

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

VOL. 36 NO.1 • EST. 1981 • \$10

MUSICROW

TIM MCGRAW

JOHN MARKS

HITTING THE MARK IN
MUSIC CURATION

MUSICROW'S NO. 1

CHALLENGE COIN

HONORS CHAMPIONS

14 TH ANNUAL
COUNTRYBREAKOUT
AWARDS 2016

THE POWER OF A SONG
CARRIE UNDERWOOD

SUCCESS STORIES OF
SECONDARY RADIO

THE RECORDING ACADEMY

SHANNON SANDERS
AND ALICIA WARWICK

BOBBY BONES

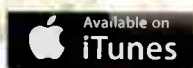
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TIM MCGRAW

ON THE COVER

Tim McGraw has sold more than 40 million records worldwide and dominated the charts with 36 No. 1 singles. He's won three Grammy Awards, 16 Academy of Country Music Awards, 14 Country Music Association Awards, 10 American Music Awards, three People's Choice Awards and numerous other honors. His iconic career achievements include being named the BDS Most Played Artist of the Decade for all music genres and having the Most Played Song of the Decade for all music genres with "Something Like That."

He is the most played country artist since his debut in 1992, with two singles spending over 10 weeks at No. 1 ("Live Like You Were Dying" and "Over and Over"). "Top of the World," the first single off his *Damn Country Music* album, is his 58th Top 10 single. His critically-acclaimed acting skills were highlighted in the award-winning films *Friday Night Lights* and *The Blind Side*, and he will next appear in Lionsgate's *The Shack* alongside Sam Worthington and Octavia Spencer. Tim most recently narrated ESPN's *Shaq and Dale* documentary and co-produced and narrated the NFL Films documentary, *Favre Returns*.

LABEL: Big Machine Records / McGraw Music

CURRENT ALBUM: *Damn Country Music*

CURRENT SINGLE: "Humble and Kind"

CURRENT VIDEO: "Humble and Kind"

CURRENT PRODUCERS: Byron Gallimore / Tim McGraw

HOMETOWN: Dehli, Louisiana

MANAGEMENT: EM.Co / Scott Siman

BOOKING: CAA

RECENT HITS: "Top of the World," "Shotgun Rider," Grammy-nominated "Diamond Rings and Old Barstools," "Meanwhile Back At Mama's" (with Faith Hill)

AWARDS: More *Billboard* No. 1 singles than any artist in history, multiple Grammys, ACMs, CMAs, AMAs, People's Choice Awards, New York Times Best Seller *Tim McGraw and the Dancehall Doctors: This Is Ours*

RIAA CERTIFICATIONS TO DATE: Over 42 million albums sold

SPECIAL TV/FILM APPEARANCES: *The Shack* (coming in 2016), *The Blind Side*, *Friday Night Lights*, *Flicka*, *Four Christmases*, *Country Strong*, *The Kingdom*, *The Timeline: Favre Returns* (Co-Producer/Narrator), *87th Academy Awards*, *Saturday Night Live*

BIRTHDAY: May 1

INTERESTING FACTS: The "All For The Hall" annual benefit for the Country Music Hall of Fame started with Tim McGraw's annual New Year's Eve concert in Nashville. One year Tim decided to make his annual show a benefit for the Hall and the tradition was passed on and continues to this day via other artists. Tim is also known for nurturing new talent. He has hosted Kenny Chesney, Taylor Swift, Luke Bryan, Big & Rich, Lady Antebellum, Dierks Bentley, The Band Perry, Jason Aldean, and Brantley Gilbert as openers for past tours.

MUSICAL INFLUENCES: Eagles, Merle Haggard, George Strait, Alabama, Conway Twitty

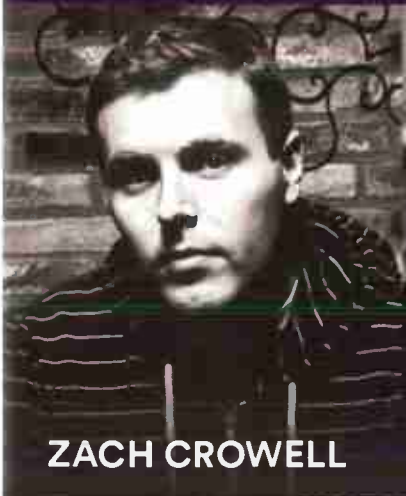
FAVORITE RECORDS: Faith Hill's *Breathe*, Eagles' *Greatest Hits*, Bruno Mars' *Unorthodox Jukebox*

ADVICE OR MOTTO YOU LIVE BY: Advice from Johnny Paycheck: "Always go hard and fast enough, so when you hit the ditch, you come out the other side."

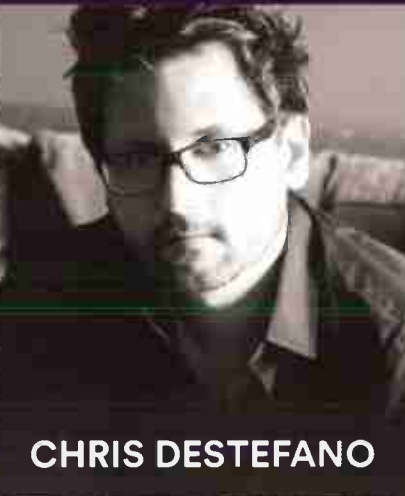
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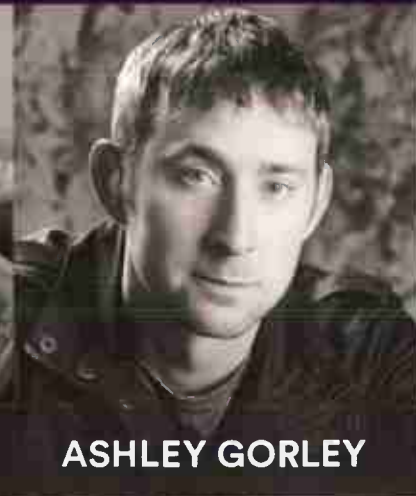
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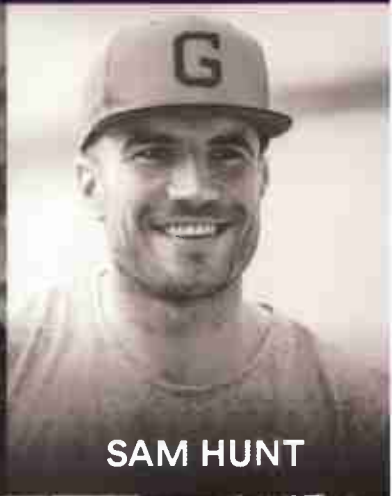
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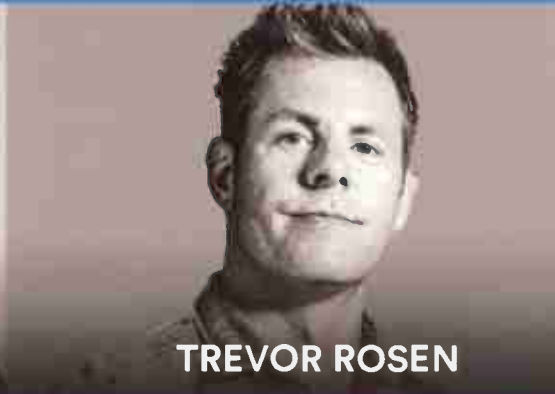


JOSH OSBORNE

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MUSICROW

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Was your first discovery of music on radio? Did radio have a significant impact on your life growing up? And did you perhaps live in a secondary market?

For me, the answer to all three questions is an overwhelming "Yes!" And it's that answer that makes me so enthusiastic this time of year to bring to our readers an issue featuring the most-played artists in 2015 on *MusicRow's* CountryBreakout Chart. With our reporting panel representing some of the best stations in secondary markets, these accolades also include record label and chart reporter honors. It's a privilege to shine the spotlight on these recipients.

Likewise, offering a print issue that is dedicated to country radio brings back memories of my childhood, listening to the radio, trying desperately to catch my favorite songs and quickly record them on cassette tapes. I also recall the exhilarating experience I felt when I was finally old enough to save some money and purchase my very own music.

Times are different now. Ownership doesn't have the same significance to new and emerging generations. Fans don't sit endlessly looking at album covers or reading the fine print in liner notes. But one thing has remained the same and that is the impact music has on our lives, particularly as we are coming of age and discovering who we are.

And many times, that wonderful experience begins with the radio.

Cheers,

Sherod Robertson, *Publisher/Owner*

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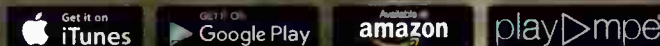
SOMEONE TO WATCH IN 2016 MUSICROW COUNTRY CHART BREAKOUT ARTIST

mary fletcher

I CALLED HIM DAD

IMPACTING RADIO NOW

Written by Mary Fletcher and Cody McCarver



"Mary Fletcher has a unique way of combining the new and traditional country sounds into melodies that will appeal to both the younger and traditional audiences of country music." - Roger McCoy / WKSF-FM-Asheville NC

"You can feel the real, honest emotion that Mary sings about in 'I Called Him Dad'. Our listeners loved it." - Ryan McCall / WGLR-Platteville, WI

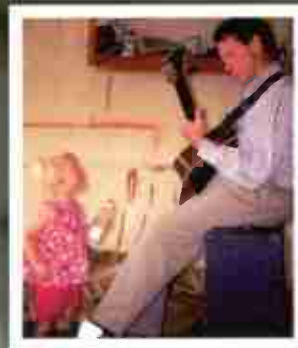
"After a fantastic debut, Mary Fletcher demonstrates why she is one of the bright shining stars on country music's horizon with her follow up single to 'The Idea of You' with 'I Called Him Dad'. This is what country music is all about...a well written, poignant song that is sung beautifully."

- Mike Thomas / KWRE-KFAV-Warren, MO

"I guess I'm pretty lucky. My Dad gave me the greatest gift I will ever know here on Earth - MUSIC. He was my first and most profound musical influence. This gift would shape my very life, from career path, to an outlet for my creativity. At its best, it carries me to places I've never thought I'd see and when I'm at my lowest, it serves as a sort of therapy for my soul.

A little over 2 years ago, my Dad passed away from alcoholism. I was heartbroken and angry. I wasn't sure what to do with these feelings, so I pulled out my guitar. The melody and the tears poured out and the result was a song I wasn't sure I would ever share.

One night in Nashville, I played this song at a songwriters round and it was astonishing how many people came to me afterwards and said, "You know what? Me too." That's when I realized that this song that I wrote to help me heal could help others as well."



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ARTIST PUBLICITY CONTACT
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SUCCESS STORIES OF SECONDARY RADIO

By Troy Stephenson

Secondary radio stations may have limited budgets, but that hasn't stopped them from throwing huge events, raising thousands of dollars for charity, or making a major impact in their communities. *MusicRow* invited reporters from five successful CountryBreakout chart stations to share their winning formulas.

***MusicRow:* What are some of your station's success stories that you are most proud of?**

Greg Almond, WGGC/Bowling Green, Kentucky: One of the biggest success stories we had this year was having Kelsea Ballerini perform privately in our live music lounge for a group of listeners. This was huge for us as far as buzz locally and it was something our biggest competitor did not have.



GREG ALMOND

We have done a lot with the Boys and Girls Club this year, including our Santa's Workshop program and our radiothon to benefit Dolly Parton's Imagination Library where we actually beat our goal in number of kids sponsored.

Gabe Buch, WQPC/Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin: We do a lot of promotions for a secondary radio station with no budget. My assistant Laurie Wild has really taken the promotions by the horns, and sells the heck out of them. Until I got here in 2010, there were no promotions on the air. The radio station only sold sports and regular inventory. Now, we are the hosting station of a major country music festival, Country on the River.

The station also decided to invite listeners to our company Christmas party. We get 15 area businesses to come on board with a promotion buy, and donate Christmas presents for 15 listeners to get qualified to win, including some large prizes like rocker/recliners and grills. I also get labels to pitch in with some awesome artist items. We basically give away everything I accumulated for prizes for that year. We also get a band, and it's a great time for the listeners, and for the 15 guaranteed present winners.

We also do a holiday food drive that accepts non-perishable food items and cash that we distribute to the four main county food banks we cover in our listening area. Our goal is 943 pounds, but we exceed that by hundreds or thousands of pounds. Maybe we should up it to 9,430 pounds?

Don Jarrett, KTHK/Idaho Falls, Idaho: One of the biggest successes of 2015 is something we are so proud to do every year, our annual Star Guitar Charity Auction! This year we had Two Way Crossing perform and auctioned off 12 guitars signed by country artists and raised \$6,000 to benefit local charities! This is why we beg all the labels for backstage passes, and for our guitars to get signed!

Jess Jennings, WUBB/Savannah, Georgia: WUBB is blessed to have a fantastic promotions team! Days after the one-in-1000-year flood that devastated South Carolina, we launched Operation: Clean Up Columbia. In less than a week, listeners donated a semi-truck full of cleaning supplies, Shop-Vacs, and generators. We transported them to Columbia and hand-delivered the much-needed supplies.



JESS JENNINGS

Our own Tim Leary and the Morning Showgram team raised over \$16,000 for the 3rd Annual Tats For Tatas fundraiser benefiting the Nancy N. & J.C. Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion at St. Joseph's/Candler Hospital in Savannah.

Toby Tucker, WDZQ/Decatur, Illinois: Each year our first big event is the annual St. Jude Radiothon that we do in partnership with our sister station WFMB/Springfield. This year we combined to raise \$161,629.

Our annual Missing Q promotion has become one of the biggest events of the year each spring, not just for our station, but also for the community. We hide a "Q" like the one in our logo somewhere in our listening area and the first one to find it wins \$5,000. You

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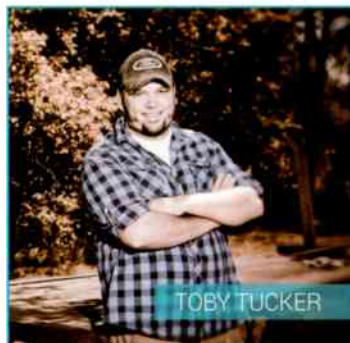
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“We don’t mind taking a chance on a song that we feel is great even if it isn’t from a core artist or major label.”

know a promotion is a success when over 200 people are lined up at a gas station/convenience store to get the next clue. And even more impressive is the fact that the cops often get called, due to people concerned over why so many people are invading otherwise less busy locations.

In October we held our 8th Annual Feed The Farmers events at local grain elevators during harvest season. At each stop we served a hot sandwich lunch to farmers and farm hands that come through while supplies last. Each location ran out of food as all 95 sack lunches were picked up in a hurry.

What do you see as the most positive things that secondary radio has over major markets? What can you do that most major stations cannot do?



TOBY TUCKER

Almond: The biggest advantage for us is being able to stand out (in the good way) from some of the other stations. In our market you can hear up to 12 different country stations, so to have CountryBreakout artists as part of our playlist gives us the upper hand in our brand identity. With us being an hour north of Nashville, we also get accessibility to those artists, which is an even bigger advantage. I also think that we can try new things and let them grow organically, instead of having a short time to produce a result.

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(En Español)

Buch: I’m not micromanaged here. I’ve been in the major radio market scene. I’ve dealt with consultants, and



GABE BUCH

was forced to play a music test from Boston to determine my playlist in Madison. If the PD has a good sense of what the station should sound like – such as sounding modern, having decent personalities, and great production – I don’t believe you need any of those corporate beliefs. I get to do my thing, do it

successfully, and have a lot of fun along the way.

I also like to hear the newer acts that are up and coming. There is so much talent out there, and it deserves to be heard. A playlist shouldn’t be limited to a song that hits Top 30. How’s a song supposed to become Top 30 if you don’t play it? Somebody has to play it. Why not support a song from the beginning if you really believe in it? I can do that in secondary radio.



DON JARRETT

Even though I have a small staff here, I rarely find myself shooting down ideas that promotions or a sales person brings to the table. We can do lots of things. We don’t have to be limited because a rating book or music test says it’s a bad idea. I understand why music tests, and ratings are important, but in the secondary markets, we get the freedom to do more.

Jarrett: As a *MusicRow* reporter we talk to many indie labels and secondary promoters and believe this keeps our ears on the freshest and hottest new talent and music coming out of Nashville! It has been a pleasure to talk music with these people and to build great relationships with them to help their artists and our station.

Jennings: One of the great things about working for Alpha Media is pride in being live and local. Especially in secondary markets, radio stations help make up the fabric of the community. Being seen and heard is so important!

For example, we recently launched “Bob’s Studio B.” Usually artists on radio tours perform in the conference room for staff, but we’ve teamed up with a local venue that allows us to host about 50 listeners for lunch and an exclusive, intimate, acoustic show. This is a win, win, win. Listeners get the opportunity to say, “I saw them when,” the artist gets to perform for an audience, and the PD/MD gets to gauge listener reaction.

Tucker: I feel that most secondary markets are far more in touch with the communities they serve on a daily basis. So

many secondary market stations have the opportunities to interact with fans on a much more personal basis, week in and week out. The fans are the heart and soul of what we do. Without them we don't exist and sure don't have the opportunity to give back in the ways that we do.

We do so much more than many major market stations can because we aren't as restricted by corporate ideals or playlists. I love getting messages from people or talking to new listeners and hearing their compliments on our wide-ranging playlist. We don't mind taking a chance on a song that we feel is great even if it isn't from a core artist or major label. Many major markets don't have those luxuries.

When it comes to creating your budget for the station, what do you consider the most important things to focus on?

Almond: For me the budget in terms of money is not as important as budget in terms of time, although the money plays a huge factor. But I have found that if you budget your time correctly, the dollars and cents (or lack of in most cases) don't seem to handcuff you as much. I want my air staff to always be thinking in terms of "What's the payoff?" Oftentimes the effort being put into a task isn't worth the ultimate result. That can be said for your sales department as well as marketing and promotions.

Buch: I don't have a budget. We do as much as we can with little spending money. Sometimes I wish that I had a budget, and sometimes I am glad we can do bigger things. We are family-owned and the owners are an hour away, and they stay out of our way really. They trust us that if we need to spend money on something, it better make us money, and since I got here, we have made them money. We just send them the receipt. And if they ask what that was for, we tell them it made us money.

Tucker: This may blow some minds, but we don't operate with any promotional budget. Any money we spend will come out of sold sponsorships that are connected directly to the event or promotion. In 2012 we gave away over \$1,000,000 in prizes and spent \$0 to acquire those prizes. Told ya, mind blown. ❖

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- "MAKE ME WANNA" • THOMAS RHETT
- "AIN'T WORTH THE WHISKEY" • COLE SWINDELL
- "I DON'T DANCE" • LEE BRICE
- "I'M COMIN' OVER" • CHRIS YOUNG
- "KISS YOU IN THE MORNING" • MICHAEL RAY
- "HELL OF A NIGHT" • DUSTIN LYNCH
- "WE WENT" • RANDY HOUSER
- "BEAUTIFUL DRUG" • ZAC BROWN BAND
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BREAKING BONES

With Controversy Behind Him, Bobby Bones Gets Comfortable In Country Music

By Eric T. Parker

In 2013, Bobby Bones left Austin, Texas, for Nashville to expand his brand on and off radio. The move paid off: In addition to his on-air and on-stage endeavors, Bones' time is now spent on a TV deal with ABC, serving as president of a production company he shares with iHeart, and charitable efforts like the merchandise company he started for visually-challenged children, called Can't See Apparel.

On a Thursday night before his first live performance of 2016, Bones sat down with *MusicRow* inside The BIG 98/WSIX studios in Nashville, where his show is broadcast. All the while a tour bus waited outside to take his band, Bobby Bones & The Raging Idiots, to Oklahoma for a concert the following evening.

"I'll be working from a studio in Tulsa in the morning," explained Bones of his Monday-Friday radio schedule, which requires a wake-up call of 3 a.m. "We'll break off occasionally but I've been writing a book and writing and recording two albums, so it's been hard to get away on weekdays."

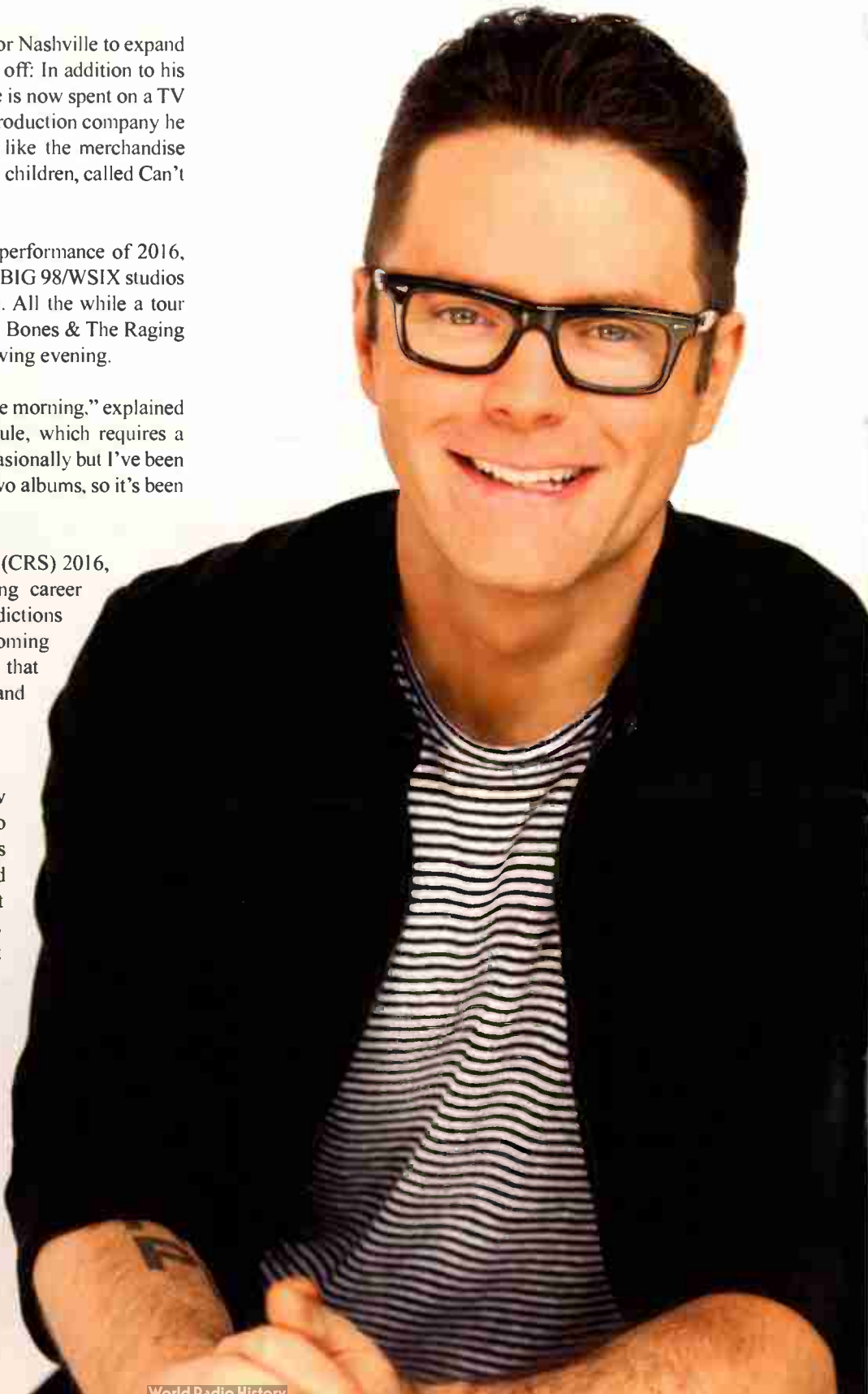
Looking ahead to Country Radio Seminar (CRS) 2016, Bones candidly discusses his broadcasting career that keeps him working so hard, his predictions for country's next superstars, and his upcoming memoir, a dramatic and personal story that he describes as "funny, biographical and motivational."

On moving to country music

They were looking to put our show somewhere and asked if we wanted to go to Major City A or Major City B. There was no syndicated national country show and [iHeartCountry's] Rod Phillips and [iHeart Chairman CEO] Bob Pittman created this job because I wanted to do it and they felt there was a need.

It was a nice swing to come to the country genre where everybody's cool. This is where I was supposed to be, and it's taken me a couple years to figure that out. But I feel comfortable in my own skin for the first time ever in my career.

The first job I applied for was at a country station and I didn't get it. So I went to Top 40. I eventually built my own syndication company through iHeart doing a morning show for 30 cities. I



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REVIVERRECORDS  SONY  



Pictured (L - R): Bobby Bones and Producer Eddie of The Raging Idiots

would have Dierks Bentley, Eli Young Band, or Willie Nelson come play at this Top 40 station. That was the trouble I would get in then—being too country. Now I get questioned why I’m playing Tupac on a country station. I don’t know if I have a ‘place,’ but I’m really comfortable here.

On his demographic

If you’re looking at numbers, data-wise, we’re an 18-49 show. We have four million listeners on the regular radio. But we probably have four to five million who listen on their phones. For the genre, I think you’re seeing country music get younger—even over the past five years, especially the past three years.

Because what you have are artists who grew up exposed to lots of music. In the past, for country music artists that lived in the South—that’s what they listened to and that’s all they had. Now we grow up with YouTube and iHeartRadio, so even though you grow up in Arkansas like I did and you’re a country guy, you still have these influences outside of that. So there’s a larger appeal for the younger demographic to get into country.

On music discovery

I didn’t feel like my job was to introduce new music, because I wanted to be the goofy/funny guy to tell stories. But what I found out is the listeners and I are sort of on the same page. So I’ve been able to break a lot of artists, not because I’m smart but because

“I think I’m getting a little more mature. I don’t have enemies anymore.”

I’m passionate. Kelsea Ballerini had never been heard of. Or Chris Janson, he wasn’t on a label. Or Cam. Even Little Big Town’s “Girl Crush.” I got in trouble playing it months before it hit.

That’s not me doing anything but playing music I like. These people are stars now because of radio. To me, radio is changing, but it’s thriving right now. It’s funny that sometimes people have to be reminded about the power of radio.

On 2016 predictions

Maren Morris is going to blow up. 2016 is the year of the female and the year of getting back to a more authentic sound. Lindsay Ell. Cam is going to be the next big female superstar. I shouldn’t even say female—superstar! Whether or not

they have uterus or ding-dongs it doesn’t matter, they’re just awesome. Chris Stapleton did it last year. We had Chris on the show for a year before anyone knew who he was. He is so good!

I think you’re seeing now with music, if it sounds like a human, people are starting to attach to it. There for a few years, the music cycle wasn’t that good. It was kind of cheesy. We’re getting out of that now.

On feuds, fines and foes

When I came into this, I came in, in a bad way. I was a bull in a china shop. I made a lot of mistakes, going in certain directions, that I regret. My favorite artist in the whole world in country music

CountryBreakout Independent Artist of the Year

Erica Nicole
ERICA NICOLE

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recognition and
to country radio
and my entire
promotions team!"*

-Erica Nicole



is Kacey Musgraves. There was a time we got into a huge fight. But she's great, I have no beefs with anybody anymore. I think I'm getting a little more mature. I don't have enemies anymore.

I also try to stay out of the industry. I don't do label stuff because I don't want to get inside. If I'm friends with everybody, I can't have an opinion or be objective.

There are some artists who are really great to me. Dierks Bentley and Eric Paslay have privately given advice and support. It's nice to have a little group because I'm a big baby. Overall it's just now starting to feel good. I don't feel awkward all the time. Just 90 percent of the time.

Rod Phillips is my No. 1 supporter radio-wise. Our CEO Bob Pittman was the same. They said, "You're gonna screw up a lot, but we trust you not to screw up too bad." I've been in some big trouble here and they have hung with me. I got fined \$1 million



Pictured (L - R): Lunchbox, Rod Phillips (iHeartCountry), Jana Kramer, Bobby Bones, Amy, Michael Caussin

for being an idiot! [The FCC fined iHeartCommunications \$1 million after *The Bobby Bones Show* transmitted emergency alerts during a 2014 broadcast.] So I'm really appreciative and thankful to those guys.

I have no further comment [on the fine]. Here's why: They do this thing where lawyers ask you a bunch of questions, and I'd be happy to tell you every detail but if I mess up on one detail, and they had two different stories, I'd probably get fined \$10 million more. So let me say it wasn't pretty, I'm very sorry, and I love America.

On radio co-hosts and 'keeping it in the family'

All the people on my show are not radio people. We shouldn't be doing a show. I met Amy, my best friend and co-host, at Culver's restaurant. I was eating alone during an oil change and she gave me some coupons. A year later I hired her to be a co-host. She was in granite sales. But I thought she was really interesting and the best radio person I've ever heard—and she's terrible at radio. That what makes her good. She doesn't have a DJ voice or a filter. She's very human.

I met Lunchbox at a bar. He was a delivery driver for Jason's Deli. I had asked him to come do an arm-wrestling match with some girls on the show coming in to promote a rugby event. He lost horribly but still talked all this trash. We stayed friends and a year later I was able to hire him. Eddie has been my producer for 10 years and now he's a Raging Idiot. Everyone else was an intern of mine.

I try to keep it all in the family, mostly because I'm scared to trust anybody, which is also why I don't have a girlfriend. But I think that's why people like us, because we're humans and we're not good DJs. We just try to be as real as possible. As long as you consistently be human, people respect you. Some people may not like me, but I hope they respect me.

On compiling his life lessons and sense of humor into a memoir

I got beat up a lot, so [jokes] came as a defense mechanism. My grandma was funny. But I don't know my dad, and my mom died early. You learn to do something [in a small town], either to fight, sell drugs, work at the mill, or get an education and leave. I took the last one. I had to be funny because I couldn't fight—jokes were my fists.

There's no reason I should write a memoir. I told [Dey Street Books/HarperCollins] that. I wanted to do a kids book about not fitting in because I did not fit in as a kid. I began to tell my story to them about my dad, and Mom was a substance-abuser who died in her 40s of an overdose.

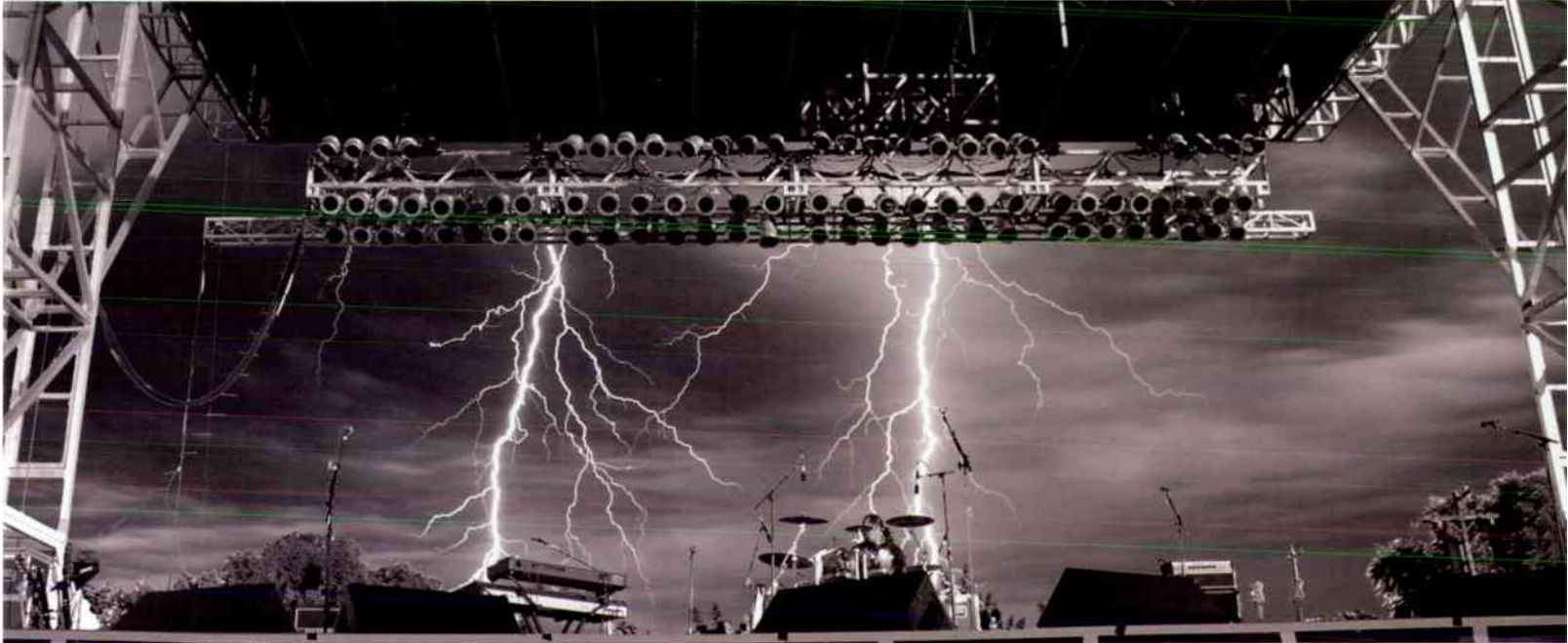
They asked me to come back the next day and they said, "You should write a book about your life because a lot of people in a lot of ways can relate. Maybe not exactly, but they will relate." So it's not about the cool things I've done, but it will be funny, biographical and motivational in the sense that if I can get through it, you can too.

On the charity efforts he supports

I have a platform that allows me to talk to a lot of people. It allows me to be a human to a lot of humans. That's the only thing I'm kind of good at—being a real person. I'm most proud of being able to help St. Jude [Children's Research Hospital]. We've been able to raise millions of dollars for them. That was a place I never understood until I went and visited. It was such a happy place when people were going through such hard times.

Supporting that and animals is my thing. I'm currently dating my dog. We always found local no-kill animal shelters or hospitals to donate to on the road with the Raging Idiots. I also work with The Burlsworth Foundation for kids that can't see and can't afford eyewear. I have a merch company to support providing eye care and eye exams for kids who can't see. My right eye doesn't work and I couldn't afford glasses growing up. So we work with them to make sure kids don't fall behind early.

I'm most proud of being able to be friends with people and help animals be adopted. I focus less on the success of what we've been able to do, but use the momentum to keep doing it. Helping people is the coolest thing about this job. ❖



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RADIO ROUNDTABLE:

Carrie Underwood, Arista Nashville,
and the Power of a Song

Pictured (L-R): Lesly Simon, Carrie Underwood, Andy Elliott and Lauren Thomas

Carrie Underwood, along with the Arista Nashville team, pulled out all the promotional stops for the superstar's fifth studio album, *Storyteller*. They celebrated the project's release with an elaborate party staged at an elegant Nashville restaurant, with each room outfitted to reflect a song from the album. On social media, fans got an early listen to each "chapter," or song on *Storyteller*, via coordinated audio snippets.

An array of promotional performances further trumpeted the new release. She appeared on *Today*, *Ellen*, CMT's *Instant Jam*, *Project Runway*, and *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, and graced the covers of *Cosmopolitan*, *People*, *Shape*, *Country Weekly*, and *Parade*. She also celebrated her eighth year as CMA Awards co-host and her third season as the voice of *Sunday Night Football*, all the while maintaining her incredibly consistent track record at country radio.

"You have to make a splash in today's world," says Underwood. "You can't just have great music and expect it to just be super well-received. It takes a big team to make that happen."

Underwood and company launched the album with the working person's anthem "Smoke Break," followed by the tender second single, "Heartbeat." Since the launch of her career just over 10 years ago, Underwood has earned 13 No. 1 *Billboard* country singles (and is a co-writer on eight of them). She has sold more

than 58 million albums worldwide and garnered seven Grammy awards. She is nominated this year in the Best Country Solo Performance category for "Little Toy Guns."

MusicRow sat down with Underwood and members of the Arista Nashville promotion team, including Lesly Simon (VP, Promotion), Andy Elliott (National Promotion Director) and Lauren Thomas (Regional Promotion Manager), to discuss the strategy behind the release of "Smoke Break," as well as the role country radio has played in Underwood's career thus far.

MusicRow: How did you introduce *Storyteller's* first single, "Smoke Break," to radio?

Simon: I think, especially on a first single, we are strategic and aware of every single thing that we do. It goes out to everybody at the exact same time. Nobody gets it beforehand because it is so in-demand and she is so in-demand on a first single. You have to make sure everything is perfectly fair across the board. On "Smoke Break" especially, we had a week when we wanted to get out and play it for as many people as possible.

So we gave the whole team these iPod Shuffles—we actually pulled those out from the old days. We had that song only on the iPod Shuffle and we went to as many stations as we could get to. Some of us were in three or four cities in a day. We would

go and spend 15-20 minutes with a station and play the song. The point was to get their commitment because we wanted to have a really, really big add day and it all paid off.

Elliott: It was really fun; it was like we were all on an undercover mission.

MR: In what other ways is the setup for a Carrie Underwood single different from the setup for other artists' singles?

Simon: I would say that every single from every artist is different. By the second single, we already have an album in the marketplace. People have already listened, and as soon we've finished the first single, once radio figures out what the second single is, some stations will just go ahead and start playing it. We had a station start playing "Heartbeat" while we were still working "Smoke Break." They were playing it 50 times a week. You don't typically have that on all artists.

MR: It feels like you have approached *Storyteller* with an extra intensity, from the marketing to the radio push. Talk about the setup around this album.

Simon: Each week we would sit in this meeting with the entire company, not just people who are on Team Carrie, and go through all the details of the marketing plan. Randy [Goodman, Sony Music Nashville Chairman and CEO] would ask people that didn't necessarily work on Carrie's project all the time, "Is there something we are missing? What do you guys think?" It was cool having an inside, yet also outside, perspective.

Underwood: Each album has its own time in the music industry that it lives in. I do things a little bit differently. I wait just a little bit longer between albums because I want them to be the best they can possibly be and then go out on the road and live in one album space. Then take a minute, and remember what it's like to be a real person (laughs) staying in one place, and being married and just kind of live a life for a second and then start writing again. So I feel like every album has been a little different.

MR: Carrie, what do you remember about meeting with radio executives early in your career? What do you recall about radio's response to you as a newcomer at that time?

Underwood: It was a big ol' whirlwind for sure. I was just learning as much as I could about everything. That was important to

"You can't have all the other stuff without radio. They play an undeniable role."

- Carrie Underwood

everybody that I get to meet everyone that was playing my song, without a history. It was important that I got to meet the faces and shake the hands. I felt really well-received and I think people were excited that someone went on a traditionally pop TV show [*American Idol*] and was singing as many country music songs as they would allow me.

Simon: (to Underwood) I think your first introduction to radio was at [2005 CMA Awards radio] remotes. I've never seen another artist whose first real introduction, face to face, to radio programmers was walking into a remote room. I don't think you'd had anything like that on *Idol*. Had you had anything like that before?

Underwood: We'd done a lot of press stuff with a lot of people in a small space, but not with radio people. It would have been more like TV and print.

Simon: Because the CMA Awards were in New York

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City that year, it was such a big deal. Unlike most new artists, we then used her tour to keep building on those connections. It's cool to look back on it because no one else has done it that way.

MR: How has the approach and reasoning behind picking radio singles changed as Carrie's career has grown?

Simon: She gives us great material, which gives us options. We pick the ones we feel will really jump off of radio, and the ones we feel her fans will connect to. Then you look at timing, marketing opportunities, what radio is asking for. There are so many things that come into play. It's always been collaborative and a conversation.

Underwood: I feel like I'm the kind of artist as well that wants feedback. I know what I like, and I know the kind of music I want to make, but I want to know what other people think too, because it's not going to just be me out there buying my album. There are a lot of people involved, buying or playing...I want opinions.

MR: In 2014, *Greatest Hits: Decade #1* was released, and featured "Something in the Water" and "Little Toy Guns." With a greatest hits project, the number of slots available for new songs is limited. How did you decide on those songs for that album?

Simon: We listened to two or three things, but we all heard "Something in the Water." It was like, "Wow!" when we heard that. Same with "Little Toy Guns." Those were the two Carrie wanted too. There are little gifts you get when you are a promotion person. When you get one of those, you can't wait to get it out there, and that was definitely one of those.

Thomas: There were too many hits! (laughs) Two new songs were all that would fit. That's the bottom line.

MR: Carrie, your career is multi-faceted now, with the CMA hosting job, fitness apparel line, acting roles and more. How important is country radio at this stage of your career?

Underwood: You can't have all the other stuff without radio. They play an undeniable role. You can make all the albums you want to make and all the music you want, but if nobody hears it, does it matter? They play such a huge part in my everything. My entire career, not just in music.

MR: Beyond just the chart numbers, which singles do you consider to be Carrie's greatest successes, and why?

Elliott: My most memorable was "Good Girl" because it was my very first No. 1 that I worked as a promotion person. That chart is taped up on my office and will forever be, and it will always be my first No. 1.

Simon: "Something in the Water." There were a lot of reasons why that would be a hard song because "Amazing Grace" is on the end of it, but we knew it would connect with people on a personal level. When you see something that impacts people's lives, that's the whole reason we do this. It spent seven weeks at No.1 on the Hot Country Songs chart.

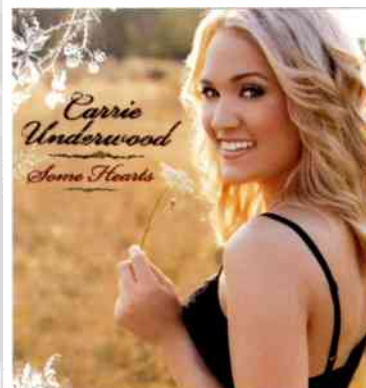
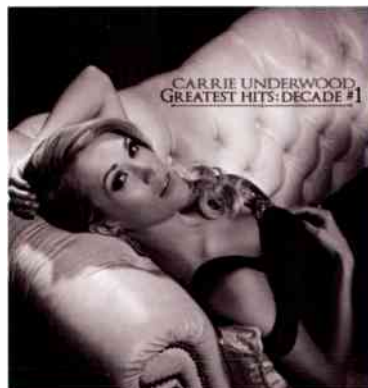
Thomas: And the awards that came with it...

Elliott: (laughs) A Grammy.

Underwood: (laughs) Just drop that Grammy thing.

Thomas: (laughs) Just throwing that out there!

Underwood: That's where following your gut can really pay off. You don't really know what's going to happen. I remember people saying, "'Jesus, Take the Wheel,' that was such a risky first single." And I'm completely naïve as to why that would be risky, and the same goes for "Something in the Water." It's a powerful song and music is supposed to make you feel something.



If everybody had overthought everything, it would have ended up on a shelf somewhere and what a shame that would have been. You want radio to love it, fans to buy it, you want all those things to happen, but sometimes you have to say, "This could be bigger than all of that," and you have to follow your heart.

Thomas: I remember "See You Again" came out right around the time Lindsay Walleman passed away. She was a young radio rep who worked at Warner [Music Nashville] who died of cancer, and the radio community was drawn to that song because of the timing. I remember that very vividly.

MR: The Storyteller Tour launches this month. How do you stay connected to radio while you are on tour?

Underwood: You go to their world and you get to say hi, or visit a morning show while in that city. I love it when people bring their families to the show. It's great when you get to meet their kids and their spouses.

Simon: And you know they are really excited when they bring their kids and spouses to a show, or when they ask for meet and greet passes for their kids. When they bring their families...

Underwood: They are going to stay for the show.

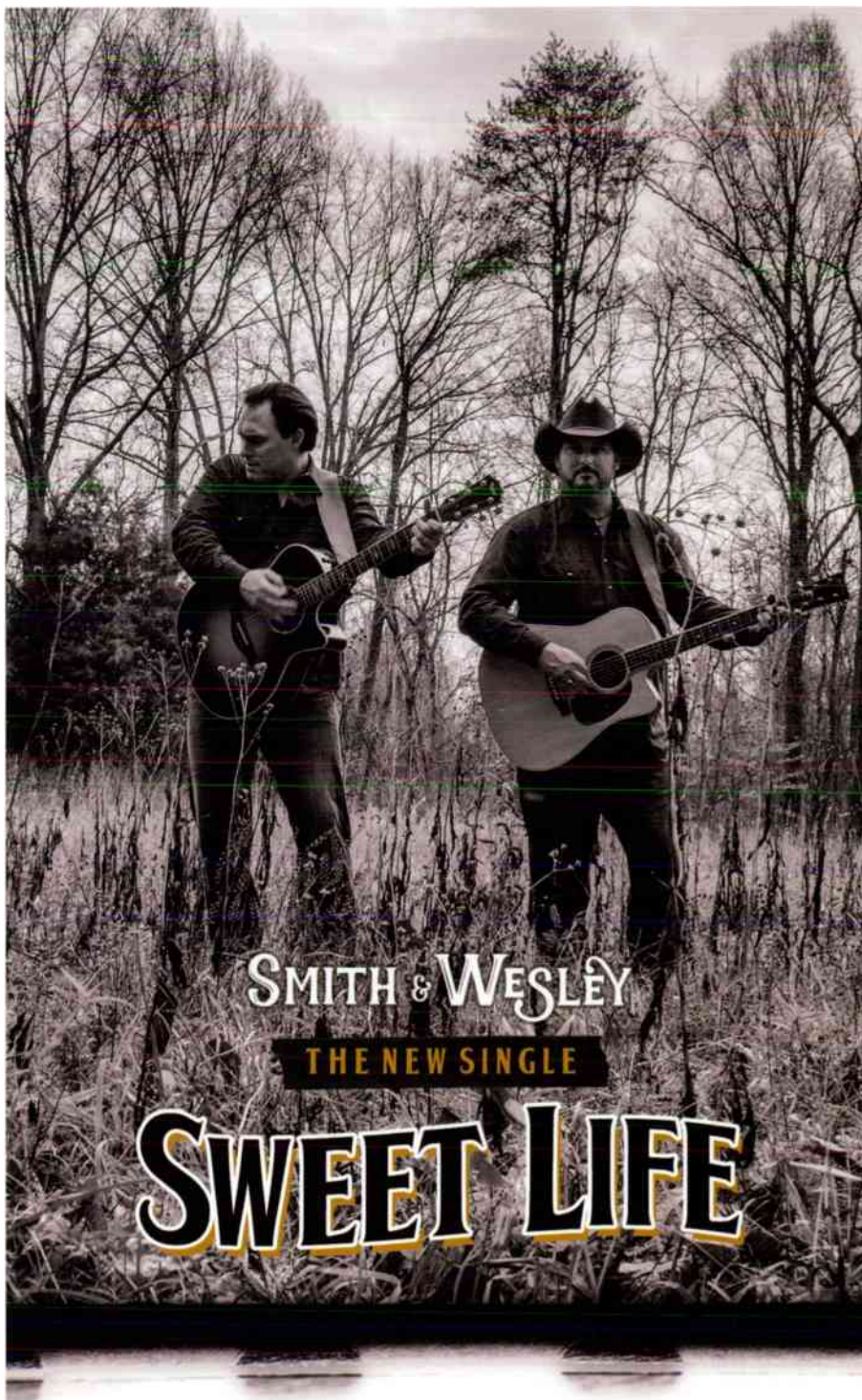
Elliott: It was a huge, high percentage of [program directors] that saw the tornado at the end of the Blown Away Tour.


Simon: It's like a night out. When someone's kids want to go, that speaks volumes.

Thomas: (to Underwood) That speaks to you as an artist. The country fan base is based on faith and family and that's exactly who you are. That's why country radio has continued to be incredibly supportive.

MR: Any last comments?

Underwood: I would like to say a big thank you. This industry as a whole has been so good to me. Everyone I get to work with, from radio, to the fans, and everyone in between has been so good to me. I'm grateful and thankful, and I know I'm very blessed. So, here's to more of that. ❖

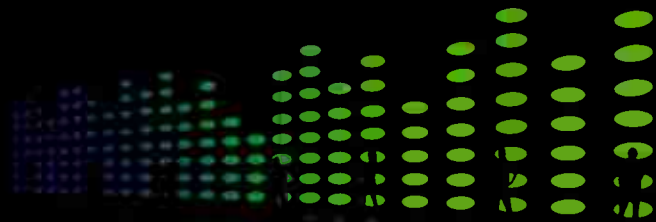



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For the 14th annual CountryBreakout Awards, *MusicRow* is proud to recognize Jason Aldean, Kelsea Ballerini, Florida Georgia Line, Erica Nicole and Capitol Records Nashville for their achievements in 2015, as well as KRRV-FM's Melissa Frost as Reporter of the Year and Ashley Gorley, Shane McAnally and Josh Osborne in a tie for Songwriter of the Year.

Awards for Male, Female, and Group/Duo of the Year go to the artists who had the most total spins on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart in 2015. Label of the Year is awarded to the imprint, not label group, with the most overall spins.

Breakout Artist of the Year is awarded to the new artist whose first single or album was released in 2015 and picked up the greatest number of overall spins on the CountryBreakout chart. Independent Artist of the Year is also based on number of spins on the chart, as well as factors such as label size, distribution model, and promotion staff.

The CountryBreakout Reporter of the Year award is an editorial decision and is given to a radio panelist who exemplifies the spirit of the chart. The honor for Songwriter of the Year is given to the writer who had the most No. 1 singles on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart.

Please join us in congratulating this year's winners, each spotlighted in the pages ahead.



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KELSEA BALLERINI
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FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
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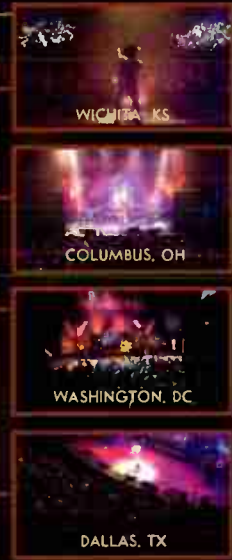
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MALE

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

JASON ALDEAN

By Sarah Skates

More than a decade into his career, Jason Aldean continues to serve up hit after hit. Last year he earned more airplay on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart than any other male artist, adding three No. 1 singles to his remarkable—and growing—tally of 17 chart-toppers. His 2015 hits “Just Gettin’ Started,” “Tonight Looks Good On You,” and “Gonna Know We Were Here” are from his current album, *Old Boots, New Dirt*, which has been certified platinum—a rare feat in today’s world of music streaming and digital single sales.

BBR Music Group Sr. VP of Promotion Carson James points out a few of the many reasons for the success of the label’s flagship star. “Jason touches the nerve of what people think about on a daily basis,” says James. “It’s relatable subjects done in a great melodic fashion, with rock sensibilities to keep the energy.”

BBR focuses on building awareness of its songs and artists in markets of all sizes. “Smaller markets are vitally important from a sales and touring aspect,” continues James, adding that music heard on small-town radio often translates to album purchases at a local brick-and-mortar store. He says many consumers still love to hold a physical copy of an album, enjoy the artwork, and read the liner notes. BBR tapped James Wesley to help lead promotion efforts for secondary market radio, reaching towns much like the one where Aldean grew up.

“Jason is from a rural background outside Macon, Georgia,” continues Carson James. “Male and female fans both like him. Males for the reason that he is a big star onstage, and he comes across as a good guy—the kind of guy you want to sit down and have a beer with. He really is as nice as he seems in interviews. That’s how he acts when he’s not on stage too. I’ve been working with him over seven years, and while his success has gone from playing large clubs to stadiums, he’s still the same guy. That’s one of the most appealing factors: he’s every man, every day.”



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ARTIST OF THE YEAR

KELSEA BALLERINI

By Sarah Skates

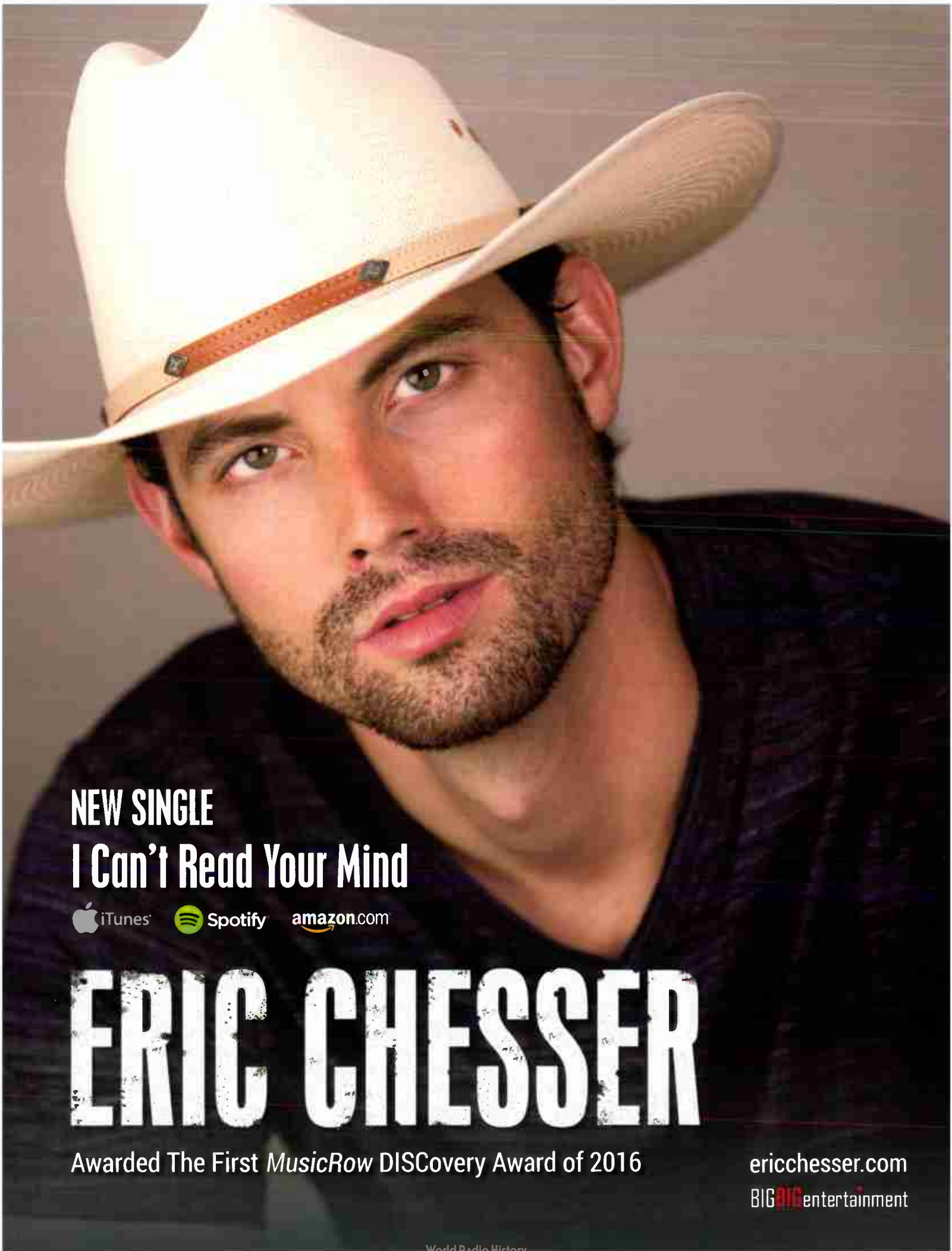
It's freezing in Nashville and Kelsea Ballerini says she is "Eskimo-ed out" on her porch trying to catch a cell phone signal—a little ironic for one of the hottest gals in country music. She is the first solo female artist in nine years to hit No. 1 with her debut country single.

In 2015 Ballerini's double-whammy of hits, "Dibs" and her introductory "Love Me Like You Mean It," helped her total more spins on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart than any other female artist. Ballerini also nabbed the newcomer honor for Breakout Artist of the Year.

Ballerini recalls, "Years ago, I was told that country radio and country artists have a special, important relationship. That when they believe in you, they'll champion you and really support you and give you a voice. As an artist, that's all you can really ask for. Thank you for these awards."

Black River Entertainment's Mike Wilson isn't a bit surprised by Ballerini's success. "I think those songs really touched a chord with young people, especially young girls," he says. "She really strikes a chord in her writing and I think that's what's been so great about this entire project. She's such a great songwriter and she and her producers have carved out her sound—it stands out. When you go to these shows, the young girls are just singing along to everything she does. It blows you away when you see that so early in one's career."

Ballerini wrote or co-wrote all 12 songs on her debut album, *The First Time*, which was co-produced by Forest Glen Whitehead and Jason Massey. She tells *MusicRow*, "I wrote songs and tried to make a record that was as 'me' as I could make it. And I didn't try to water it down to fit anything. I just made the best record I could. I think that by not trying to fit it into any frame or box, it allowed it to be honest and truthful, and maybe different. It was really cool to see fans and radio embrace it like they did."



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GROUP/DUO

OF THE YEAR

FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE

By Sarah Skates

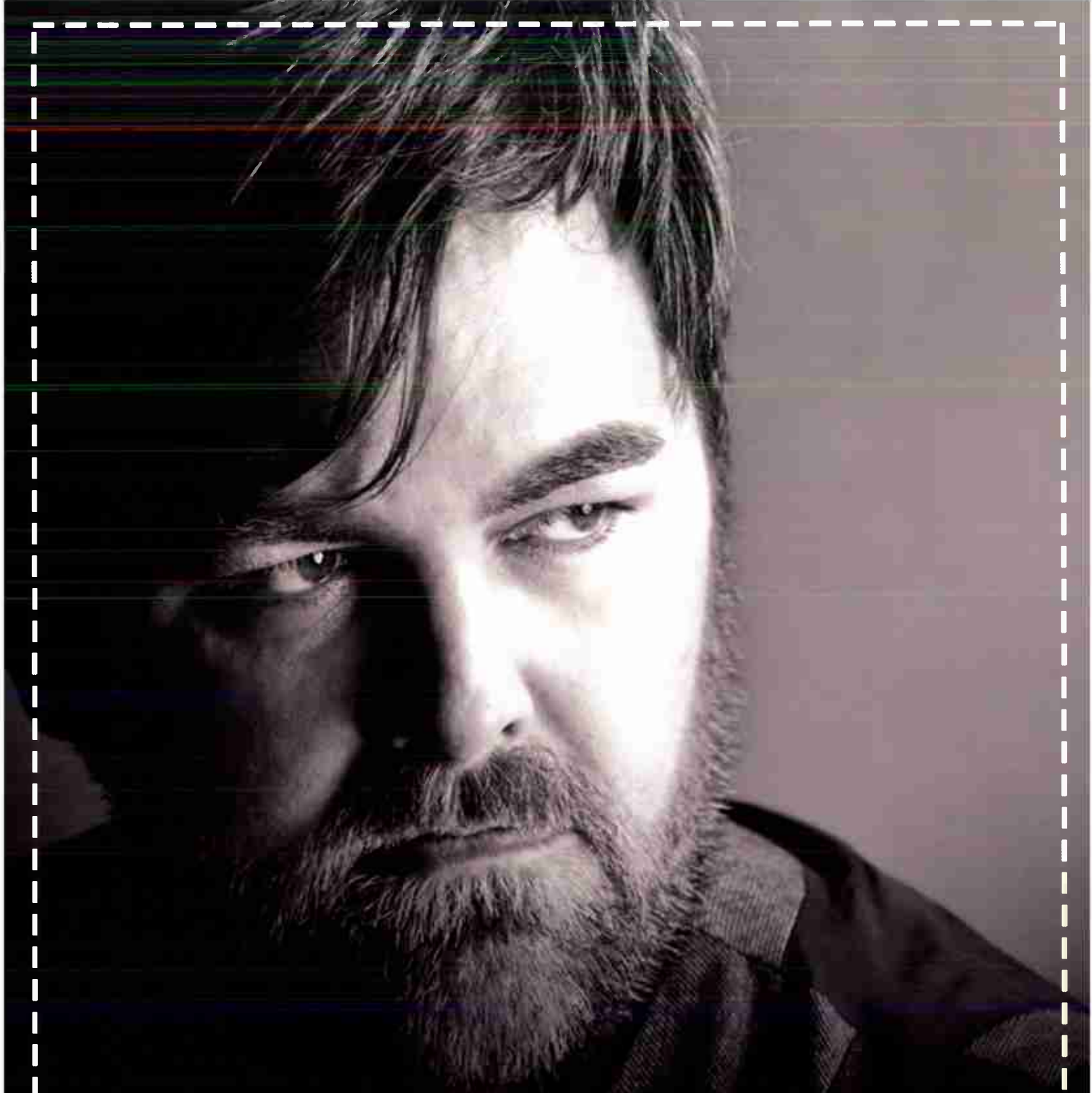
Florida Georgia Line wrapped 2015 by winning their third straight CMA Award for Vocal Duo of the Year, and are kicking off 2016 with another honor, *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Group/Duo of the Year.

“2015 was another record-setting year for Florida Georgia Line as we celebrated three more No. 1s with ‘Sun Daze,’ ‘Sippin’ On Fire’ and ‘Anything Goes,’” says Republic Nashville VP/Promotion Matthew Hargis. “We are greatly appreciative of all the *MusicRow* radio stations’ support in making FGL the most played group/duo on the CountryBreakout chart for the second year in a row! A big shout-out goes to the team at Diane Richey Promotions for their continued hard work on behalf of Florida Georgia Line and all of the Republic Nashville roster.”

Florida Georgia Line played to more than 1.4 million fans when their Anything Goes Tour 2015 traveled coast to coast. The duo also provided direct support on Luke Bryan’s Kick The Dust Up Tour and joined a boatload of fans on their sold-out voyage, This Is How We Cruise.

Even though Tyler Hubbard and Brian Kelley are wowing fans worldwide, they remember the smaller radio stations and towns where they got their start.

“Without small market radio, we likely wouldn’t be where we are today,” the duo shared with *MusicRow* in a joint statement. “A few years back it was a few small market stations that gave us one of our first real launching pads. In many of those markets, that turned into going to those towns and playing small clubs with real fans who spread the word about what we were doing fast. We still stay in touch constantly with those stations because they are very important to us and always will be.”



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INDEPENDENT

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

ERICA NICOLE

By Sarah Skates

Feisty songstress Erica Nicole made a mark on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart in 2015, earning more spins than any other indie act and securing the title of Independent Artist of the Year. Contributing to her success were the singles "It's Comin' Down," which peaked at No. 16 early in the year, and "I'm Making Mine," which hit No. 10 in October. These songs follow her 2014 Top 20 hit, "I Listen To My Bad Girl."

"I am so honored to receive this incredible award, which is truly the coveted award for an independent artist," says Erica Nicole. "The platform that *MusicRow* sets forth allows an artist like me the opportunity to get to know country radio, build relationships and live the dream. Thank you to my very dedicated team, thank you *MusicRow* and thank you country radio!"

Working her singles in 2015 were promotion teams led by Jan Woods, Regina Raleigh, Lynne Connolly and Ann Chrisman.

Largely influenced by classic country, Erica Nicole finds inspiration in the traditional sounds of George Strait, Dolly Parton and Patsy Cline. Therefore, it's no surprise that the younger singer teamed with Parton's producer Kent Wells to helm her own project, *I'm Making Mine*.

In 2016 she is aiming for another Top 10 on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart as she ramps up new single "Like I Do," featuring Jamie O'Neal. Erica Nicole will hit the road again this year, and when she returns home it will be to a brand new house in Leiper's Fork, outside Nashville.





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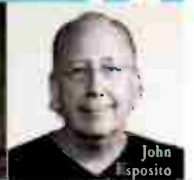
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REPORTER

OF THE YEAR

MELISSA FROST

By Troy Stephenson

Melissa Frost of KRRV-FM in Alexandria, Louisiana, uses this programming philosophy: “Good music is just good music and should be heard.” This spirit, along with many other positive attributes, has earned Frost the honor of *MusicRow*’s Reporter of the Year.

Frost has been with KRRV for 15 years and was named program director five years ago. The station became a part of the *MusicRow* panel about 10 years ago, shortly after Cenia Broadcasting purchased the station from Clear Channel. Since being named to the PD position, Frost hasn’t been deterred from taking what some may consider a risk when scheduling music.

“I’m not afraid to play female artists back-to-back, or even three times in a row,” says Frost. In addition, *MusicRow* recognizes that KRRV has been a consistent supporter of new artists that are chasing the dream independently. While it is never an easy path to success, it helps the artists when a *MusicRow* station believes in them enough to give them a chance on the air.

Frost also realizes that working in radio should be an enjoyable experience. “Whether it’s an on-air contest, being involved in the community, artist visits, or having your entire staff pull a prank on an artist during a visit, it all should be fun,” she says.

This year’s recognition is also a full-circle moment for Frost, who learned about the music industry as a teenager by seeking out copies of *MusicRow* magazine.

“In high school, I would read *MusicRow* magazine as my way of connecting to Nashville,” remembers Frost. “To be named the *MusicRow* Reporter of the Year is an unbelievable honor. This truly is one of the highlights of my career.”



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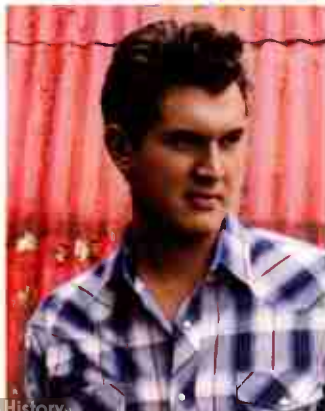
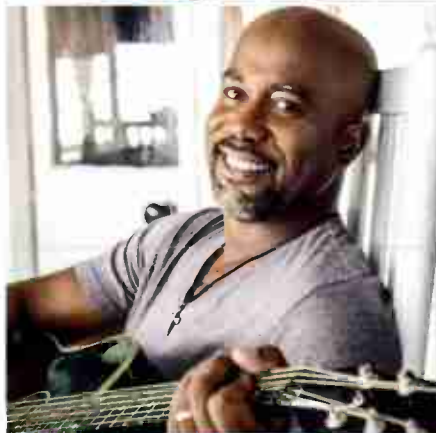
By Sarah Skates

Keith Urban and Eric Church weren't the only ones singing "Raise 'Em Up" last year. That could have been the mantra for the Capitol Records Nashville promo team, which raised eight singles to the top of the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart. Thanks to these No. 1s and other hits, the UMG Nashville imprint totaled more spins on the chart than any other label, winning *MusicRow*'s Label of the Year award for the 12th time, and 11th consecutive.

"*MusicRow* has been so awesome about acknowledging our good fortune with the music and artists we represent, and we place a lot of value on that," says Capitol's Shane Allen. "We are thankful to have such authentic artists and fantastic music. We can't say thank you enough to our partners at Diane Richey Promotions. We're proud to have them as our main representatives to the *MusicRow* stations."

In addition to "Raise 'Em Up," Capitol's Keith Urban took "John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16" to the top of the chart. Labelmate Luke Bryan secured a trio of No. 1s: "I See You," "Kick The Dust Up" and "Strip It Down." Also scoring No. 1s were Dierks Bentley ("Say You Do"), Lady Antebellum ("Long Stretch of Love"), and Little Big Town ("Girl Crush").

Early in his career, Allen worked in secondary market radio, and values it to this day. "Those stations reach very passionate listeners and fans, and that's how they hear about our music and our artists. That's a huge connection point. Country radio is the biggest format because of every station—not just because of the biggest stations, the small stations too."



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SONGWRITER

OF THE YEAR [TIE]

SHANE McANALLY

By Craig Shelburne

To borrow the title of one of his latest hits, Shane McAnally might've wanted 2015 to stay a little longer.

"It's just a year that seems like a million flashes. I honestly can't believe that it's been one year when I think back on what has happened in the last 12 months," says McAnally, who owns the publishing company SMACK Songs. "Everything went to a place that I hadn't imagined. We've had a few years of really good runs, and you kind of think, 'This is as good as it can get.' And if it can get better than 2015, then my head might blow off my body."

As a writer, McAnally enjoyed five No.1 singles on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart: Dierks Bentley's "Say You Do," Sam Hunt's "Take Your Time," Kenny Chesney's "Wild Child," Keith Urban's "John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16," and Brothers Osborne's "Stay a Little Longer."

As an album producer, McAnally also takes pride in Hunt's *Montevallo*, Kacey Musgraves' *Pageant Material*, and Old Dominion's *Meat and Candy*. He's quick to give credit to secondary radio for helping Old Dominion's "Break Up With Him" to find a national audience.

"Those guys started at secondary radio building this groundswell that you can't ignore," he says. "For all of radio, there are only so many slots, but secondary radio does at times take a leap of faith with people. And if people start hearing a song at secondary radio in smaller markets and reacting, then people in bigger markets are going to have the same reaction. Because the truth is, music is universal in that way."





JOSH OSBORNE

You can't blame Josh Osborne for feeling on top of the world. With five No. 1 singles on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart in 2015, he's one of Nashville's most in-demand songwriters.

"First of all, to even get a cut in this business is a miracle, the way things are now," he says. "It's so much harder to get a cut. And 2015 for me was a year where everything I needed to fall my way, fell my way, for whatever reason. I was very, very lucky for that to happen."

Five of country music's biggest artists dipped into Osborne's catalog to find a chart-topping single: Sam Hunt's "Take Your Time," Kenny Chesney's "Wild Child," Blake Shelton's "Sangria," Keith Urban's "John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16," and Tim McGraw's "Top of the World."

In contrast to that undeniable star power, Osborne praises secondary radio for saving a spot for unproven songwriters and aspiring artists.

"Sometimes with secondary radio, you get a better gauge of what people are really wanting to hear," he says. "They take a chance on something."

Osborne made the switch to a new publishing company in 2015; after a time with Black River Publishing, he's now partnered with Shane McAnally's SMACK Songs.

"2015 was a little bit of a transition for me," he admits. "Coming to SMACK and getting to be part of this – honestly I can't even really put it into words. It's no exaggeration to say it was the greatest year of my life."



ASHLEY GORLEY

With another winning streak of hit songs, Ashley Gorley sums up 2015 like this: "I feel like I love the job right now more than I ever have."

Part of the reason is because he's been nurturing new songwriters through Tape Room Music, his joint venture with Warner/Chappell and Combustion Music. (Gorley himself is signed to Combustion Music and Warner/Chappell). Last year he landed No. 1 hits on the *MusicRow* CountryBreakout Chart with Jason Aldean's "Just Gettin' Started" and "Tonight Looks Good on You," Luke Bryan's "I See You" and "Kick the Dust Up," and Billy Currington's "Don't It."

Asked about his exceptional work ethic, Gorley jokes, "It comes from a lack of natural talent." He compares himself to an athlete who has to be scrappy to stay in the game.

"I think people deserve a great product," he says. "These songs are things that everybody has to be able to sing along to. I get pretty picky with the ideas and the melodies and the flow and the cadence. And the people I work with share the same work ethic, so it's not like I'm dragging anybody along."

He observes that secondary radio is known for helping rising performers launch from small stages to superstar status.

"I think it requires those early believers that aren't scared to play certain things," he says. "Somebody's got to do it first." ❖

RELYING ON NASHVILLE'S CREATORS

A Q&A With Shannon Sanders and Alicia Warwick
Of The Recording Academy's Nashville Chapter



By Jessica Nicholson

Pictured (L-R): Alicia Warwick and Shannon Sanders



annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on Feb. 15.

Nashville Chapter President Shannon Sanders and Executive Director Alicia Warwick are enthusiastic while speaking about the importance of the Grammys, The Recording Academy's focus on advocacy for creators, and the value of membership during a sit-down interview with *MusicRow*.

Sanders brings an artist's soul, skill, and passion to his role. As a producer, songwriter, arranger, vocalist and musician, he has crafted notable sounds for an array of artists, including India.Arie, Eric Benet, Jonny Lang, and John Legend. Among his honors are two Grammy Awards, two Emmy Awards, and a Dove Award.

Warwick joined the Recording Academy in 2006 and climbed the ranks to become the Nashville Chapter's Executive Director,

where she handles day-to-day operations. She previously worked as an NSAI membership director, and also interned at Zomba Music under Neil Portnow, who is now Recording Academy President and CEO. She is a 2014 graduate of Leadership Music.

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***MusicRow:* As Nashville Chapter President and Executive Director, what does each of you bring to the table?**

Warwick: I rely on Shannon consistently for his perspective as a creator. If we are not aware of what our music community is doing in Nashville, then we are not properly covering and serving them. I use Shannon as a sounding board to go through ideas and initiatives. We can say, "Does this feel good as a creator? As someone sitting in those shoes every day, does this idea feel organic and does this make sense?"

Sanders: That's what is good about Alicia too. She is creative. She has a great voice. She came here because she is a singer and songwriter, and she has a heart for that. It helps for people in our position to be creators because you are sensitive to the process.

Warwick: We've had amazing chapter presidents and the legacy continues with all of them. Shannon is one of our first chapter

“As the Nashville chapter, we feel like we are really the voice for Nashville, and we don’t take that lightly.”

boards in a while to be involved in so many genres.

MR: Shannon, what brought you to this role at the Nashville Chapter?

Sanders: I’m India.Arie’s musical director too, and [early in her career] we happened to be in L.A. while the Grammys were happening. I went to everything because I could and it was fun! There was a sense of community that I hadn’t felt before. When I got back to Nashville, I wanted to get involved and Nancy [Shapiro, Sr. Vice President of The Recording Academy] reached out.

India was nominated seven times [in 2001] and lost all seven. So, the next year, she won. Nancy called me a few weeks later and asked, “How many songs did you produce on that record?” I told her I did eight, and she called me back to say, “Congratulations, you’ve won a Grammy.” I didn’t even know.

I won because it was R&B Album of the Year [2002’s *A Voyage to India*]. As a producer in an album category, if you do more than 50 percent of the record, then you qualify too. I felt invested at that point. Growing up here [in Nashville], I never really felt part of the Nashville landscape, part of the Nashville vision. I felt like an outsider, because all of my success came from outside of here. So the first time anything officially from Nashville welcomed me, I threw myself at it.

MR: Taylor Swift took part in a listening session for GrammyPro to discuss the making of her album 1989. Talk about what that means for The Recording Academy.

Sanders: She’s a Nashville chapter member, so that’s Grammy family. Her publicist is on our board. Access. Everybody brings his or her access. Her access is our access.

Warwick: That event was so unique and so special because it was only producers and engineers in that room. Some of the best and brightest in the industry, at all levels and genres. They were enamored because Taylor was so warm and candid. It felt like she felt like she was at home. It is all about access, through relationships.

MR: Your initiative Grammys In My District allows members to engage with Congress to advocate for creators’ rights. What has that been like in Nashville?

Sanders: All 12 chapters across the country got involved on October 14. In Nashville, we had more than 155 members engaged, and met with many local representatives. We met with Marsha Blackburn, Diane Black, and Jim Cooper. It was an amazing day, knowing that nationwide we were connecting to such a large percentage of Congress. We had over 1,600 members nationwide involved in this advocacy effort.

There is nothing like that collective community. The Academy is the only organization that represents all genres and all creators. I think we are uniquely positioned and unified to do that. I don’t think any other organization can really do that.

Grammys In My District was impactful because we brought policymakers into studios to see the creative process. For them to be able to see that the process is something tangible, that’s been



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Pictured (L - R): Jacquire King, Courtney White, Keith Thomas, Alicia Warwick, Steve Emley, Craig Campbell, Brett James, Rep. Marsha Blackburn, Shannon Sanders, Julian King and Leah LaRocco. Photo: Ed Rode, WireImage.com © 2015

good. But that's the beauty of us all being connected. That's the access. Even here, we needed places to host these events. One of our members, Pat McMakin, is [Director of Operations] at Ocean Way. He was able to offer up Ocean Way for an event. Songwriter Brett James offered his studio for another one.

MR: What makes the Nashville Chapter unique?

Warwick: Our area as a chapter ranges from Nashville to Knoxville, North and South Carolina, and Kentucky. For Grammys In My District, we had meetings in Nashville and Hendersonville, Louisville, Asheville, and Raleigh, because we have a large region of voting members. While Nashville is the hub, we see the value of all of our cities.

As the Nashville chapter, we feel like we are really the voice for Nashville, and we don't take that lightly. We have all these genres and professionals we work with, but we are also connected to so many chapters throughout the country. There are 11 other chapters

that have a specific music mecca or unique music community that we lean on a lot. We are all in touch consistently.

MR: What makes the Grammy Awards so revered by the music industry's creative community?

Sanders: I really like the fact that it's peer-to-peer. I like that the industry gets the chance to say, "I know this was the most popular record this year, but this was the best record." I love when that happens.

I have two wins [with the second for co-producing Jonny Lang's *Turn Around*], but just the nomination alone is an honor. To be considered for the best of the best among your peers? To see the number of submissions that have to be whittled down, and you survive that? That's a hell of an honor.

Warwick: That's why we so strongly encourage members to vote. Your vote is your voice. ❖

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JOHN MARKS

HITTING THE MARK IN MUSIC CURATION

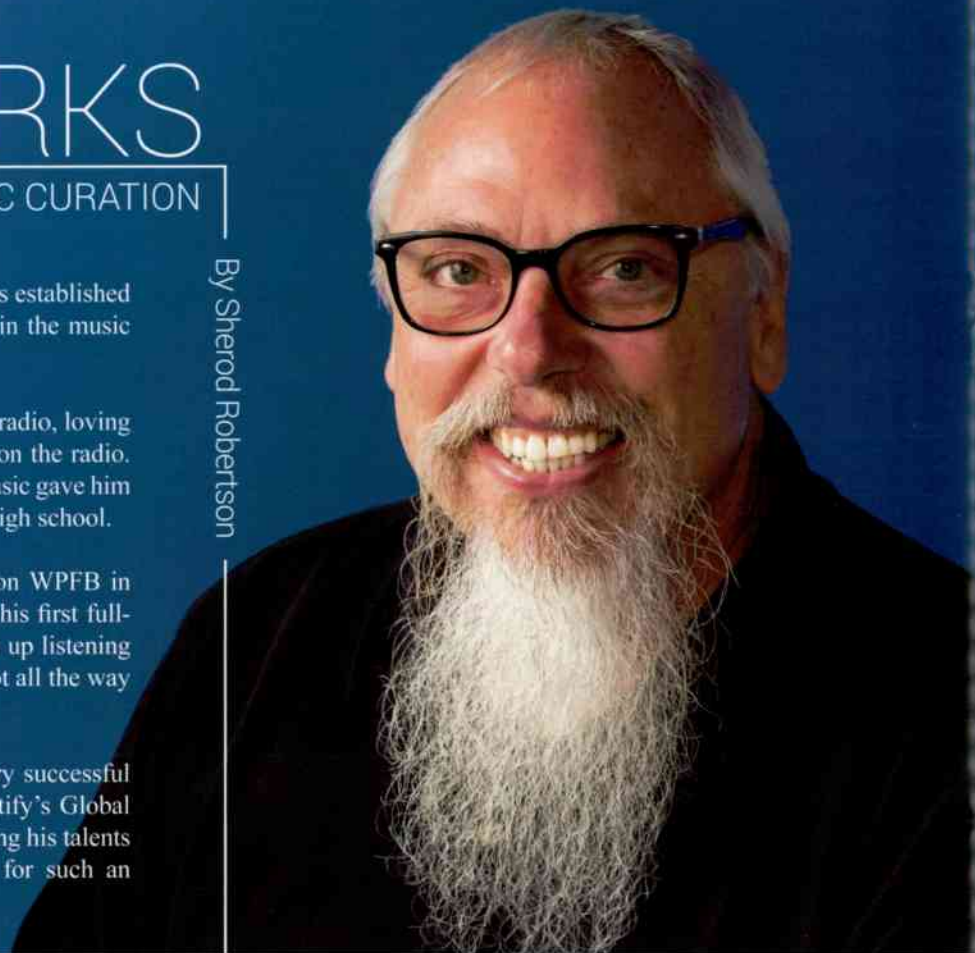
With decades of experience in radio, John Marks has established himself as one of the most prominent tastemakers in the music industry.

He grew up just like any other kid—listening to the radio, loving music, and wishing he could be one of those guys on the radio. Through Junior Achievement, his early interest in music gave him an opportunity with radio during his junior year of high school.

This led to his first paying gig at local radio station WPFB in Middletown, Ohio. Fresh out of college, he landed his first full-time job at WSAI in Cincinnati, the station he grew up listening to, and went from driving around the chicken mascot all the way up to program director.

After 30 years in terrestrial radio, Marks had a very successful five-year stint at SiriusXM and now serves as Spotify's Global Senior Editor, Music Programmer of Country, offering his talents in playlist and music curation. It's a role fitting for such an ambassador of country music.

By Sherod Robertson



MusicRow: After you left terrestrial radio, did you feel there was a shift when the music industry began looking at you almost like an A&R guy?

Marks: The new music elements have always been with me. At SiriusXM, I came in as a child of local radio for all of my life. And through some of the “new music” things we were doing there, it began to open my eyes as to exactly what was laid out in front of us, in terms of meaningfulness, power and impact of a national audience and what that could do for a song. We did some experimentation.

The first real, let's just say, tag at success was Green River Ordinance and “Dancing Shoes.” I found the song through a friend and put it on the air. It blew up out of nowhere with nobody working or promoting the song. The artist barely knew what we were doing with it, so it was a pure, organic thing and it snowballed.

When you shifted from SiriusXM to Spotify in 2015, everybody wondered what was behind the big move. What drew you to Spotify?

There are a lot of reasons. I think the most intriguing of all were the global elements. They are well established in most of the regions of the world and where they're not, they are opening offices. The United States is still a bit of an open market for Spotify so it seemed like a ground-floor opportunity to start up a cool thing with country music at Spotify.

Another reason is the opportunity to bring country music as a United States export to the world. Rock and pop have already been able to cross that bridge through some collaborative efforts. I'm looking to get United States country music as highly-perceived a brand as rock and pop.

Let's discuss the differences between playlists on traditional radio, satellite radio and on-demand distribution. I know those are different buckets, but is the music the same?

No. I think probably the methods of curation can be similar but when you look at terrestrial radio, even satellite radio, you're looking at a fully-curated list that's typically programmed a week out. You have a library of songs you pick and choose from, a level of currents and new songs, and it's programmed through a music scheduling system for people to consume in whatever order it plays.

The difference with Spotify is, even if it's a curated list, it's an on-demand list. You can look at the playlist and see if you want to hear the whole thing or part of a song or save it. Spotify's unique contribution is that anything that you see, hear, and want to play is virtually on-demand. Many people consume the lists as a whole while others pick and choose. It just depends on what your mood and tastes are that day.

You are known in the industry for helping break promising new talent including Florida Georgia Line, Sam Hunt, Chase Rice and others. How much do you think about breaking new acts when you're programming music?

All the time! And that's another thing where Spotify and I mutually agree. This is a unique forum for being able to break new and emerging talent. It's an area where it doesn't require any hoops to get into. If you can upload a song, you can be heard on Spotify, with or without a playlist, so there is no barrier to entry. That's not the same for other mediums and media.

Breaking artists is a priority. It's what I love doing— finding new and undiscovered artists and bringing them to a market that may or may not have existed before. With those artists you mentioned, we don't know what would happen, but in that moment we were able to play them and bring them to market and they found some success as a result. And I'm looking to, fingers crossed, have similar results through Spotify.

Beyond listening to music, what role does data play in how you curate songs?

It's important in terms of evaluating the fitness of a song for future and ongoing use. The data can't tell you anything about whether a song is going to be good or not. So it's a combination of human elements of knowing what your playlists are about. The personality of those lists and what is likely to work in those lists. And then finding those songs that are likely to fit.

You use your intuition, your gut and your experience to be able to bring those songs into the lists and then look at the data to see whether or not your intuition is correct. It's a good combination of those two elements that I think works at Spotify.

You are often seen at showcases. You also reach out to colleagues and use social media to discover new music. What are other elements of curation that contribute to an artist's music having success?

I think all of that is important. It's not a critical factor if they don't have an infrastructure, but the chances are better if you're in the process of building your social media base, your touring base and all of those things to build your brand instead of waiting around for something to happen.

Most of the successful artists you named that we were involved with breaking, were working bands touring the circuit selling merchandise, selling their CDs (or whatever they sell these days). They were all working bands on the road, grinding it out every day.

Regardless of who you are and where you are in that stage of development, you simply must do that to begin the process of building your brand. These days if you want to take the typical route and get signed, they are looking at an artist or band's bottom line. What are you selling? What are you pulling down in terms of crowds? And if you don't have that kind of build going on, I think it's not impossible, but a more difficult process.

"I'm looking to get United States country music as highly-perceived a brand as rock and pop."

You've mentioned the low barrier of entry to at least get on the field. That creates a lot of music and much of it isn't very good. How do you sort through so much content?

I've remarked, and it's absolutely the truth, that I've listened to more music in my first weeks at Spotify than I did in almost all my time at SiriusXM. It's not a critique. It's simply the truth. There are wider lanes at Spotify that make it a little more possible, obviously not just anyone, but for high-quality music. You have playlists that are uniquely suited to new music discovery and for crossover music. There are wider and larger opportunities for those songs to be added to the playlists.

It's more important now to be screening those songs, to be going to the showcases, to the meetings with artists and their representation because that helps give you some background. You start seeing the narratives of the artists, their stories, and the roots of their music. And all of those things kind of play a role. But again, I'm not saying that it's impossible for you to just get a song played. That can happen as well but all those things are important.

When it comes to programming and discovering new music, you are someone who isn't afraid to take risks. How have you been able to avoid letting fear affect those decisions?

I've never really had that barrier from a corporate level, and if I did, I'd probably change it. But that's me and I can't apply that to anybody else's life or career. I haven't had to operate in a fear-based environment on music I chose for the air. And in terms of career, all you can do is take a leap of faith and not 'hope for the best,' but do your homework and find what works for you, your goals and objectives.

Every once in a while missteps happen. It's not the end of the world. You just dust yourself off and do it again. That's never been a large part of what motivates me or doesn't motivate me. I just look ahead. If I step in a mud puddle and get dirty, I clean up and do it again. ❖

The MusicRow podcast featuring John Marks is available on iTunes.



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT EPHEMERAL ROYALTIES

By Craig Owens
O'Neil Hagaman, PLLC

Most of us are familiar with the role SoundExchange plays in the collection of royalties from service providers (e.g. Pandora, SiriusXM, radio groups that webcast their content, etc.) for the use of audio master recordings, as well as the subsequent distributions SoundExchange makes to featured artists and copyright owners.

Likewise, many would also be familiar with the tremendous growth in distributions by SoundExchange over the last few years, as total distributions grew from \$293 million in 2011 to \$773 million in 2014. Even with the recent rate decision by the Copyright Royalty Board, which seems to limit future growth of royalties generally paid by Pandora, it still appears that royalties received from SoundExchange will remain, in the foreseeable future, a significant portion of an artist's recording income.

With that said, it's important to concentrate on a less appreciated piece of the royalties collected by SoundExchange. These royalties from ephemeral uses stem from the server/temporary copies of the master recording used by subscription and satellite radio services.

There are two components to these ephemeral uses under the Copyright Act:

1. Royalties collected by SoundExchange from digital services that provide music for use in business establishments ("Business Establishment Services" or "BES"). All of the royalties collected from BES are deemed ephemeral.
2. Currently, 5 percent of the royalties paid by SoundExchange from all other uses are deemed ephemeral (i.e. 5 cents of every dollar SoundExchange pays out is ephemeral).

Income collected by SoundExchange derived from the non-ephemeral transmissions of master recordings is distributed (after deducting SoundExchange's operating costs) 50 percent to the copyright owner (usually the label), 45 percent to the artist and 5 percent to the unions (AFTRA and AFM).

However, SoundExchange pays all of the income associated with the ephemeral uses to the copyright owner. Therefore, if the copyright owner/label does not pass through any of these ephemeral royalties to the artist/unions, then \$100 of non-BES income received by SoundExchange would be split as presented below (after SoundExchange's operating costs):

ROYALTY COMPONENT	BASIS OF PAYMENT	ARTIST / UNIONS	LABEL	TOTAL
Non-Ephemeral Royalties	Split 50% to each party	\$47.50	\$47.50	\$95.00
Ephemeral Component	100% to copyright owner	\$0.00	\$5.00	\$5.00
TOTAL		\$47.50	\$52.50	\$100.00

Note the above example does not reflect income received from BES, which can be an insignificant component of SoundExchange distributions. If BES income was included in the above example, then the overall total to the label would have increased since BES amounts are paid 100 percent to the copyright owner.

Many labels pass through royalties from ephemeral uses to their contracted artists. However, the actual amount shared with the artist is subject to the individual terms of the recording agreement.

While the ephemeral piece does not seem to be a considerable amount of money, 5 percent of such a large royalty pool is not inconsequential in the aggregate. This percentage would represent approximately \$38 million for 2014 if you disregard the impact of BES royalties.

Therefore, it would be prudent for artists to review their royalty statements and determine if they are being paid their appropriate share of the ephemeral royalties received by record labels from SoundExchange. ❖

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By Sherod Robertson





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After winning the decisive battle that would make him Rome's first emperor, Augustus Caesar minted coins to celebrate his victory, solidifying his legacy in small, round pieces of metal. Leaders have always minted coins to celebrate their achievements, or those of others, and *MusicRow* joined the tradition in 2014 with its No. 1 Challenge Coin, a hallmark of songwriting accomplishment.

As Nashville's leading music industry publication, *MusicRow* awards Challenge Coins to artists and songwriters who reach the No. 1 position on *MusicRow*'s weekly CountryBreakout chart.

Sources vary, but most accounts agree that Challenge Coins originated during World War I, when an American officer cast a group of coins marked with his unit's emblem and distributed them to the members of his squadron. Later in the war, one of the squadron's soldiers was shot down flying over Germany, captured by enemy forces and stripped of all possessions except his coin. The soldier escaped his captors and reached French allies, who thought he was a spy until they recognized his troop's emblem on his coin and set him free. Although the story is dramatic, many support its validity.

During the Second World War, American soldiers stationed in Germany collected virtually worthless German currency called pfennigs. Soldiers often gathered for drinks and challenged one another to produce their pfennigs. If a soldier failed to do so, he bought his comrades in arms a round of drinks. Eventually, Challenge Coins, as they came to be known, replaced pfennigs.

Whether part history or myth, the Challenge Coin's origins demonstrate its ability to unite individuals and stand as a marker of accomplishment and pride.

MusicRow's No. 1 Challenge Coin continues this tradition. ❖



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