Awards, the singer/songwriter was planted in a bar just across the street from the venue watching the festivities on television with friends and wondering if her time would ever come. Of course, it most certainly did. The Texas native enjoyed a banner year in 2016, highlighted by the chart-topping debut of her Columbia Nashville album, *Hero*, a coveted opening slot on Keith Urban's "ripCORD World Tour," four Grammy Award nominations, and her CMA win for New Artist of the Year.

Prior to accepting the Award, Morris performed her breakout hit, "My Church," backed by the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and the McCrary Sisters. "I just knew it was going to be a big deal and I wanted it to feel emotional," she told *CMA Close Up* of her performance on "The 50th Annual CMA Awards." "Even though I was nervous, once the curtain comes up, you realize, 'We're just making music, just playing a song, and I've sung it a thousand times now.' I just had to mentally calm myself down, but in the moment, performing on the Awards with those amazing musicians backing me, I felt right at home. I was having so much fun and I started to see people in the audience stand up and sing along. That was just so crazy to me, and it made me get even more into the performance. It was very emotional."

Morris had no idea her night was about to get even better. When she took the stage to accept the New Artist of the Year trophy, she gave one of the evening's most inspiring speeches, telling the story of watching the 2015 show from the bar and thanking the Nashville songwriting community for providing "courage."

"I was still running on pure adrenaline when I got back to my seat, and then when they called my name for New Artist, I hadn't quite gotten myself back together," she said. "It was such an amazing and emotional tornado. I couldn't even read my note cards that I had written. But I've heard from so many people since then that my speech moved them, because what can happen in a year is really astounding. I was sitting in a bar during the last CMAs, watching them on TV, never once thinking that I'd be going the next year or be nominated or win, so it was just really an inspiring moment. [It showed] a lot of people you can do it. We've all been sitting in that bar feeling like our dreams are never going to come true, and when they do it's just so satisfying."

Morris began dreaming of Country Music success even before she hit her teens. "I was 11 when I realized I loved to sing," said the now 26-year-old. "I was really inspired by LeAnn Rimes, who was from Texas. Every girl from Texas was obsessed with LeAnn when that *Blue* album came out." Determined to follow in Rimes' footsteps, Morris would sing at local bars and honky-tonks. "Eventually I got a band and started writing songs when I got



MORRIS PERFORMS ON THE NISSAN STADIUM STAGE DURING THE 2016 CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL IN A SURPRISE APPEARANCE WITH RASCAL FLATTS.

Photo: John Russell / CMA

my first guitar," she recalled. "I was a touring act in Texas on the weekends in high school. I missed a lot of sleepovers because I was in a bar on Saturdays."

But she has no regrets about the journey. "I'm still friends with the girls I was friends with back then. I was on the soccer team and I did choir and musical theater. I definitely had a childhood, but on certain weekends I'd be playing in a bar. The downside was my friends were too young to get into the shows," she said with a laugh. "When I tell people that I've been doing this for 16 years, they kind of give me a side eye and are like, 'Wait! How old are you?' But I really did start when I was a kid. Nothing happens overnight and I'm a clear example of that."

Morris became a popular fixture on the competitive Texas circuit and began honing her vocal style recording indie albums. "I definitely feel those years in Texas where I was performing were like a practice run for me to really grow as a performer and cut my teeth," said Morris, who also thinks her parents' support was key to her early achievements. "When I got to Nashville things started rolling really quickly because I had that experience onstage from performing shows in Texas. It prepared me better for all this craziness."

After relocating to Nashville, Morris first garnered attention for her songwriting skills. Early cuts included album tracks "Last Turn Home" by Tim McGraw and "Second Wind" by Kelly Clarkson. The latter was included on *Hero*. "It's such a personal song for me because it's about my trip from Texas to Nashville, and feeling like I had to uproot my life ... for this whole thing. 'Second Wind' was about finally coming out the other side."

But the song that really signaled Morris' metamorphosis from hot new songwriter to pioneering young artist was her major label debut single, "My Church," a song she co-wrote with her producer/collaborator Busbee. She calls writing that song "a turning point. That was the song [where I said], 'I cannot play this for anybody. I'm afraid to send it anywhere.' I didn't want anyone to hear it because I felt like it could be my first single, so I was really protective of 'My Church.' It was so autobiographical and

(continued on the next page)

so special to my story. I just couldn't hear anyone else singing it, so that's when I was like, 'OK, this is rounding out my album, and whether I get a record deal or not I'm putting this song out as a single in some way, shape, or form.'"

In her quest to have her music heard, Spotify became an important ally. "The biggest thing that Spotify has is the Discovery tool," she explained. "People find you through those playlists and stumble across your music in a really organic way. When you give control back to the listeners, they feel really prideful when they discover you, like they found you on their own. Being an artist who had a really cool opportunity to work with Spotify in the very beginning — when I hadn't quite signed my label deal yet — was a huge platform for me. I was a songwriter and no one had ever heard of me or my songs. Spotify was a really great platform for me to bring those to a curated audience. I feel like it did wonders for me. We hit, like, a million streams in two weeks and it just moved the dial. I feel like it made all the labels that were offering me deals take it even more seriously."

After fielding several offers, Morris said, "Sony just came in with such a great marketing plan. It had everything in line with what I first saw in my head. I wanted to hit the ground running instead of going through months and months of development and writing again. I already had the album done and I wanted to take it to radio immediately. Two months after I signed, 'My Church' went to radio. When [Sony Music Nashville Chairman/CEO] Randy Goodman took the job, I felt such a kinship with him and the whole A&R team over there. They really got me and had a great plan to boot."

Sony released *Hero* on June 3, 2016, and it debuted at No. 1 on *Billboard's* Top Country Albums chart and peaked at No. 5 on the all-genre *Billboard* 200. Morris quickly became one of the industry's most buzzed about new artists, and her reputation as a compelling live act grew when she landed an opening slot on Urban's tour.

"It's been such a life-changing experience," she said of the trek, which concluded in late November 2016. "I'd never performed in arenas. I'd never performed on stages that big. It was a sink-or-swim environment. Once you get out there, you either fail or you have to learn how to work a stage that big. I feel like I've grown so much having those shows every night, and also watching Keith perform every night. [He was] giving it his all every night and changing it up and making it interesting for the audience. I've just been a sponge soaking in all this knowledge [from him] of touring, and how to treat your fans, and how to treat your crew."

Morris will be putting that knowledge to use in February as she embarks on her first headlining tour, which has already sold out in some cities. "I'm looking forward to playing more music," she said of the longer set she'll enjoy as headliner. "On the Keith tour we only got 25 minutes each night to play. I'm just excited to run my own gig and have the set that I want and the set list that I want and throw in some fun. We'll have amazing opening acts with Ryan Hurd and Devin Dawson coming out with us. It's



Photo: John Russell / CMAA

**DURING "THE 50TH ANNUAL CMA AWARDS," MORRIS ACCEPTS HER TROPHY FOR NEW ARTIST OF THE YEAR.**

just going to be a really cool way to interact with fans on a closer level. We want to make the tour really intimate because we are just doing clubs. I just want it to feel — after this crazy year — that we can just plug in and play a club and just rock the [expletive] out of it. I'm gearing up for how fun that tour is going to be."

Morris has already started writing for her next record, but she doesn't want to rush the process. "I'm starting to reflect on my life this past year, and I think some great song ideas will come out of that reflection," she said.

Indeed, 2016 was a year filled with highlights — the CMA win, taping a "CMT Crossroads" episode with Alicia Keys, and receiving *Billboard's* Breakthrough Artist Award among them. But one of the most unforgettable moments came when she performed in Dallas on the Urban tour. "I'd seen so many shows at the American Airlines Center," she said with a catch in her throat, "and for me to be standing onstage singing 'My Church' and having my [home]town sing the words to it, that was a major dream come true for me."

**MarenMorris.com**



DOLLY PARTON (CENTER) RECEIVES THE WILLIE NELSON LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOLLOWING A MUSICAL TRIBUTE FEATURING (L-R) KACEY MUSGRAVES, REBA, JENNIFER NETTLES, MARTINA MCBRIDE, AND CARRIE UNDERWOOD. PARTON'S "9 TO 5" COSTAR LILY TOMLIN (FAR RIGHT) PRESENTED THE AWARD.

photo: ABC Image Group LA



photo: Donn Jones / CMA

FOUR-TIME CMA ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR KENNY CHESNEY RECEIVES THE CMA PINNACLE AWARD, WHICH RECOGNIZES AN ARTIST WHO HAS ACHIEVED GLOBAL PROMINENCE THROUGH CONCERT PERFORMANCES AND RECORD SALES AT LEVELS UNIQUE IN COUNTRY MUSIC. RETIRED NFL QUARTERBACK PEYTON MANNING WAS ON HAND TO PRESENT CHESNEY WITH THE HONOR.

ROLLING STONE COUNTRY'S BEVILLE DUNKERLEY (NOW WITH PANDORA) AND JOSEPH HUDAK (CENTER) RECEIVE THE 2016 CMA MEDIA ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FROM COUNTRY ARTISTS CASSAOEE POPE (LEFT) AND TUCKER BEATHARD (RIGHT).



photo: Joseph Llanes



CMA BROADCAST AWARD WINNERS TAKE THE STAGE DURING PRE-TELECAST CEREMONIES. (BACK ROW, L-R) "COWBOY" KYLE CROFT OF "THE GATOR & STYCKMAN PROGRAM"; KEN HICKS, KELLEY BRADSHAW, AND DANIEL WYATT OF WUSY; GREG "STYCKMAN" OWENS AND GATOR HARRISON OF "THE GATOR & STYCKMAN PROGRAM"; JASON STATT, CHELSIE SHINKLE, AND DAVID CHANDLER OF "THE BIG OAVE SHOW"; GROVER COLLINS OF WUBE; (FRONT ROW, L-R) BILL HENDRICH AND JOHNNY CHIANG OF KKBO; CHRIS CARR, KIA BECHT, AND JEFF "MAVERICK" BLOEN OF "CHRIS CARR & COMPANY"; GEORGE ACHAVES OF "COUNTRY COUNTDOWN USA" (ACCEPTING ON BEHALF OF LON HELTON, NOT PICTURED); MARK GRANTIN OF KTTG; SHARON GREEN AND EDDIE FOXX OF "THE EDDIE FOXX SHOW."

photo: Donn Jones / CMA

photo: Chris Hollo/ABC



"GOOD MORNING AMERICA" ANCHOR ROBIN ROBERTS (CENTER) FILMS "ALL ACCESS NASHVILLE: CELEBRATING THE CMA AWARDS WITH ROBIN ROBERTS" AT TOOTSIES WITH (FROM LEFT) HUNTER HAYES, CASSADEE POPE, JAKE OWEN, BRAD PAISLEY, CARRIE UNDERWOOD, LADY ANTEBELLUM (CHARLES KELLEY, HILLARY SCOTT, AND DAVE HAYWOOD), AND DIERKS BENTLEY.

photo: Jamie Schramm/CMA



DIERKS BENTLEY KICKS OFF HIS CMA AWARDS DAY WITH "GOOD MORNING AMERICA" ANCHOR LARA SPENCER FROM THE BRIDGESTONE ARENA PLAZA. BENTLEY WAS NAMED CMA MUSICAL EVENT OF THE YEAR WINNER DURING THE LIVE "GMA" BROADCAST FOR "DIFFERENT FOR GIRLS" FEATURING ELLE KING.



photo: John Russell/CMA

(LEFT-RIGHT) DON SCHLITZ, BRAD WARREN, BRETT WARREN, GEORGIA MIDDLEMAN, AND GARY BURR PERFORM DURING A CMA AWARDS EDITION OF THE CMA SONGWRITERS SERIES AT THE CMA THEATER.

photo: Caitlin Harris / CMA



THE MORNING OF THE CMA AWARDS. REPRESENTATIVES FROM 24 CORPORATE BRANDS ATTENDED THE 11TH ANNUAL CMA BRAND MARKETING SUMMIT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE COUNTRY CONSUMER.

GARTH BROOKS HOISTS THE CMA ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR TROPHY FOR A RECORD-SETTING FIFTH TIME AFTER HIS WIN DURING "THE 50TH ANNUAL CMA AWARDS."



photo: Donn Jones / CMA



photo: Donn Jones / CMA

CMA AWARDS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ROBERT DEATON BRINGS TOGETHER ICONIC ARTISTS FEATURED ON "THE 50TH ANNUAL CMA AWARDS." (FRONT L-R) COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME MEMBERS ROY CLARK, RANDY TRAVIS, REBA, CHARLEY PRIDE, AND RANDY OWEN OF ALABAMA; DEATON; COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME MEMBERS JOE BONSALE AND RICHARD STERBAN OF THE OAK RIDGE BOYS; AND BEN HAGGARD. (BACK L-R) CMA CEO SARAH TRAHERN; RICKY SKAGGS; ALAN JACKSON; COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME MEMBERS JEFF CODK OF ALABAMA AND VINCE GILL; CLINT BLACK; AND COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME MEMBERS TEDDY GENTRY OF ALABAMA, CHARLIE DANIELS, AND WILLIAM LEE GOLDEN AND DUANE ALLEN OF THE OAK RIDGE BOYS.

# 'CMA Country Christmas' BOOSTS SALES, STREAMING NUMBERS FOR ITS DIVERSE PERFORMERS

by TOM ROLAND

With the 2016 holiday season firmly in the rearview mirror, plenty of consumers are looking at both their scales and their credit card statements in disbelief at how large the numbers grew in December.

But the artists that appeared on "CMA Country Christmas," which aired Nov. 28 and again on Dec. 24 on ABC Television Network, were happy to see their numbers up as part of the holiday experience. According to Nielsen Music, sales of songs performed during the show increased by 528 percent in the two days following the first airing, compared to the pre-show daily average. On demand streams of those songs jumped 225 percent in the same period.

Most of the artists on the show saw increased sales of their entire catalog, too. Host Jennifer Nettles' total downloaded tracks doubled, according to Nielsen Music, while four Country artists – Brett Eldredge, Loretta Lynn, Rascal Flatts, and Chris Young – saw their total album sales improve by 40 percent or more. Young (65 percent) and Eldredge (62 percent) were the biggest beneficiaries in album gains. Kacey Musgraves' on-demand streaming, meanwhile, shot up 45 percent.

"This is a huge television opportunity," Universal Music Group Nashville President Cindy Mabe said of the show.

But it's not just about the sales. The annual "CMA Country Christmas" special often showcases talents that the audience might not have known the artists possess. The 2016 show was no exception. Nettles' opening number employed a series of costume changes in the middle of a choreographed dance sequence that brought her from the Grand Ole Opry House dressing rooms to the front of the stage, where she wowed the crowd by flipping backwards off a piano. Tuxedo-clad Eldredge crooned "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!" backed by an elaborate big band of strings, sax, and muted trumpets. And Kelsea Ballerini delivered "The Sound of Music" classic "My Favorite Things" with a jazz combo led by 13-year-old Indonesian-born and Grammy-nominated pianist Joey Alexander.

"CMA Country Christmas" is a different beast – or a different kind of "roast beast," the Grinch might say – than Country acts experience through most of the year. Whether it's Rascal Flatts singing with a gospel

ELDREDGE PERFORMS DURING  
"CMA COUNTRY CHRISTMAS."



choir, Musgraves channeling Hawaiian sounds in “Mele Kalikimaka,” or Young belting the rock-flavored “Christmas (Baby Please Come Home),” it’s an opportunity for the genre’s artists to show the breadth of their talent without worrying if it fits the typical constraints of the format.

“It allows you to show some sides of an artist that will not get you in trouble with your P1 listeners and programmers,” noted John Esposito, Warner Music Nashville chairman/CEO.

The value of that aspect can’t be underestimated. While artists don’t necessarily want to jolt their core fan base with music that’s too far afield of their central sound, it’s creatively refreshing to paint with sonic colors that aren’t typically available to them. It’s also a different way to attract fans who might not have otherwise bought in previously, and it’s potentially an “aha!” moment for consumers who already appreciated them.

“We as an industry knew Brett loved Frank Sinatra-style music,” said Ballerini’s manager Fletcher Foster, President of Iconic Entertainment. “But did the millions of viewers out there know that? I think it’s a great opportunity for fans to look at these artists creatively and get to know them more outside of what they’re doing the rest of the year.”

That was the point when Foster booked Ballerini and Alexander on the show. He was aware of Alexander’s unusual prowess on the keyboard through his own work with the Recording Academy, which featured the young musician previously in a music-education segment. “CMA Country Christmas” producer Robert Deaton was a fan as well, and since Ballerini is a major supporter of music education programs, the pairing seemed organically cohesive. Alexander flew to Nashville to record a version of “My Favorite Things” with Ballerini for iTunes release, and Ballerini announced the CMA Foundation’s \$1 million contribution to music education programs in Metro Nashville Public Schools on Dec. 6 (see pg. 22 for more).

“It gave us a great opportunity to tie in a lot of messages and have her stretch,” Foster said. “People found out more about her vocally, or creatively, and how she can work in different worlds.”

Country artists aren’t the only ones benefiting from “CMA Country Christmas.” Alexander, clearly at the beginning of his jazz career, was likely making a first impression on many of the 7.8 million viewers who watched the first broadcast in November. He saw triple track sales and streaming activity increases across the board, according to Nielsen.

Other non-Country stars enjoyed an uptick this year, too, with album sales for Kelly Clarkson, Sarah McLachlan, Idina Menzel, and Jordan Smith (a former contestant on NBC’s “The Voice”) all soaring by as much as 60 to 90 percent.

“There’s nothing formulaic about that show,” said Mabe. “Robert has booked some pretty interesting acts, above and beyond Country. He’s done a bunch of Broadway acts, he’s done pop and other genre acts. It’s always an interesting, awesome watch.”



YOUNG HITS THE STAGE DURING THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY SPECIAL.

That includes both onstage and offstage moments captured by the camera. Young made an impression on a personal level in this year’s edition when he partnered with Make-A-Wish Foundation to surprise a teenage fan, aspiring music producer Patricia Hash, and sang a section of his 2016 hit “Think of You” with her in a recording studio. Onstage, 10-year-old JT Church, a runner-up on the 2016 season of “So You Think You Can Dance,” got a standing ovation for his choreographed moment on a three-foot snare while Nettles and Menzel sang “The Little Drummer Boy.”

“It had a magic to it and an air to it,” Esposito said of the show. “It was, in my estimation, the best production that Robert has put on yet.”

It’s that unexpected, break-the-rules programming sense that’s kept the audience coming back – and growing – over the seven-year run of “CMA Country Christmas.” Between the sales results, the creative opportunity, and the natural match of a family holiday with a family-friendly music format, it’s become as much a part of the yuletide TV schedule as “Christmas in Rockefeller Center,” “A Home for the Holidays,” and the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

“There’s a handful of them now that have become anticipated every year,” Foster said, calling the CMA telecast “a great show. The art direction, the lighting, the sound – it’s done really well. I think it’s a great platform for our Country artists, and I think if we can continually fold in some artists that are non-Country, that can add some flavor by bringing in a demographic and giving our artists an opportunity to match them creatively. I think it can have a long life.”

“If you want to do Christmas,” Mabe agreed, “you’re going to do ‘CMA Country Christmas.’”

**CMAChristmas.com**

# Justin Moore Still Proudly Waves the Flag for Traditional Country

by LORIE HOLLABAUGH

**A**lthough he's flown a little bit under the radar for most of his nine-year recording career, there's little doubt Justin Moore can soar with the best of them. And after four albums, six No. 1s, and a heap of Top 10 hits, the Arkansas native is finally at that sweet spot in his career where he's both ready and able to branch out and try some new things musically.

In a bit of a gutsy move, Moore took his time making his current album for the Valory Music Co. — three years, to be exact — so the resulting set, the No. 1-debuting *Kinda Don't Care*, and its hit first single "You Look Like I Need a Drink," are meaningful to the hardworking father of three.

Having "Drink" top the charts "was particularly special to me," Moore said, "because we took more time in between albums. We've [previously] been on a two-year stretch between them, and this one was three years somewhat by design. I knew this was an important album and stage in my career, and I wanted to make sure we delivered the best music we possibly could. I'm fortunate to be at a label that said, 'Just go take your time and when it's done it's done.' They didn't put any time limitations on me, which was fun, and the first time I've had that opportunity in my career. We've wanted to try some different things in the past and — quite honestly — didn't have the time to do so. So to have that additional time was great, and contributed to us delivering the best, most complete album we've delivered."

Not that Moore reinvented the wheel. He largely stuck with the traditional-sounding Country Music he's hung his hat on from the start. But he realizes, even with a slew of hits under his belt, that he has to keep pushing the envelope to remain relevant.



"Obviously I feel pressure to stay true to what's gotten me to this point in my career, and [what made me] able to have success for almost a decade. But in order to maintain relevance and continue to grow my fan base, it's imperative that I stretch my legs, get outside my comfort zone, and continue to push myself," he said. "[It's about] straddling that line and not selling out to whatever's happening at the time, but also knowing that you've got to continue to grow."

As one of a handful of artists carrying that old-school Country torch in a diverse Country Music scene, Moore is proud to represent and embody the spirit of those legends he grew up listening to. He titled his 2011 album *Outlaws Like Me*, and much like the outlaws who tore through Nashville in the '60s and '70s making their own rules, Moore doesn't mince words or give lip service, and he'd much rather play with his three daughters than play politics on Music Row. It's a philosophy that has served him well thus far in his career, and one he doesn't plan to change.

"I take that as a huge compliment, to be thought of as helping to wave that traditional flag," he said. "It's something that makes me proud. Yeah, it's human nature to go, 'Wow every song on the radio doesn't sound like what I grew up on that made me love Country Music.' But I realize ... the guys and gals who have been coming out the last few years listen to different stuff than I did growing up and are a generation behind me. But at the end of the day, if there's fans out there for it and it grows our format, I'm all about it. ... Regardless of what type of music anybody plays, if they're genuine and they truly believe in what they're doing, I have respect for that."

As he embarked on his own "American Made" co-headlining tour with Lee Brice in January, pleasing fans who share his musical tastes has been top of mind. "There are definitely people craving that traditional sound. I can see it on the road every week," Moore said. "And selfishly, for somebody like me who loves it so much, I loved seeing it on the CMA Awards [last] year."

Moore's newest challenge these days has been trying to work all of his fan-favorite hits into his shows. Planning the set list has gotten easier in one way, he said, because at this point "the crowd's gonna be singing along to everything you do. But we've gotten to the point that we have to leave some stuff out at times, which is a great problem to have."

He hopes to give fans a treat when they see him in concert with Brice. "Lee and I have known each other for a long time, and we thought, 'Man, this would be fun to give the fans a different type of experience than they're gonna get on any other tour,'" he explained. "They're gonna get to see two full shows, [one] from each of us, and have a lot of hits to sing along with."

While he loves playing for the fans, Moore is also glad to be at a point where he can spend much more time at home with his wife and daughters in Arkansas, although he still brings them on the road whenever possible. "I love having them out," he said. "They used to be out all the time until my oldest started 'real' school, and that kind of changed things a little. It's definitely easier now in my career to find balance. I'm home a lot more than early on in my career. We will play about 80-85 shows this year. I can remember playing 230 shows a year. Thank God those days are over!"

He still prefers to live a more low-key existence out of the limelight, but Moore has plenty of goals still on the bucket list to accomplish before he someday hangs his hat up and drops the mic for good.

"I definitely fly under the radar and have my entire career," he admitted, attributing some of that to the fact that he doesn't live in Nashville. "My priority is my wife and kids at home when I'm not playing music rather than playing the [industry] game.

"I still have goals, sure. There's still a ton I'd love to accomplish," he added. "We've done headline tours, but never with an unlimited budget. I think that's every artist's goal, to put on the best show with all the bells and whistles they can find. We have three busses and three trucks, and it'd be nice, one day, to see that grow to 20 of each and fill up some stadiums. And the ultimate would be to become a member of the Grand Ole Opry. But I'm proud of what we've accomplished and experienced so far. If it ended now, I would be so grateful for all the success we have enjoyed."

[JustinMooreMusic.com](http://JustinMooreMusic.com)



MOORE PERFORMS AT NISSAN STADIUM DURING THE 2016 CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL.

Photo: Natasha Moustache / CMA

## ARTIST MANAGER

# **BILL SIMMONS** sees the world AS COUNTRY MUSIC'S OYSTER

by CHRIS TALBOTT

**H**ere's a fact about artist manager Bill Simmons that may surprise you: he does not have a written contract binding him to client Brad Paisley.

Yes, one of the most successful and lucrative partnerships in modern Country Music history has been governed by a handshake since it began in late 2003.

"I don't have a contract with Brad Paisley," the Fitzgerald Hartley Co. partner said. "I'm just his manager as long as he wants me to be his manager, and vice versa. I think that's different than some of the other management companies. My role as a manager is to help the artist become who he or she wants to be, if that makes any sense. That's what a manager's supposed to do anyway."

Simmons brings this mentality to his new leadership role with the CMA Board of Directors, where he has served since 2011. He ascended to his new position as President at the beginning of this year, and will take over as Chairman next year. He has no plans for a shakeup, but sees CMA's mission continuing to grow.

"You can't keep the status quo in anything," Simmons said. "If you don't grow – and I'm not just talking about CMA, but in any business – you become stagnant. Nothing stands still. 'Time marches on,' to quote Tracy Lawrence, who's a client here. So I don't have some major agenda. I just feel our goal is to promote Country Music, which has grown dramatically since I moved to this town. It's continued to evolve and become more and more popular around the world. Country Music in the 1960s and '70s seemed like it was just an American art form. As the world becomes more of a global economy, it's pretty popular all over the world. I believe the world is our oyster."

This is a worldview Simmons has developed during his more than three decades of work in the industry. Raised in Douglas, Georgia, Simmons' parents moved to Mississippi the summer before his 10th grade year. They moved back after he graduated high school, but he stayed, attending Ole Miss (University of Mississippi) and identifying the rest of his life as a Mississippian.

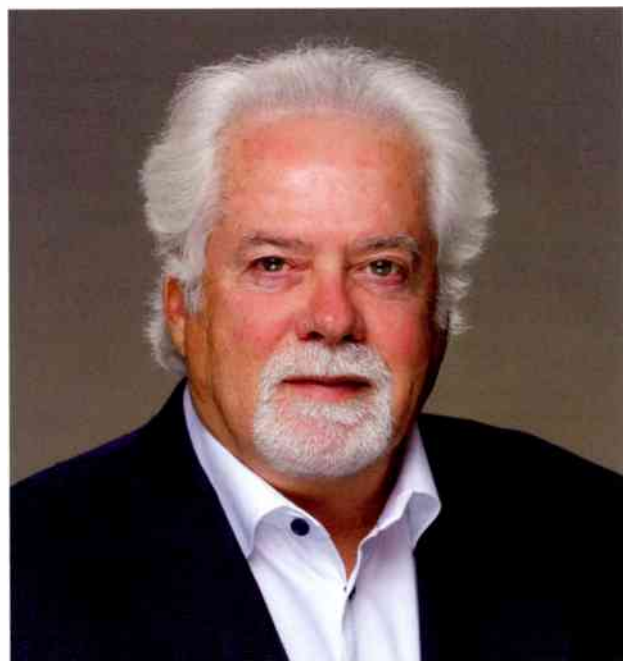


photo: Donn Jones / CMA

He graduated with a degree in psychology and political science, and embarked on a career in social services. But after realizing he'd have to spend at least six more years in school to get anywhere in that field, he began managing a cover band named Sassy Jones. Over the next several years Simmons worked with pop-turned-Country singer-songwriter Paul Davis and Fred Knoblock, and moved to Atlanta to take a position with Bang Records. He relocated to Nashville in 1980 to take a temporary gig tour managing for Eddie Rabbitt. He met Tammy Wynette and decided to stick around to work for the legend, eventually taking the same job with Restless Heart.

When Tim DuBois left Fitzgerald Hartley in 1989 to open Arista Nashville, Simmons joined the firm, where — in addition to Paisley — he has guided the careers of Chris Young, Radney Foster, Restless Heart, Brett James, the Kinleys, Jerrod Niemann,

Kellie Pickler, and others. Though he'd been in town for less than a decade when he joined the firm, he already had a reputation as a man who got things done – a reputation that precedes him to the Board Presidency.

Fellow Board member Randy Goodman, Sony Nashville Chairman/CEO, has known Simmons much of that time. The two met when Restless Heart was at RCA, where Goodman worked in the marketing department under then label head Joe Galante. Goodman said he was always amazed at what Simmons

*"Country Music has grown dramatically since I moved to this town. It's continued to evolve and become more and more popular around the world." - SIMMONS*

got done for his clients, and believes Simmons will serve CMA in much the same way.

Goodman said as a leader Simmons is the embodiment of the idea of completing a task, as espoused by former General Electric executive Larry Bossidy in his book "Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done."

"He's somebody who always gets the job done when it comes to executing the goals and plans, and I think execution is so important for anyone who's in any kind of leadership role," Goodman said. "It's great to articulate a vision, but if you can't get it done, that vision's not worth articulating. I think that's the kind of leader that Bill will be."

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# SETS NEW HIGH FOR GIVING IN 2017

Compiled by WENDY PEARL AND COURTNEY BEEBE

**A**s a result of more fans and artists than ever before attending CMA Music Festival, the CMA Foundation announced a record-setting \$3.1 million to support music education programs across the country. Foundation funds are generated during the annual event, where artists donate their time to support this important cause. Since 2006, CMA and the CMA Foundation have donated more than \$17.5 million to ensure every child has access to quality, sustainable music education, touching the lives of one million students and counting. The 44 programs receiving grants are:

**147 Million Orphans** – 147 Million Orphans was created to provide for the critical needs of children impacted by the orphan crisis and living in poverty in Haiti, Honduras, Uganda, and the United States, prioritizing access to quality education. In 2017 the program is expanding its curriculum to include music education.

**Austin Ed Fund/AISD** – Austin Independent School District (AISD), which serves nearly 84,000 students, has prioritized arts education and committed to making all district schools “arts-rich” by 2023. That includes sequential fine arts instruction, community arts partnerships, and after-school opportunities.

**Bay Area Children’s Theatre (BACT)** – Beginning in the fall of 2017 and continuing through spring 2018, BACT will present the third year of the Disney Musicals in Schools (DMIS) program, which provides musical theater access to low-income schools in Oakland and Richmond, Calif.

**Camp Southern Ground** – The vision for the camp in Peachtree City, Ga., comes from CMA Award winner Zac Brown. Brown created a state-of-the-art facility that serves children ages eight through 13 with both typical and special needs, as well as their families, teaching them healthy life skills through a program involving nutrition, physical exercise, music and arts, technology, and embracing the outdoors.

**Charlie Worsham/Follow Your Heart Arts Program** – Worsham’s program enriches and empowers the lives of young people living in Grenada County, Miss., through music education. It provides the opportunity for young people from Worsham’s hometown to learn, play, create, and share music in collaboration with Delta State University professors and students, alongside individuals from the Grenada Public Schools system.

**Country Music Foundation, Inc./Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum** – Words & Music is the museum’s curriculum-based program that creates in-school educational opportunities that address Common Core standards in language arts and music for 9,000 Middle Tennessee students. The program also provides out-of-school programs to at-risk youth, trains more than 100 classroom teachers in the curriculum, and connects students and teachers with professional songwriters.

**Edgar County Community Foundation** – Nestled in Brett Eldredge’s hometown, a rural Illinois community removed from any major cities and the resources they offer, Edgar County and the Paris Community Unit School District have placed a high priority on the fine arts and hope to improve music instruction and give more students access to music programs in the district.

**Education Through Music (ETM)** – ETM partners with inner-city schools to provide all students with music as a core subject, to create school communities that value the arts, and to use school music programs to enhance students’ academic performance and general development. The ETM model is anticipated to serve nearly 29,000 children at 50 elementary, middle, and K-8 schools in the New York metropolitan area.

**Education Through Music Los Angeles (ETM-LA)** – ETM-LA is committed to providing and promoting the integration of music into the curricula of disadvantaged schools in order to enhance students’ academic performance and creative and general development. By working closely with each principal, ETM-LA will address the critical needs of the school through an individualized, long-term plan for sustainability, ultimately serving approximately 12,500 children at 25 partner schools.

**Girls Rock Santa Barbara (GRSB)** – GRSB is a nonprofit organization that empowers female-identified youth and fosters self-confidence, creativity, and teamwork by using music and female mentorship as tools for social change. The program brings girls from diverse backgrounds together and gives them the opportunity to expand their cultural awareness and develop life skills.

**Guitars in the Classroom (GITC)** – GITC improves musical access in public education through ongoing teacher training, mentoring, and in-classroom coaching, as well as access to musical and instrumental resources. GITC teachers learn to lead hands-on music lessons integrated

with English language arts, math, science, social studies, character development, and special education in grades K-6 by boosting student engagement, communication skills, critical thinking, and creative collaboration.

**Harmony Project** – Founded in 2001, Harmony Project now commits to more than 2,000 students for their entire childhood to ensure they receive the support necessary to graduate from high school and continue to college. Its mission promotes the healthy growth and development of children through the study, practice, and performance of music.

**Indiana Music Education Association Foundation (IMEA)** – IMEA's mission is to advance music education in Indiana by advocating for the musical interests of students, and by providing quality programs, professional development, and services. The funding includes support for six specialized workshops throughout the state for music educators working in various disciplines and geographic settings.

**John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts** – Turnaround Arts at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts leverages the power of the arts in education to accelerate transformations in the nation's most underserved public schools: chronically struggling schools at the elementary and middle school level that are ranked among the lowest five percent in their state. Through strategic arts investments, Turnaround Arts empowers whole-school transformation.

**KID smART/Any Given Child New Orleans** – KID smART — through the collective impact project Any Given Child — works to ensure that every K-8 child will receive abundant and resource-rich arts learning experiences that are connected to New Orleans culture, and to support excellence and best practices in education.

**Little Kids Rock** – Little Kids Rock transforms lives by restoring, expanding, and creating innovative music education in schools. This includes its Modern Band Teacher Professional Series. The program also provides 28 professional development hours, and provides curricular resources including teacher manuals, songbooks, chord charts, regular lesson plans, and access to an online library of materials.

**Metro Nashville Public Schools/Nashville Public Education Foundation** – A joint effort of Metro Nashville Public Schools, the Mayor's Office, and music industry and community leaders, the Music Makes Us® initiative aspires to be a national model for high-quality music education.

With a focus on music literacy and student participation, Music Makes Us is strengthening traditional school music programs while adding a contemporary curriculum that embraces new technologies and reflects the district's diverse student population.

**Monroe Harding, Inc.** – Monroe Harding, which provides a nurturing environment for Nashville children in foster care, is developing and implementing a year-round music education program for youth in its Cooperative Living program. That program, "Soundtracks," will create a much-needed opportunity for creative self-expression for at-risk teenage boys.

**Murfreesboro Symphony Orchestra** – The Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Symphony Orchestra Education Outreach Program provides events and activities that help encourage children to work hard within their school programs to make the most of their musical talents. These include master classes with professional musicians working with students and free family concerts.

**Music and the Brain** – Music and the Brain is a project of the 42nd Street Development Corporation designed to teach public school students to read and play music through classroom keyboard instruction, linking cognitive development and early music instruction. The program includes professional development training for music teachers in partner schools across all the regions they serve including New York City, New Orleans, and Ferguson, Mo.

**Music For Everyone (MFE)** – MFE is a nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to raising awareness and resources to strengthen the role music plays in schools and communities. MFE provides instruction, student community performances, access to professional performances, and summer learning opportunities for students in Lancaster County, Pa., reaching nearly 300 students per week. The organization recently doubled the number of students in its summer camp program, and after-school programs have doubled as well.

*(continued on the next page)*



photo: Terry Wyatt/Getty Images

**KELSEA BALLERINI CELEBRATES WITH THE OLIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL WIND ENSEMBLE AFTER ANNOUNCING THE CMA FOUNDATION'S \$1 MILLION GRANT SUPPORTING MUSIC EDUCATION IN METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

**MusicAlliance, Inc.** – Based in Mentor, Ohio, the goal of the MusicAlliance is to keep high-quality, affordable instrumental music education and performance programs available to students who attend schools that do not otherwise provide such programs. It is rooted in the belief that studying a musical instrument plays an essential role in the academic, emotional, and social development of all students and contributes to helping them reach their full potential.

**Nashville Symphony Association** – The Nashville Symphony is the largest performing arts nonprofit in Tennessee and a major contributor to music education in Middle Tennessee. Through concerts, classroom presentations, curriculum materials, instrument lessons, and other hands-on learning opportunities, the Symphony's free education and engagement programs reach and engage tens of thousands of adults and children in the area every year.

**National 4-H Council** – The 4-H Mission is to empower youth to reach their potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults. National 4-H Council exists to support this by increasing investment and participation in high-quality 4-H Positive Youth Development programs. The CMA Foundation is proud to support the inaugural Music Education Matters Summit in Atlanta.

**New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation** – The mission of the Foundation is to promote, preserve, perpetuate, and encourage the music, culture, and heritage of communities in Louisiana through festivals, programs, and other cultural, educational, civic, and economic activities.

**Notes for Notes** – Notes for Notes® is a nonprofit organization that designs, equips, and staffs after-school recording studios inside Boys & Girls Clubs, offering youth the opportunity to explore, create, and record music for free. Notes for Notes studios are packed with professional instruments, equipment, and full recording facilities. Beyond providing access to equipment and resources, the program educates youth about careers both on the stage and behind the scenes.

**Phoenix Conservatory of Music** – The Conservatory unleashes the power of music by providing high-quality music education and experience to students and families that is affordable and accessible. It provides community education programs and classes, after-school programs for at-risk populations, private music instruction, and a college preparatory program in affiliation with Berklee College of Music's Berklee City Music Network.

**Rainey Institute** – Rainey Institute is dedicated to positive growth for Cleveland's youth through education and participation in the performing and visual arts. El Sistema@Rainey provides 90 minutes of daily instrumental music instruction to underserved Cleveland children in grades 2-8, with a primary focus on children with the fewest resources and the greatest need.

**Rocketown of Middle Tennessee** – Founded by contemporary Christian music artist Michael W. Smith in 1994, Nashville's Rocketown serves children and teens through innovative and one-of-a-kind programs. All young people are welcome at Rocketown, and they regularly interact with those who are underserved, unsupported, and disconnected.

**Rosie's House: A Music Academy for Children** – Rosie's House in Phoenix is dedicated to the long-term success of Arizona students and utilizes music as a method of inspiration, motivation, and intervention for youth. Its free after-school music lessons for underserved youth act as a method of prevention by providing a "second home" for children who participate. The program serves more than 500 youths annually through its string, wind, brass, piano, choir, and mariachi programs.

**Seattle Theatre Group** – For the past two years, Seattle Theatre Group has focused on expanding musical theater arts education at nine Title 1 schools as an affiliate partner of the Disney Musicals in Schools program. The aim of the program is to build sustainable theater programs at under-resourced public elementary schools. Since 2014, the program has reached 300 students, giving participating schools free performance materials and professional development training.

**Segerstrom Center for the Arts** – Segerstrom Center for the Arts presents a wide variety of the most significant national and international productions of music, dance, and theater to Southern California. The Center provides four underserved Title 1 elementary schools lacking access to the arts with the Disney Musicals in Schools program: a 17-week musical theater residency that develops sustainable theater programs.

**St. Paul's Foundation's Ryan's Guitars Project** – Ryan's Guitars Project, one of the works of St. Paul's, seeks to provide quality guitars and music instruction to poor and refugee children throughout the Middle East and the world so that they may learn positive ways to express themselves regardless of circumstance, and heal themselves and others through that expression. The program is focused on students in grades 3-12.

**Tennessee Performing Arts Center (TPAC)** – TPAC's Disney Musicals in Schools is a free semester-long, after-school musical theater program that inspires students and their school communities to organize around the challenging work of mounting a 30-60-minute musical production. Guided by TPAC teaching artists, this program utilizes partnerships that combine school, professional, and community resources to create rich avenues for student learning while providing teachers with the training and tools needed to strengthen their arts programs.



**The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation** – The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation keeps music alive in schools by donating musical instruments to underfunded music programs, giving young people the many benefits of music education, helping them to be better students, and inspiring creativity and expression through playing music. In nearly 20 years, the foundation has donated to 1,412 schools nationwide.

**The People's Music School** – The school's mission is to deliver access to high-quality, tuition-free music education. Through intensive instruction and performance, students achieve excellence in music that transfers to other areas in life. They grow musically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually, and develop a foundation of responsibility, self-esteem, resilience, and purpose. TPMS delivers more than 100,000 hours of free music education to more than 600 at-risk youth across the Chicago metropolitan area.

**The Quest Center for Art & Community Development** – The Quest Center is a nonprofit music education and resource center located in Dickson, Tenn. The program serves children in grades pre-K-12, including at-risk youth; those with behavioral, social, and emotional issues; and students with developmental delays.

**The Roots of Music** – The Roots of Music empowers youth in New Orleans through music education, academic support, and mentorship while preserving and promoting the unique musical and cultural heritage of the city. The program's goal is to implement an infrastructure that will diversify the programming and increase its outreach in Orleans parish schools.

**The Young Americans** – The Young Americans in Corona, Calif., is a nonprofit performing arts and educational company with no political or religious affiliations. The organization is the oldest and largest youth music advocacy group in the world. It strives to help strengthen music education programs in schools and communities and to inspire people through music and the arts.

**VH1 Save the Music Foundation** – Launched in 2016, the foundation is offering a special Encore Grant specifically to past full instrumental grant recipients who have shown a continued commitment to music and building thriving programs. Schools that have had their original VH1 STM grant for three or more years can apply to add instruments to their growing programs.

**Virginia Tech Foundation, Inc.** – The Virginia Tech String Project, established in 2007, is the signature outreach program for the School of Music at Virginia Tech. Its missions are to provide affordable string instrument lessons to students in the community and to prepare Virginia Tech's undergraduate music students for success in the field of music education. The foundation fills a gap in the public school system curriculum by providing low-cost beginner lessons in string instruments to students in the third and fourth grades.

**W.O. Smith Music School** – Since 1984, W.O. Smith Music School has provided music instruction to low-income students in the Nashville area. The school strives to offer the best music education possible for its students, and does so through private instruction, classes, and ensemble opportunities, as well as master classes and performances by both local and national artists. Lessons are offered for 50 cents, and no student is turned away due to an inability to pay fees for any school programs.

**Youth Empowerment through Arts and Humanities (YEAH!)** – Established 14 years ago in Murfreesboro, Tenn., YEAH! provides a conservatory-style learning atmosphere in which female students are immersed for one week in the art of making music. Girls participate in instrument instruction, music industry workshops, social justice workshops, ensemble practice, and guest artist performances. Participating students form a band and learn in an ensemble setting, using popular music to build music fundamentals. Students are taught how to play instruments, work together, write original songs, and market their bands.

**Youth on Record** – Youth on Record in Denver values equity and the power of music, and is committed to ensuring that the youth it serves through music programs graduate from high schools and are ready to enter the workforce or transition to college. The organization functions as an independent contractor within Denver Public Schools, Colorado's largest district, and is focused on engaging low-income students who have lower graduation rates – sometimes less than 20 percent.

**CMAfoundation.org**



photo: Christian Bottonoff/CMA

CMA CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER SARAH TRAHERN (SECOND FROM LEFT), CMA FOUNDATION CHAIRMAN JOE GALANTE, AND CMA DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH TIFFANY KERNS PRESENT A \$100,000 CMA FOUNDATION GRANT TO W.O. SMITH MUSIC SCHOOL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JONAH RABINOWITZ (FAR LEFT) SUPPORTING THE NASHVILLE MUSIC PROGRAM.



## TUCKER BEATHARD

**M**usic runs in the family for Tucker Beathard. The son of hit songwriter Casey Beathard (“No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problems,” “Homeboy”), he first picked up a guitar in eighth grade after being inspired by rock band Blink-182.

“Music has always been my identity,” said the Nashville native and self-taught drummer. “Blink-182 is the reason I learned guitar.”

Beathard recalls playing along to the band’s music with his headphones on, trying to mimic drummer Travis Barker on his own drum set. While his six-song EP *Fight Like Hell*, released in October, embodies Country storytelling, there is also a hint of that rock side heard throughout, including on his guitar-driven debut single “Rock On,” which went Top 5 on the Country charts in 2016.

Follow-up single “Momma and Jesus” is a riff-heavy track that details the trouble Beathard got into as a kid. He said he’s thankful neither his mother nor Jesus gave up on him, adding that the song is a better representation of him as a person and an artist than “Rock On.” It also hints at the musical direction he hopes to go in, with more guitar licks and rock-based accompaniment.

His mother isn’t the young artist’s only source of family inspiration. Beathard shared that his father, who co-wrote all of the songs on *Fight Like Hell* with his son, is a “great supporter” who tells him to write from the heart. The senior Beathard also stressed that his son should act smart on the road because there are many temptations. It was welcome advice, as the young Beathard recently wrapped a college tour, something he admitted to being nervous about.

“It does come with pressure,” he said of touring on his own after stints opening for other artists. “But when you go to play and you see the people [are] all there for you, it’s a really cool experience. Hearing them sing ‘Rock On’ at the top of their lungs is one of the coolest feelings.” —Annie Reuter

[TuckerBeathard.com](http://TuckerBeathard.com)

## KANE BROWN

**L**ong before fans got to know Kane Brown’s songwriting and live performance talents, they were already familiar with his vocal skills. That’s because the 23-year-old first made a name for himself by recording and posting videos on social media in which he lent his baritone voice to well-known Country hits.

The popularity of those clips — coupled with the success of a 2015 independent EP, *Closer* — caught the attention of Sony Music Nashville, which quickly signed him. His first label project, the EP *Chapter 1*, debuted in April 2016 at No. 3 on the *Billboard* Top Country Albums chart and No. 9 on the all-genre *Billboard* 200 chart.

Throughout 2016 the Georgia native continued to build his fan base, along with his confidence as a performer, by opening dates on Florida Georgia Line’s “Dig Your Roots Tour,” then embarking as a headliner on his own “Ain’t No Stopping Us Now Tour.” In total, Brown performed more than 200 shows last year.

“It’s been crazy,” Brown said. “You don’t realize what all can happen in a year.”

In December, his RCA Nashville/Zone 4 self-titled debut full-length bowed at No. 1 on Top Country Albums and No. 10 on the *Billboard* 200. Brown co-wrote seven of the album’s tracks. The young artist really shines on the more autobiographical songs, in which he shares sometimes powerful stories about what he calls a “rough” childhood enduring abuse, racism, loss, and homelessness.

After getting his first taste of success, Brown said, “I realized that I was a role model to a lot of people ... So I [thought], ‘I’ve been through so much I might as well just write about my life,’ and people have been telling me that it’s touched them in a lot of ways.”

His base has now swelled to more than two million followers on Facebook alone, and Brown said the secret to his social media success has just been letting fans into his life. “They’ve been with me from day one and they kind of got this thing started, so they want to keep going with me [to] see where they’re going to take me.” —Phyllis Stark



photo: Joseph Lannes

[KaneBrownMusic.com](http://KaneBrownMusic.com)

## HIGH VALLEY

What's the best way to put together an album fans are sure to love? How about letting those fans choose the songs? That's exactly what High Valley did with its major label debut, *Dear Life*.

Even before landing a deal with Atlantic Records/Warner Music Nashville, the duo — comprising brothers Brad and Curtis Rempel — had what Brad called “a light bulb moment” and decided to make about 40 songs available for fans to listen to on the band's app, some just early work tapes or demos. The album ended up scoring the third highest opening week sales for a debut Country duo in 2016 following its November release, something Brad entirely attributes to those early fans he calls “the smart ones” when it came to song selection.



photo: Robby Klein

The fans overwhelmingly chose “Make You Mine” as the project's first single. That slow-burning hit, launched in March, continues to climb the airplay charts and ultimately contributed to what proved to be a breakthrough year for the brothers. Among the milestones, High Valley landed songs on the “EA Sports Madden NFL 17” soundtrack, toured with Martina McBride on her “Love Unleashed Tour,” and then booked its first European tour, a 10-date run that kicks off in early February.

Raised in a remote Canadian farming community in Alberta with no TV and access to just one radio station, the brothers honed their bluegrass-flavored sound with few outside influences beyond the handful of records their family owned and the occasional Country artist they heard in between farm reports on that AM station. That experience helped the duo learn to thrive in acoustic settings, such as playing for programmers on their radio tour. Joked Brad, “The less electricity, the better we are.” High Valley, the reigning Canadian Country Music Association Group of the Year, scored 14 Top 20 singles in Canada before signing with WMN.

The brothers now reside in Nashville with their families, living what Brad called a “super exciting, once-in-a-lifetime dream come true.” — Phyllis Stark

[HighValleyMusic.com](http://HighValleyMusic.com)



photo: Hunter Airheart

## OLIVIA LANE

Olivia Lane had a memorable first week in Nashville. She moved to Music City from Los Angeles in 2013 to follow her dream as a songwriter. Soon after her move, she saw Paul McCartney perform at the nearby Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival.

“He played for three hours, and it was really a learning experience,” Lane recalled. “I just thought, ‘Welcome to Nashville.’”

The Houston native has since introduced herself to music fans through songs like “Lightning” and “Make My Own Sunshine,” the latter her first single off her debut EP. The singer, who is managed by Dennis Kurtz, released a deluxe edition of that EP at the end of 2016, adding three songs — including a holiday tune — to the original seven. She is now writing additional songs and working with producer Ilya Toshinskiy on a full-length album she plans to release this year.

It is no surprise Lane chose a career in music. Her mother is a singer, and early on recognized her daughter's love for performing. She enrolled her daughter in acting classes, vocal and dance lessons, but music was always what Lane calls her “happy place.”

When she was 16, she persuaded her parents to let her move to Los Angeles, where she completed her last two years of high school, then took songwriting and theatre classes at the University of Southern California. “As soon as I took songwriting, I knew I had to move to Nashville because Country Music was where it was for me.”

Since then, Lane has also had the good fortune to work the road with some great teachers. She took notes when opening for Cam, Randy Houser, Kip Moore, and Wynonna. “It's like taking a master class,” she said.

And what did she learn? “They each have one thing that is special and they own it, and that's why their fans come to see them.” — Vernell Hackett

[OliviaLane.com](http://OliviaLane.com)

## SPREADING HOLIDAY CHEER

CMA staffers assist members of the United States Marine Corps collecting Toys for Tots at the Grand Ole Opry House prior to the taping of "CMA Country Christmas."



## NEW YEAR, NEW DIGS

After his Live@CMA performance, William Michael Morgan (center) joins Angela Roland, CMA Awards & Industry Relations Assistant; Brandi Simms, CMA Senior Director of Awards & Industry Relations; John Esposito, Warner Music Nashville Chairman/CEO; and Branden Oliver, CMA Manager of Awards & Industry Relations.



CMA EDU members from Nashville universities meet with Cam (center) during her Live@CMA performance, the first in the Association's new corporate headquarters.



## LEARNING TO FLY

CMA Music Teacher of Excellence Tracy Roberts (right) and her students at Dodson Elementary visit with Eric Paslay (center) during the artist's recent trip to Roberts' classroom. The students' "Angels in This Town" project was inspired by Paslay's recent single of the same name. The children performed the song and presented the singer with a pair of angel wings.



## AWARDS & HONORS

CMA Board Chairman Sally Williams (left) and former Chairman John Esposito present the Irving Waugh Award of Excellence to Board member Steve Buchanan (center). The Award honors individuals who are originators and caretakers of demonstrated ideas and actions that have dramatically broadened and improved Country Music's influence on a national or international level for the benefit of the industry as a whole.



CMA Chief Executive Officer Sarah Trahern (center) presents Board Chairman Sally Williams and former Chairman John Esposito with the crystal globe and gavel, respectively, during a Board dinner at CMA's Music Row headquarters.



CMA Board member and the musical producer of "Forever Country" Shane McAnally receives the CMA Chairman's Award from former Board Chairman John Esposito. The Chairman's Award is given annually at the discretion of the Chairman of the Board. At the presentation, Esposito praised McAnally's vision and tireless efforts on behalf of Country Music and "Forever Country."



W.O. Smith Music School student Destini Thompson presents Joe Galante with his CMA Foundation Chairman's Memento during a dinner for the CMA Board of Directors.



photos: AWARDS AND HONORS - Christian Bottorff / CMA

# GIVING FOR GATLINBURG

## Country Music Unites to Aid East Tennessee

by COURTNEY BEEBE



photo: Hunter Berry / CMA

In the wake of the devastating wildfires that roared through Sevier County, Tenn., in November, CMA Pinnacle Award recipient Kenny Chesney and CMA matched funds to donate \$250,000 each to the region, totaling a \$500,000 contribution to support fire relief efforts.

It was later announced that from the \$500,000 donation, \$250,000 would be earmarked to support 2016 CMA Willie Nelson Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Dolly Parton's My People Fund, which is providing \$1,000 each month for up to six months to Sevier County families who lost their homes in the wildfires. As he helped present the donation during the "Smoky Mountains Rise: A Benefit for the My People Fund" telethon, CMA Board member Chris Young was inspired to give as well, offering \$50,000 to make the sum \$300,000.

But support didn't stop there. CMA members, staff, and community partners came together at the CMA Member Holiday Party in December (pictured above) to collect donations for Toys for Tots. Those donations were transported to the Gatlinburg area just before the holidays. FirstBank, Live Nation, and the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp collected or contributed new, unwrapped toys to the cause, and hundreds of toys made the trip.

Remaining funds from Chesney's and CMA's joint contribution will be distributed where need is the greatest with the hopes of reaching as many affected families and individuals as possible, working with established local agencies in an attempt to identify those organizations that are providing valuable and necessary services. For more information, head to [CMAworld.com](http://CMAworld.com).



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# Tammy Wynette

.....  
welcomes a young fan onstage during the 1974 Fan Fair held at Nashville's Municipal Auditorium. Wynette appeared at the inaugural Fan Fair in 1972 and attended the event into the '90s, appearing for the last time in 1995.

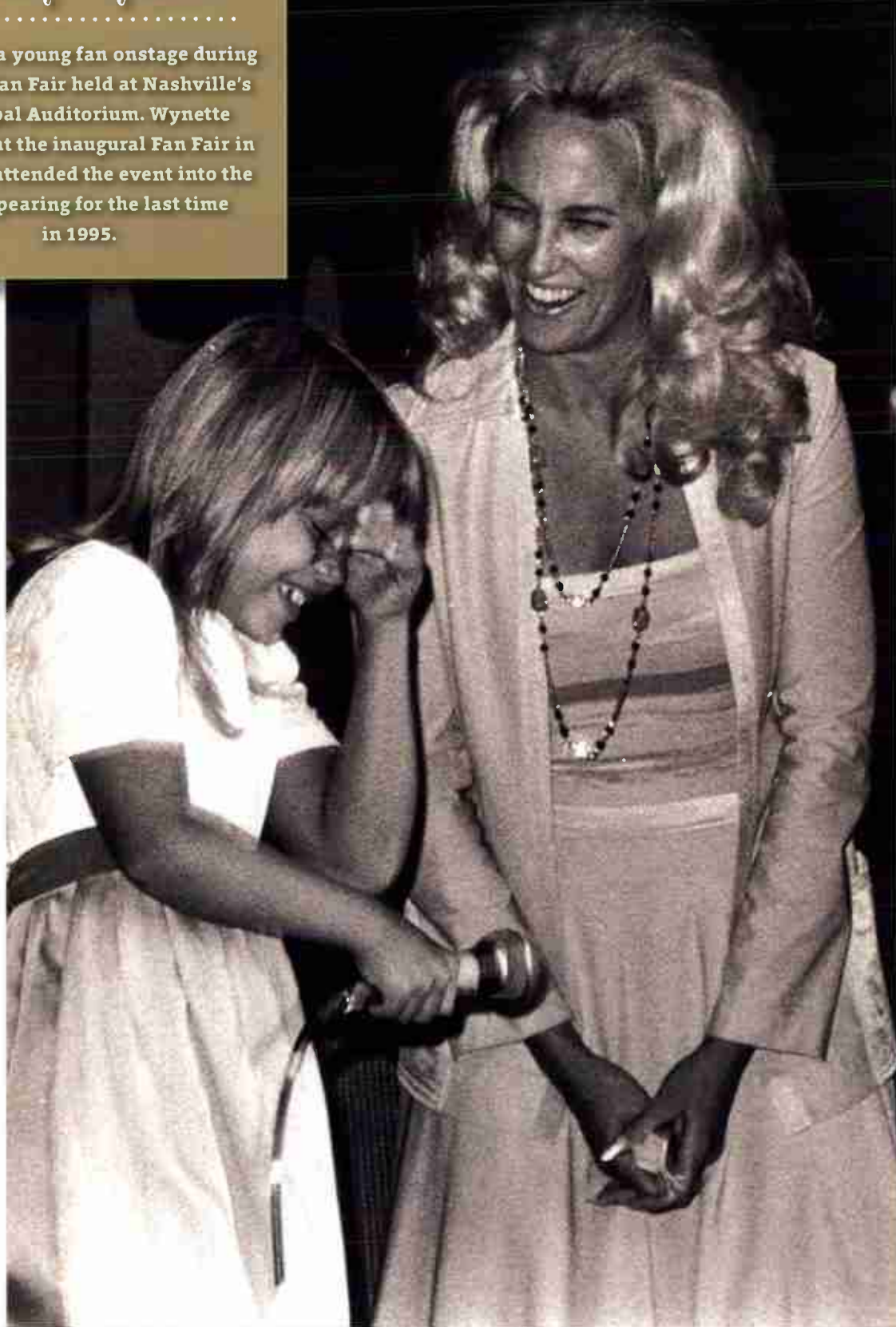


photo: CMA Archives



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Justin Moore

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