

NASH NEXT ARTIST SPOTLIGHT WITH **KIP MOORE**



NASH Country Weekly

COUNTRY FOR LIFE | SEPTEMBER 7, 2015

DUO DUEL
MADDIE & TAE
FACE OFF!

CARRIE & BRAD
together again

LEE BRICE
creates mix tape for fans

BILLY SHERRILL
1936 - 2015

URBAN KEITH URBAN PLAYS BY HIS OWN SET OF COUNTRY MUSIC RULES DEVELOPMENT

JENNIFER NETTLES
to play Dolly Parton's mom

PLUS!

REBA & NARVEL
separate after 26 years



COUNTRYWEEKLY.COM

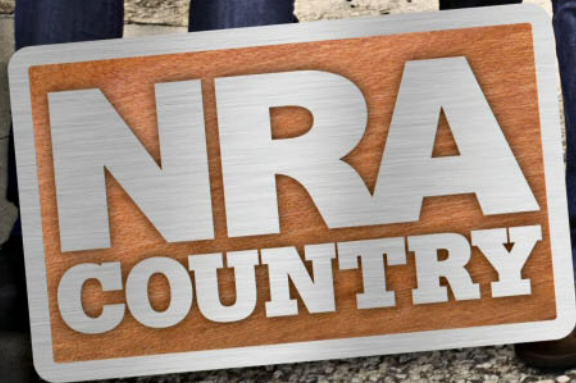
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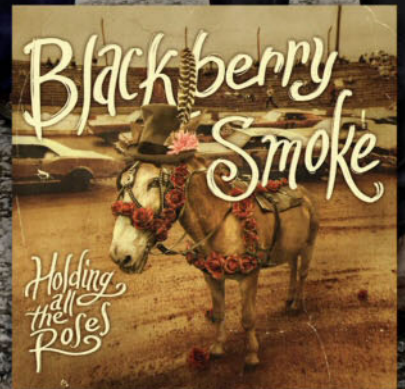


This is NRA Country

"We've got great memories from being on family hunting land in Mississippi or at a fishing cabin in Alabama. It's important to us to remember our family's history and where we came from and pass that on to future generations. We are Blackberry Smoke and we are NRA Country." –
BLACKBERRY SMOKE



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1984 THURSDAY, SEPT. 6



Ernest by George Rose/Getty Images; M&T by Kevin Winter/Getty Images; Eric by Rick Diamond/Getty Images; FGL by PG/Corbis

The Troubadour Passes

Country music lost one of its earliest pioneers when **ERNEST TUBB** died of emphysema on Sept. 6, 1984, at age 70. Known as the Texas Troubadour, Ernest was one of country's first stars, along with Roy Acuff. Born in Crisp, Texas, in 1914, Ernest grew up on the music of Jimmie Rodgers and later fused Western swing with other country sounds. His 1941 lament, "Walkin' the Floor Over You," helped usher in the musical style known as honky-tonk, a rhythmic brand of music designed for play in the rough-and-tumble country bars of the era. Ernest sang in a distinct lower-register voice that made him instantly identifiable and helped him garner a large following. He joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1943, becoming one of the show's most-requested performers. During the '40s, Ernest scored No. 1 hits with classics like "Soldier's Last Letter" and the honky-tonk favorite "Slipping Around." But even as his chart success began to wane, Ernest remained a regular fixture on the Grand Ole Opry. In 1965, Ernest was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame.

2015

SEPT. 1:

SONGS FOR TODAY

Catch **MADDIE & TAE** as they lift up their harmonious voices on a special edition of NBC's *Today* show Toyota Concert Series from New York's Rockefeller Plaza on Sept. 1. No doubt, they'll be livening up the block with selections from their newly released debut album, *Start Here*.



SEPT. 4-5:

BUCKEYE BASH

Labor Day weekend looms ever closer, which means it's time for the annual WCOL Country Jam in Thornville, Ohio, on Sept. 4 and 5. The lineup includes **ERIC CHURCH**, **THOMAS RHETT**, **BIG & RICH**,



JOE NICHOLS and other acts, performing on Buckeye Lake, about 30 miles from downtown Columbus. For more info, go to legendvalleyfestivals.com.

SEPT. 4:

FRIDAY IN THE PARK



The *Good Morning America* Summer Concert Series wraps up on Friday, Sept. 4, with **FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE** doing the honors.

The smokin' duo will be firing up the hits from Rumsey Playfield in New York's Central Park. *Good Morning America* airs on ABC from 7 to 9 a.m. ET.

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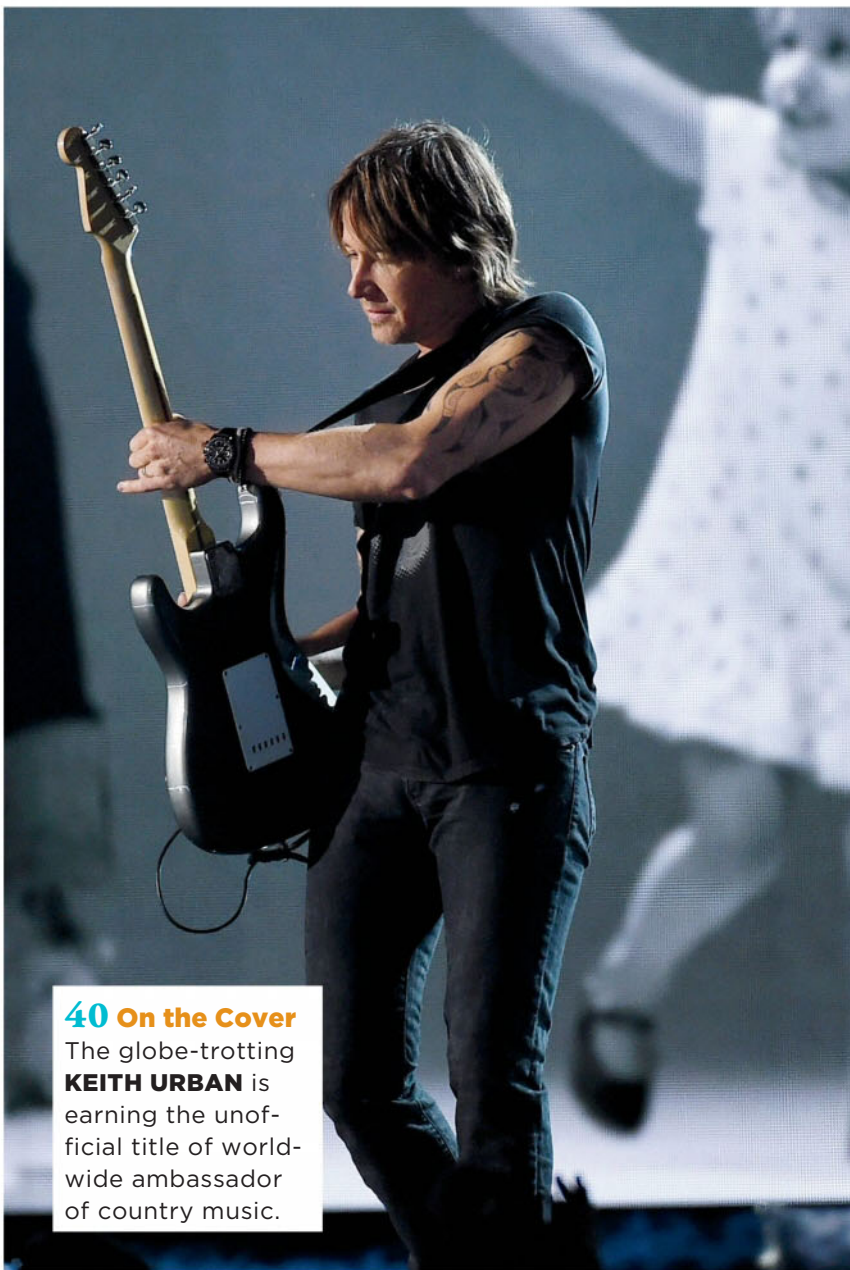
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The globe-trotting **KEITH URBAN** is earning the unofficial title of world-wide ambassador of country music.

PLUS!

NASH
NEXT

27 After a nearly three-year wait, **KIP MOORE** is releasing his sophomore album, *Wild Ones*. The straight-shooting singer talks about the making of the new record, his blue-collar, scratch-and-claw roots and his goal of becoming a master at his craft.



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NASH Country Weekly

COUNTRY FOR LIFE

FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

Keith Urban decided to do something different by releasing a single from an album he has yet to make or even fully conceive. That single, "John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16," has got some serious buzz going on so we sat down with Keith to discuss his creative process and the diverse group of people with whom he's collaborated over the years. We also talk to Keith about his signature guitar collection and his final

season on *American Idol*.

In this week's Nash Next artist spotlight we catch up with Kip Moore. Our managing editor, Jon Freeman, gets deep with Kip about his disappointment with the success of his recent singles, his worries about the new album and his determination to keep making the best music he can. Kip also opens up about what he does to find peace and gives us an inside glimpse at his new album, *Wild Ones*.

Also in this issue, we go hunting with Chris Janson (maybe we should have taken him to buy a boat), we talk mix tapes with Lee Brice, celebrate Stephanie Quayle's wedding day, honor the legendary Billy Sherrill and so much more.

Don't miss next week's issue, on stands Sept. 7, as we honor the working men and women with George Strait and the Top 40 songs that pay tribute to us working stiffs for Labor Day.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK!

LISA KONICKI, EDITOR IN CHIEF

FROM THE READER



Shoot us an email, a comment or a tweet and let us know what you think!

Letters, Nash Country Weekly, 506 2nd. Ave. South, Suite 200, Nashville, TN 37210

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STAY GOLDEN

Thank you for the nice article on Jim Ed Brown. A pure golden sound has been sidelined but never his music or his memory. He was such a gentle soul. We will miss him.

RICHARD SESSAMEN

Warriors Mark, Pa.

TEDDY BEAR

Thank you so much for the great review of the new song "Somewhere Tonight" from my favorite singer, James Otto, in your Aug. 3 issue. I look forward to when y'all write about him again. I love the precious sweet-hearted teddy bear so much. God bless you and him always.

HOLLY ISON

Morristown, Tenn.

FACEBOOK

Love #KeithUrban's music/songs!!! This song of the #theJohn's is fantastic!!

DENNIS JOHNSON

We love you, *Country Weekly*.

CYNTHIA McDANIEL

It has definitely bothered my 13-year-old 'cause she thinks Blake and Miranda are the most wonderful people in the world.

WILLIA SKEANS

If you haven't seen Darius Rucker's video, "Southern Style," you need to YouTube it. It will make you proud. Great song.

COUNTRY MUSIC ROX

Continued prayers for Joey, Rory, Indy and their families.

SUSAN MARIE GLAZE

TWITTER

@countryweekly @kennychesney @MLStadium That was one of the sweetest things I've ever seen, God bless you @kennychesney

LISA

@lisagailrvs

Way to go, Kenny!! Not just a fan but someone who will cherish that moment!

THEYC

@yahoocountry

@countryweekly @MaddieandTae are the future of #countrymusic. With such a talent, I see them going so far. #StartHere is just the start

LUKE

@lucatrani4

@camcountry is the bomb. So happy she is making it big :)

AMBER BRANNON

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**YOU CAN DRINK IT ANYWHERE
BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE YOU CAN BUY IT.**

George Jones' White Lightning moonshine received platinum honors in the 2015 SIP Awards. Come visit the George Jones Entertainment complex in Nashville, Tennessee and experience White Lightning, fine dining, live entertainment, river views and a museum filled with artifacts from the legendary singer.

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georgejonesmuseum.com



FIRST TAKE

HEARTS OF GOLD

Hunter Hayes performs "Heart to Heart" with ACM Lifting Lives Music Camp attendees at a family picnic during the 2015 Special Olympics World Games in L.A.



photo by Brandon Campbell/Academy of Country Music



THE COUNTRY BREW

A SWEET TASTE OF ALL THINGS COUNTRY

Opening Act



THEY'RE BACK!

It's getting to be a tradition—**BRAD PAISLEY** and **CARRIE UNDERWOOD** hosting the CMA Awards telecast. Brad and Carrie are back as co-hosts for the eighth straight year, ready to welcome you to the 49th Annual CMA Awards, live from the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Nov. 4 at 8 p.m. ET on ABC. It's often called "Country Music's Biggest Night," as it's the event where the prestigious Country Music Association awards are handed out. Brad has 14 under his belt, while Carrie has a total of five, including three straight Female Vocalist of the Year honors from 2006 to 2008. You can also catch Brad as he performs on the *Today* show Toyota Concert Series, Friday morning, Sept. 4, on NBC.

photo by Bob D'Amico/CMA



(Above) **GOLDEN BOY** Scotty McCreery receives a gold record for his song “Feelin’ It” from *Fox & Friends* hosts Steve Doocy (left), Elisabeth Hasselbeck and Brian Kilmeade; (below) **HOG HEAVEN** Keifer Thompson of Thompson Square takes a break from the USO Bike Ride; (left) **PARTY FOR TWO** A couple of country music’s most powerful women, Miranda Lambert (left) and Shania Twain, share the love; (bottom left) **KNOW WHEN TO HOLD ‘EM** Rapper/actor Ludacris snags a selfie with The Gambler himself, Mr. Kenny Rogers.





(Above) **POINTER BROTHERS** As Blake Shelton (left) and Brad Paisley know, when in doubt, blame the other guy; (below) **WRITE STUFF, EH** (from left) Ron Sexsmith, Kristian Bush, Josh Turner and Deric Ruttan attend the CMA Songwriters Series in Toronto, Ontario, as part of a CMT Canada television taping.



(Above) **CRASH MY PARTY** (from left) Randy Houser, Thomas Rhett, Luke Bryan and Dustin Lynch shake things up onstage in Nashville as part of Luke's Kick the Dust Up Tour; (below) **KILLER COMBO** Kip Moore and Jewel spend a little time recording together in the studio.



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COUNTRY GOES FISHING

With most game hunters on hiatus during the summer, it was time to hit the water and wet a line like some of our favorite country stars that landed a boatload of lunkers.



Thomas Rhett



Mo Pitney (right) with his brother Blake



Tyler Hubbard of FGL



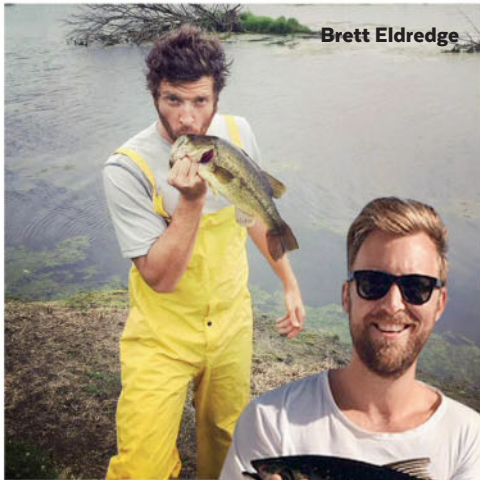
Dierks Bentley



Terri Clark



Darius Rucker



Brett Eldredge



Lady Antebellum's
Charles Kelley

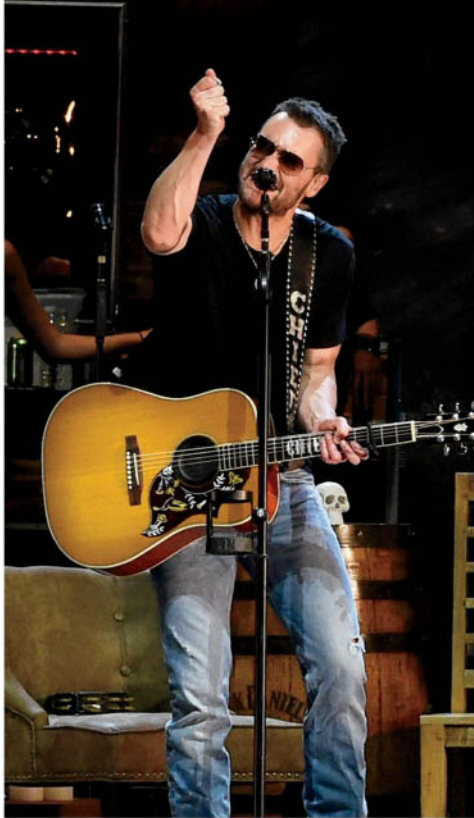


Maddie Marlow
(left) and Tae Dye
of Maddie & Tae



Jerrod Nie-
mann (left)
and Lee Brice

UP, UP AND AWAY



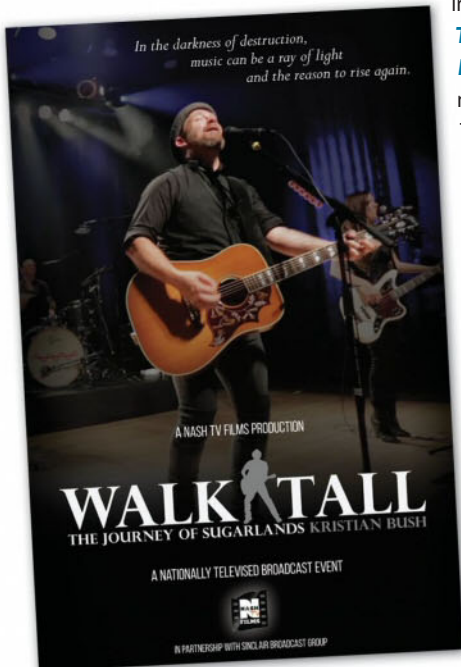
ERIC CHURCH christened Nashville's new \$52-million Ascend Amphitheater with back-to-back sold-out shows in July. Since then, the 6,800-capacity outdoor venue has welcomed a who's who of musical acts from all genres, including Phish, My Morning Jacket, Counting Crows and Peter Frampton. In the coming months, you can catch ZZ Top, Blackberry Smoke, Widespread Panic, Loretta Lynn, Janet Jackson, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Jackson Browne and more. Don't forget to bring a few extra dollars for beer, barbecue and hot chicken.



WALK OF LIFE

The life and career of singer/songwriter **KRISTIAN BUSH** will be examined in a new one-hour documentary airing the first two weekends

in September. **WALK TALL: THE JOURNEY OF SUGARLAND'S KRISTIAN BUSH** marks the launch of NASH TV Films and will cover tragic events that touched Kristian's life in recent years, from his mother's death to the Indiana stage collapse that killed seven and his private divorce, as well as the uplifting songs that came out of it and shaped his solo album *Southern Gravity*. *Walk Tall*, in conjunction with Sinclair Broadcast Group, will be broadcast in 80 markets. Air dates and times at nashtv.com.



NETTLES STING

A year and a half after releasing her acclaimed solo album, *That Girl*, **JENNIFER NETTLES** has parted ways with her longtime label, Universal Music. The announcement came shortly after the label released her new single, "Sugar." In other Jennifer news, she was recently cast to play Dolly Parton's mother, Avie Lee Parton, in the upcoming NBC film *Dolly Parton's Coat of Many Colors*, which also stars Ricky Schroder and Gerald McRaney. No broadcast date has been announced.

BIRTHDAYS

SEPT. 1, 1950
**STEVE
GOETZMAN**
of Exile

SEPT. 1, 1964
**CHARLIE
ROBISON**

SEPT. 1, 1985
**CHARLIE
WORSHAM**

SEPT. 2, 1959
PAUL DEAKIN
of The Mavericks

SEPT. 3, 1982
**AARON
HENNINGSEN**
of The
Henningens

SEPT. 4, 1981
TOM GOSSIN
of Gloriana

SEPT. 6, 1939
**DAVID
ALLAN COE**

SEPT. 6, 1952
BUDDY MILLER

SEPT. 6, 1957
JOE SMYTH
of Sawyer Brown

SEPT. 6, 1958
**JEFF
FOXWORTHY**

SEPT. 6, 1983
**MARK
CHESNUTT**



LAST CALL

If you didn't get down to the Florida beaches this summer, you've got one last chance to party. The Pepsi Gulf Coast Jam, now in its second year, is serving up some hot country acts on the scenic shores of Panama City Beach, Fla., on Labor Day weekend. **KEITH URBAN, MIRANDA LAMBERT, LADY ANTEBELLUM, SAM HUNT, GARY ALLAN, HUNTER HAYES** and **DWIGHT YOAKAM** are just some of the big-name stars that'll have you dancing in the sand on Sept. 4-6. Want to get in on the fun? Go to gulfoastjam.com for more details.

POETRY IN MOTION

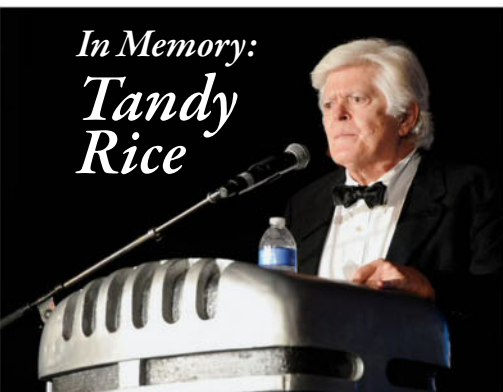
The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum will honor singer/songwriter **DICKEY LEE** as part of its Poets and Prophets series on September 5. A 1995 inductee into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, Dickey co-wrote hits such as George Jones' "She Thinks I Still Care" and Tracy Byrd's "The Keeper of the Stars," as well as recording his own songs like "Patches" and "9,999,999 Tears."



Baby BOOM

CARRIE UNDERWOOD warned country music... "there must be something in the water," and she was right. Last month three country music couples announced that they are expecting little bundles of joy. Congratulations go out to **THOMPSON SQUARE's SHAWNA** and **KEIFER THOMPSON** who will make their duo a trio in January; **JANA KRAMER** and husband **MIKE CAUSSIN** are expecting their new addition at the beginning of 2016; and **LADY ANTEBELLUM's CHARLES KELLEY** and his music industry wife, **CASSIE MCCONNELL**, will welcome the next Baby A in February.

In Memory: Tandy Rice



Colorful Music Row personality **TANDY RICE**, who worked with such country legends as Dolly Parton and Jim Ed Brown, died on Aug. 3 in Nashville at age 76. Tandy bought the Top Billing booking agency in Nashville in 1971 and developed it into a nationally respected company. He booked shows for Dolly Parton, Porter Wagoner, Jim Ed Brown, The Kendalls, Helen Cornelius and Jeannie C. Riley, among others. He also managed comedian and recording artist Jerry Clower. "Tandy was not only one of the greatest agents in the business," said Dolly Parton upon his passing, "but he was also one of the greatest people I've ever known."

WEEKDAY WARRIOR

In February, former Sony Music Nashville CEO Gary Overton made waves by telling *The Tennessean*, "If you're not on country radio, you don't exist."

In most other years, he would have been right. First week sales figures for a country album generally bear that out, giving an indication of how hot that artist is at the moment. For example, when **ERIC CHURCH**'s *The Outsiders* was released in 2014 and churned out a nearly 300,000-unit total in its first week, it was a solid indication that Eric was a popular insider, all the way. (It's since sold more than a million copies, one of only two country albums to do that in 2014.) With very few exceptions, the rule in country music has always been that you have to have a hit song on the radio to generate big sales numbers. It's a pretty simple equation: the more people hearing an artist's song when his or her album comes out, the more people will buy a copy.

And yet, 2015 seems determined to disprove that logic over and over again in an unprecedented way. As of this point in the year, there have already been six albums to bow at No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Country Albums chart with little to no country radio support. Three others have landed at No. 2. That's about one per month, and the busy end-of-year release schedule is still ahead.

First up was southern rock outfit **BLACKBERRY SMOKE**, whose fourth album, *Holding All the Roses*, topped the chart in February. One week later, Texas cowboy **AARON WATSON**'s independently released *The Underdog* followed suit. Country renegade **DWIGHT YOAKAM**'s *Second Hand Heart* came in at No. 2 in May, right behind Reba's latest, then soulful **CHRIS STAPLETON**'s *Traveller* hit the second slot behind **ZAC**

BROWN BAND's *Jekyll + Hyde*. Country icons **WILLIE NELSON** and **MERLE HAGGARD** released a collaborative album, *Django and Jimmie*, that reached the top in June. Critics' favorite **KACEY MUSGRAVES** bowed at No. 1 with her sophomore album, *Pageant Material*, in July. In early August, beloved singer/songwriter **JASON ISBELL** hit No. 1 with *Something More Than Free*, just a few hundred units ahead of **ALAN JACKSON**'s *Angels and Alcohol* (which, surprisingly, is getting very little radio play). The following week, Alan was at No. 1, followed by **ASHLEY MONROE**'s latest, *The Blade*.

Now, not all of these records have amassed **LUKE BRYAN** or **JASON ALDEAN**-level sales in their first weeks of existence, and some have benefited from thinner major label release schedules than in years past. But they've still snuck in ahead of continually popular releases like Eric's *The Outsiders* and **SAM HUNT**'s unstoppable *Montevallo*.

So what does this mean? Well, if nothing else, it's a good sign that fans are finding good country music outside the traditional channels. Maybe that's due to an increase in understanding of technology and the spectrum of streaming and downloading services available, or maybe high profile media outlets (in TV and print) are just paying more attention to what's going on in country music. It's likely some combination of those, with a healthy dose of word-of-mouth factoring in. Whatever the case, it has returned a sliver of democracy to fans who still actively seek and buy new music.

And you have to think that, at some point when an artist makes a splashy enough debut through other methods of promotion, radio won't be able to ignore it any longer.

Billboard



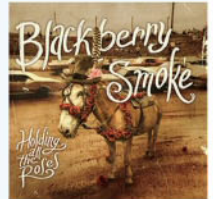
Dwight Yoakam
Second Hand Heart



Alan Jackson
Angels and Alcohol



Zac Brown Band
Jekyll + Hyde



Blackberry Smoke
Holding All the Roses



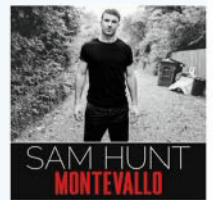
Aaron Watson
The Underdog



Eric Church
The Outsiders



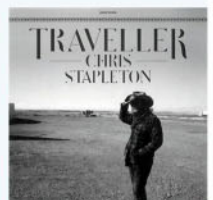
Ashley Monroe
The Blade



Sam Hunt
Montevallo



Kacey Musgraves
Pageant Material



Chris Stapleton
Traveller



Willie Nelson & Merle Haggard
Django and Jimmie



Jason Isbell
Something More Than Free



NATIONAL TREASURE

MUSIC ROW'S RCA VICTOR STUDIOS BUILDING, better known as **RCA STUDIO A**, has been named to the National Register of Historic Places. Studio A was scheduled to be demolished to make way for luxury condos in 2014 before a last-minute purchase by philanthropist

AUBREY PRESTON that was spearheaded by singer/songwriter **BEN FOLDS**. Studio A, which served as recording space for the likes of **ELVIS PRESLEY**, **WILLIE NELSON** and **WAYLON JENNINGS**, is now eligible for federal tax credits and historic preservation grants.



FOR THE CHILDREN

Country star and adventure-seeker **CRAIG MORGAN** will play it a little safer and a little closer to home when he hosts his annual charity golf tournament and festival benefiting the Dickson County Craig Morgan Foundation on October 17 in Dickson, Tenn. This is the ninth year for Craig's event, which supports foster children in Middle Tennessee. The golf tournament will take place at the Greystone Golf Course, and the family-friendly festival will follow on the city's War Memorial lawn.

FORD TOUGH

With 90-million albums sold, 17 Top 10 country singles and four Top 10 pop singles in a 35-plus-year career, Tennessee **ERNIE FORD** is easily one of the most identifiable voices in country music, and on September 25, Bear Family Records will release a comprehensive collection of his secular-themed recordings called *Tennessee Ernie Ford: Portrait of an American Singer (1949-1960)*.

This deluxe box set features 154 tracks on five CDs as well as a 124-page hardcover book with album notes, photographs and essays. Songs on the track list include hits like "Mule Train," "The Shotgun Boogie" and "Rock City Boogie," along with the never-before-released track, "Slow Down."



ONCE IN A LIFETIME

RICKY SKAGGS, **DON HENLEY**, **BUFFY SAINT-MARIE**, **LOS LOBOS**, **GILLIAN WELCH** and **DAVID RAWLINGS** will receive lifetime achievement awards at the **AMERICANA MUSIC HONORS AND AWARDS CEREMONY** at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium on September 16. The esteemed group joins previous honorees such as **JOHNNY CASH**, **LORETTA LYNN**, **KRIS KRISTOFFERSON** and **WILLIE NELSON**, among others.



RICKY SKAGGS
Lifetime Achievement Award as an Instrumentalist

DON HENLEY
Lifetime Achievement Trailblazer

BUFFY SAINT-MARIE
Spirit of Americana Free Speech in Music Award

LOS LOBOS
Lifetime Achievement in Performance Award

GILLIAN WELCH
Lifetime Achievement Award for Songwriting

DAVID RAWLINGS
Lifetime Achievement Award for Songwriting

Southern COMFORT

You don't have to be Southern to appreciate the region's culture, and with the new line of T-shirts and hats from **Y'ALLSOME**, you can wear your heart for the South on your sleeve. These 100 percent cotton shirts (made in North Carolina) and embroidered hats (stitched in Georgia) boast Southern pride with their sayings and logos. But even cooler? For every Y'allsome product sold, 15 percent of the profits go to support Southern foster kids through Adoption Discover in Atlanta.



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Y'allsome
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The Cross
\$30

MY DEAR SON MAY GOD ALWAYS PROTECT YOU

*Cross Set with a
Genuine Black Sapphire*

*Crafted in Gleaming,
Tough Stainless Steel*

Finely engraved on
the reverse side



*Shown smaller than
actual size of 2 inches*

Share a wonderful way for your son to carry the power of God's love forever with a stylish and sophisticated expression of faith. Introducing the "Protection and Strength for My Son" Pendant—an exclusive jewelry design available only from The Bradford Exchange.

Gleaming Stainless Steel and a Genuine Black Sapphire

Crafted of rugged, gleaming stainless steel as strong as your faith, the front of our shield dog tag pendant features a stylized diamond-shaped cross set with a genuine black sapphire at the center. The sides have a black finish which contributes to the contemporary design.

Adding to the meaning and value, the pendant is engraved on the reverse side with the sentiment: "My Dear Son, May God always protect you and give you strength." A matching 24" stainless steel chain completes the look.

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*Respond as soon as possible to
reserve your pendant.*



Satisfaction Guaranteed!

*Plus \$8.98 shipping and service. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of your jewelry after we receive your initial deposit. Sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.

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YES. Please reserve the "Protection and Strength for My Son" Pendant for me as described in this announcement, in the quantity checked below.

1 Pendant 2 Pendants 3 Pendants 4 Pendants

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Mrs. Mr. Ms. _____

Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

E-Mail (Optional) _____

01-16930-001-E08101



AMERICAN GRILL

MARTINA McBRIDE BRINGS OUT THE BURGERS FOR AN ALL-AMERICAN LABOR DAY COOKOUT.

Martina McBride loves to indulge in a good old-fashioned cheeseburger, especially on holidays like Labor Day. In her recent book on cooking and home entertaining, *Around the Table: Recipes and Inspiration for Gatherings Throughout the Year*, Martina shares her recipe for the All-American Backyard Burger.

“While there are all kinds of fancy additions and uptown ways to do it,” Martina writes, “the classic ground beef burger with simple toppings is still my favorite.” Get out the grill and serve this up for your crew as we celebrate Labor Day on Monday, Sept. 7.

BOB PAXMAN

ALL-AMERICAN BACKYARD BURGER

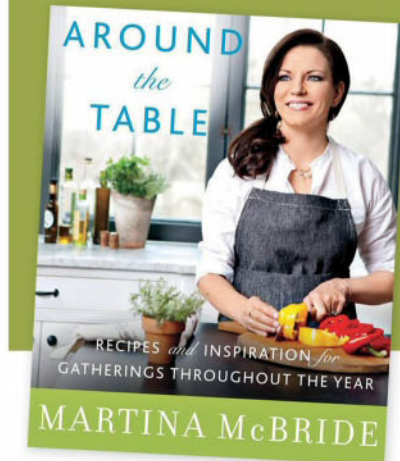
5 lbs. ground chuck (at least 80 percent lean)
3 cups finely chopped spinach (optional)
1 cup chopped sweet onion
3 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Vegetable oil for the grill
12 cheese slices (American, Monterey & pepper jack)
12 hamburger buns
Applewood-smoked bacon (slices, cooked and halved)
Tomato slices
Green leaf lettuce leaves
White onion slices
Dill or sweet and spicy pickles
Ketchup
Yellow mustard
Mayonnaise

Preheat the grill to medium-high. In a large bowl, **MIX** the ground beef, spinach, onion, Worcestershire sauce and 3 tsp. each of the salt and pepper.

DIVIDE the meat equally into 12 portions and form into patties about 1-inch thick. Season both sides of the patties lightly with salt and pepper.

Lightly **BRUSH** the grill grates with vegetable oil and place the patties on the grates. **GRILL** the patties for 4 to 5 minutes, then flip and grill 4 minutes more for medium. Place a slice of cheese on top of the patties and cook an additional 1 minute or until melted. Toast the buns (if desired), cut-sides down, 30 seconds to 1 minute or until lightly toasted.

Serve burgers with desired toppings.



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 The lasting beauty of fine art.

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 Centerpiece



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 is hand-formed from
 a silky, textured
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 size of about 11 inches tall.
 Vase is appr. 6 inches tall.
 Requires 3 "AAA" batteries
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Limit: one per order.

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It wouldn't be Christmas without the
 imagery of Thomas Kinkadee, whose
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 Centerpiece that will always look
 fresh and lovely. It features hand-
 crafted silken flowers, holly
 leaves, carnations, evergreen
 boughs, glittered pine cones, and
 white and red roses presented
 in an ornament-shaped vase
 decorated with Thomas Kinkadee's
 Victorian Christmas II imagery.

The vase is hand-painted in a
 satin metallic finish, while
 long-lasting LED lights within
 the bouquet add a warm,
 inviting glow.

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 guaranteed

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 three installments of \$33.33 each,
 the first due before shipment. Send
 no money now. Just return the
 Reservation Application today!

Singles

Tim McGraw "Top of the World"

BIG MACHINE RECORDS

B

It's nice to hear an old-fashioned love song, particularly in these times when that style has taken the literal back seat to sex-and-alcohol romps. The song's central theme, all you need is love, doesn't qualify as terribly original. But the presentation is so pleasing that you don't really mind. Tim's phrasing gives this a romantic feel that's ramped up on the chorus, with particular emphasis on the word "got," a simple but effective production touch. It all revolves around a catchy melody and you can easily envision couples singing this back to one another, whether on the back porch or the front row at one of Tim's concerts. True, the lyrics pander somewhat with references to "double wide" and white picket fences, though they're augmented by the clever sound-to-sense wordplay of, *Any way you kiss me, flips me and gets me the right kind of tipsy.* This belongs squarely in the Tim pantheon of love songs like "Just to See You Smile" and "One of Those Nights."

BOB PAXMAN



THE NCW JUKEBOX

Essential songs from the artists featured in this issue

KEITH URBAN

"John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16"

KIP MOORE

"I'm to Blame"

MADDIE & TAE

"Shut Up and Fish"

THOMAS RHETT

"Crash and Burn"

CHRIS JANSON

"Buy Me a Boat"

BILLY SHERRILL

"Stand by Your Man"
(co-writer)

REBA MCENTIRE

"Until They Don't Love You"

LEE BRICE

"That Don't Sound Like You"

CRAIG MORGAN

"That's What I Love About Sunday"

JOSH GRIDER

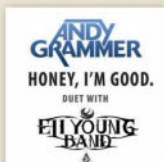
"I Love a Storm"

STEPHANIE QUAYLE

"That's What I'm Talking About"

LOOK FOR THIS
NASH COUNTRY WEEKLY
PLAYLIST ON

rdio



Eli Young Band and Andy Grammer "Honey, I'm Good"

VALORY MUSIC COMPANY

B

It wasn't enough for pop rocker Andy Grammer to take "Honey, I'm Good" to the top of *Billboard's* Adult Top 40 chart in 2014, he had to tackle the country charts by enlisting the help of Eli Young Band for a countrified duet of the tune. Now, country radio is primed for its most unshakable earworm since Swedish recording group Rednex's 1994 cover of "Cotton Eye Joe." If you were a fan of Andy's version, you'll likely enjoy the duet that features amped up harmonies, clap-along percussion, plucky guitar and EYB frontman Mike Eli trading verses with Andy. **JIM CASEY**

Reba McEntire

"Until They Don't Love You"

NASH ICON MUSIC

B+



It's hard to hear Reba's latest single and not think about the superstar's separation from husband/manager Narvel Blackstock.

Sometimes you don't love somebody until they don't love you, goes the money line, sung with a righteous, gospel intensity that sounds at once apologetic and angry. Concocted by the A-list team of writers Shane McAnally, Lori McKenna and Josh Osborne, "Until They Don't" offers some nifty wordplay (see the A-B-C-D combo in verse 2) wrapped up in a desperate, baby-come-back breakup narrative. The production sounds a touch dated, with too-heavy guitar stabs stealing focus from the funky percussion and relentless, hammering piano in the background. Still, with its sly disco groove and build/release dynamics, it's one remix away from absolutely destroying a dance floor. **JON FREEMAN**

Canaan Smith

"Hole in a Bottle"

MERCURY NASHVILLE

B



The tendency to lump all of the ball cap, skinny jean and flannel shirt wearing male country stars into a one-and-the-same category is frequently overwhelming, but when it comes to Canaan Smith, you might want to hold off a second. Sure, his new single, "Hole in a Bottle," is in the same vein as those up-tempo, boozy summer songs, but he gives the fist-pumpin', hand-clappin', solo-cup-in-the-air party anthem an infectious, chugga-chugga country twist that stands out. Go ahead and sing along, you know you want to, but don't sing too loud. Canaan has one of the finest new voices in country music, so don't drown him out. As fun as "Hole in a Bottle" is, it's almost a teaser to even better tracks on his album, *Bronco*, which serves as a nice launchpad for his career.

TAMMY RAGUSA



MADDIE & TAE

WHO IS THE MESSIEST?

TAE: I'm the messiest in the brain, if that makes sense.

MADDIE: Physically, neither of us really likes a mess.

WHO SPENDS MORE TIME ON THE PHONE?

M: Tae.

WHO SPENDS MORE TIME IN THE MIRROR?

M: I do, I take like 30 minutes longer to get ready than she does.

WHO IS THE PICKIER EATER?

T: Maddie.

M: Yeah. I'm pretty picky. I'm just not easily impressed.

WHO IS THE BIGGER SHOPAHOLIC?

T: It depends. If you're telling me I can go to TJ Maxx and spend all day, I'll do that. But if you're telling me I have to

go to friggin' Chanel or something, heck no.

M: We don't buy expensive stuff. We like bargains. Quantity over quality with clothes, because clothes go out of style so quickly. Why spend \$300 on a pair of pants if they're just gonna go out of style?

WHO WOULD WIN IN AN ARM WRESTLING MATCH?

T: Probably Maddie, she's got some great muscles.

M: [laughs] I do love working out.

T: I try to exercise out on the road, but oh my gosh, our schedules are just so crazy. We're more into having fun while we exercise. We went and played tennis. We like to do fun stuff, like going kayaking.

M: I went to Percy Warner Park and did an outdoor workout, which is the best. You have your free weights—so you can do a bunch of stuff.

WHO IS THE WORSE DRIVER?

T: Oh, me!

M: I don't think you're a bad driver.

T: I've never been pulled over, I can say that.

M: I got a speeding ticket. I've been in two wrecks that weren't my fault, if that counts. This girl hit me head-on driving in the left lane. And my social studies teacher back home rear-ended me because she got rear-ended. But I got a speeding ticket.

T: I've never been pulled over. I'm knocking on wood.

M: I think I'm the worst driver.

WHO WATCHES MORE TV ON THE BUS?

T: Oh, me. I'm obsessed with *Pretty Little Liars* right now so I wake up, watch two episodes, go to sleep, watch two episodes, it's so good.

M: And I find stupid crap to do like clean or something boring like that.

WHO IS THE EARLY RISER?

T: Maddie. I could sleep 'til noon, if I could.

WHO GETS MORE STRESSED OUT?

T: [laughs]

M: I do. Oh my gosh, I am like the perfectionist stresser person. I stress for the both of us.

T: I wish that I could do that, but I can't.

WHO IS MORE LIKELY TO RANDOMLY BURST INTO SONG?

M: Both of us.

T: Yeah, we pretty much talk in song. It's really annoying to our band members, I'm sure.

M: They hate it. There was a really good one that happened the other day, and they were so annoyed. We just sing all the time.

T: We're a step below a musical.

LYRICAL LESSONS . . . ACCORDING TO REBA MCENTIRE

Listen closely and you might find that your favorite country star isn't just a singer or writer of great songs, but they're also a bit of a spiritual leader teaching life lessons through their lyrics.

"I'M NOT THAT LONELY YET"

Life Lesson: There's a difference in being lonely and being alone. Lonely means you could end up regretfully doing the walk of shame after a Friday night hook-up. Alone means you get the whole pint of Ben & Jerry's and the remote control to yourself

"CAN'T EVEN GET THE BLUES"

Life Lesson: You can't make yourself feel something you don't. You can't make yourself love someone you don't really love and you can't make yourself miss someone you don't miss. You can, however, file a restraining order when he takes all the silverware and furniture.

"LITTLE ROCK"

Life Lesson: There are four things that contribute to the value of a diamond—cut, color, clarity and carat size. But none of those things mean anything if it doesn't make you happy. Skip the rock and get a puppy. Puppies make everyone happy.

"THE NIGHT THE LIGHTS WENT OUT IN GEORGIA"

Life Lesson: If you live in the backwoods of Georgia, never, never, ever, walk home alone. Ever.

"CONSIDER ME GONE"

Life Lesson: Have a little bit of pride, a little dignity and never settle for anything less than you deserve. Unless it's chocolate—a little of that is better than none at all.

"WALK ON"

Life Lesson: A snappy beat and a catchy hook can make walking away from troubles so much easier. Find a soundtrack for your life and when things go south, walk the heck on.



Thomas Rhett

With a Top 10 single, "Crash and Burn," driving its way up the charts, we caught up with Thomas Rhett for a little game we like to call, "Check Yes or No."

HAVE YOU EVER HAD A FLAT TIRE?

YES NO

DO YOU BELIEVE IN KARMA?

YES NO

WERE YOU POPULAR IN HIGH SCHOOL?

YES NO

DO YOU LIKE RAIN?

YES NO

EVER SNEAK UP ON SOMEONE AND SURPRISE THEM?

YES NO

DID YOU RUSH TO GET HERE?

YES NO

HAVE YOU EVER MADE SOMEONE CRY?

YES NO

DID YOU TRY ON MORE THAN ONE OUTFIT THIS MORNING?

YES NO

HAVE YOU EVER KISSED SOMEONE YOU DIDN'T LIKE?

YES NO

DO YOU FLOSS?

YES NO

WOULD YOU EAT PICKLED PIG'S FEET?

YES NO

DO YOU WISH THIS WAS OVER?

YES NO



photo courtesy The Valory Music Co.

NASH **N**EXT

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



THE SEEKER

KIP MOORE FINDS HIMSELF
—AND A NEW SOUND—
WITH HIS SOPHOMORE
ALBUM, ***WILD ONES***

BY JON FREEMAN

In retrospect, Kip Moore's 2014 single "Dirt Road" was an important milestone for the singer/songwriter. Topically, it was a tough sell for programmers: the oft-used title phrase was employed as an attempt to understand the magnitude of the afterlife and why many simple, earthly pleasures are frowned upon by organized religion. The song's decidedly heavy, nonparty atmosphere probably didn't help matters. It fell just shy of the Top 40 before disappearing.

It was disappointment heaped on disappointment—Kip's prior single "Young Love" hadn't managed to crack the Top 20—and further delayed the follow-up to Kip's well-received 2012 album *Up All Night*. At that point, he could've started aping what was working on radio to keep the hits coming. Instead, he wrote new music in self-imposed isolation, late at night at home or on the road at soundcheck, searching his soul for songs that spoke to him.

"My life has changed so much," admits Kip, sprawling comfortably in his chair in the Nash conference room. "I'm not gonna keep writing about something just because it worked. I'm not gonna keep making the same record just because it worked."

By Kip standards, he's dressed up today—his light blue Hawaii T-shirt actually has sleeves—but he can't mask the anxiety he's currently feeling. His long-awaited sophomore album, *Wild Ones*, will be in stores by the time this issue hits shelves but he doesn't seem entirely convinced that it's actually going to happen—that some unforeseen circumstance may cause it to be sidelined indefinitely.

"Hell yeah, I'm worried," he erupts, laughing. "This has felt like eternity for me. I've felt like I've almost lost my mind in the midst of this. And my only saving grace was playing shows at night."



Whether fishing, diving or surfing, Kip loves being in nature.



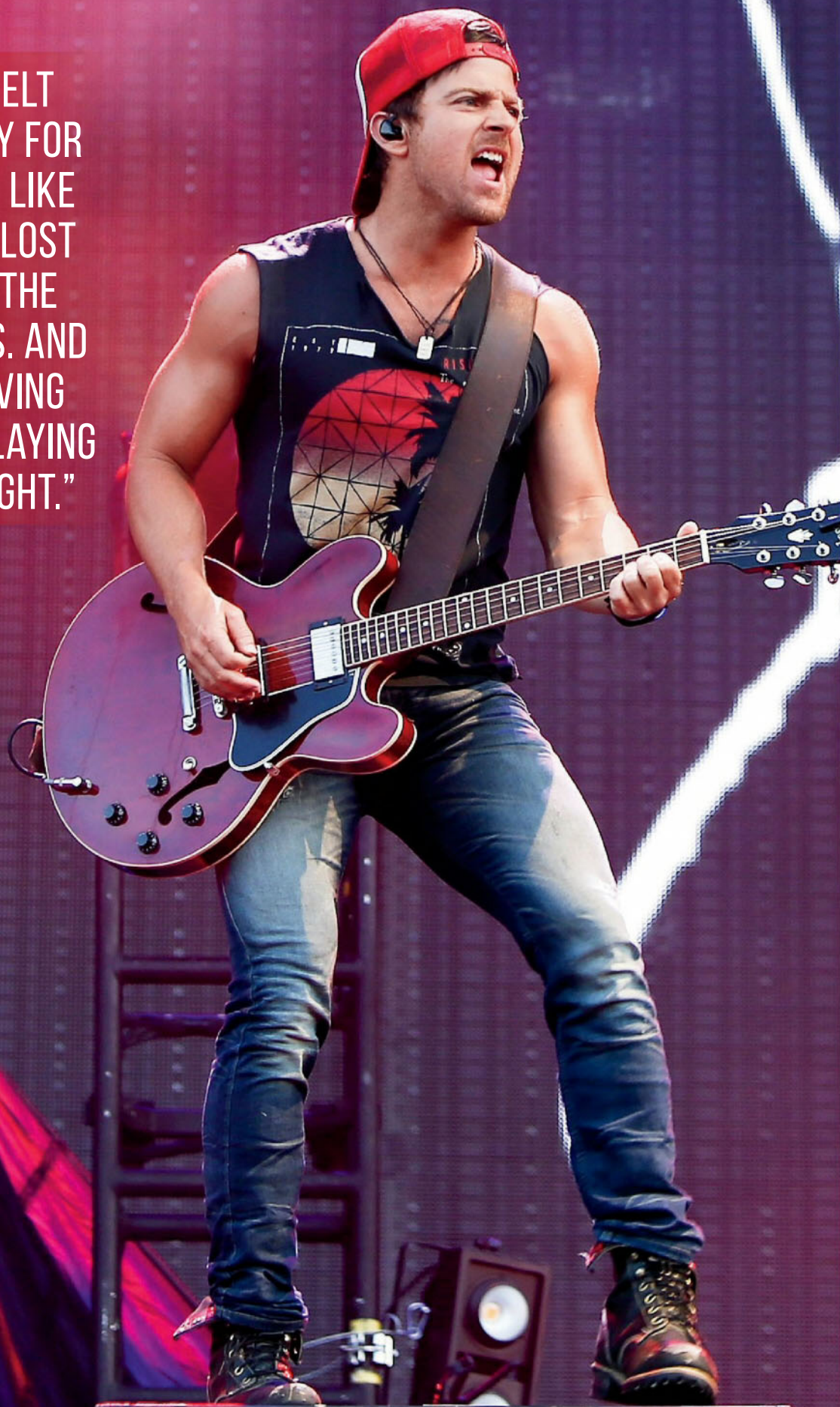
Seldom are there ever guarantees in the music business. It's constantly shifting sand and wildly variable weather at best. After Kip scored a quick succession of hits with "Some-thin' Bout a Truck," "Beer Money" and "Hey Pretty Girl," he had enough momentum to ascend to the next level of his career. That's when the setbacks started to happen.

Kip's voice was off country radio for an extended period (roughly six months at the end of 2014), which can be a killer for anyone who hasn't yet attained superstar status. And yet, things were still happening at the street level with Kip's shows that defied logic. "There was something about it—[fans] kept coming and it kept growing," he says. "That's what was the only thing that made me feel like, OK, maybe I am on the right path. Maybe me sticking to my guns and being so stubborn all the time is serving a purpose."

Wild Ones, with its kinetic, neon-colored image of Kip on the cover, matches the energy of his live shows and also plays up the stubborn, unapologetic nature of the Valdosta, Ga., native. Musically, it takes an intriguing left turn away from the relatively straightforward dusty country rock of *Up All Night*. Kip's fixation on Bruce Springsteen and Tom Petty still remains in the mix, but now there are distinct touches of U2, Peter Gabriel and '90s Britpop among its glistening guitar arpeggios and roving basslines.

"It was searching and searching, it was landing on what I heard in my head," explains Kip, who doesn't cite any specific musical reference points for *Wild Ones* but does claim U2's classic *The Joshua Tree* as a favorite. "This record came out like I had it in my head, where *Up All Night* did not always turn out that way. I had time to live with these songs. I knew what they were. I know what they were about, I knew each one of them

“THIS HAS FELT LIKE ETERNITY FOR ME. I’VE FELT LIKE I’VE ALMOST LOST MY MIND IN THE MIDST OF THIS. AND MY ONLY SAVING GRACE WAS PLAYING SHOWS AT NIGHT.”





Kip celebrates his first No. 1, "Some-thin' 'Bout a Truck," with his co-writer Dan Couch. Kip and Dan also co-penned Kip's "Hey Pretty Girl."

Dan & Kip by Kendra Gene Motycka; Kip & band and Kip on beach courtesy Kip Moore social media

what I wanted them to be."

The album's current single, "I'm to Blame," is a nice encapsulation of the guy Kip sees himself as being: flawed, rough around the edges and unapologetic about it. As of this writing, the song is creeping through the Top 20 at radio, a riff-heavy, bite-size anthem for blue-collar life.

"I don't think there's any bulls**t about me," he says. "There's nothing polished about me. I grew up with a blue-collar lifestyle. I sing about blue-collar life a lot of times. I don't know, man, I just feel like those are my people. That's what I relate to."

The isolated, desperate period during which the songs on *Wild Ones* were conceived was an essen-

tial ingredient for Kip, who claims the discomfort of those times actually serves his songwriting. That feeling of desperation is imprinted on "Complicated," about a guy trying his best to hold a wild-and-crazy relationship together, and the slow-burning "Heart's Desire," about a guy trying to get back in one of those relationships.

"A song like 'Heart's Desire,' which is one of the most special ones for me—it was because of that that I was able to tap into that," he says. "Because a lot of times I'm not good at understanding or showing how I feel in real life with somebody, but I can get off on those isolated trips or journeys, the surfing

trips I take, or writing in the studio by myself and then I can actually tap into what I'm feeling. It's a weird thing with me. A lot of that is like a double-edged sword for me. It's like I need it to create."

Even closer to that idea of Kip's struggle is the album's thematic centerpiece, "Comeback Kid." Relatively quiet by comparison to the rest of the songs, it's about a guy who refuses to give up when the chips are down and succeeds in spite of the long odds. That narrative mirrors Kip's own winding, sometimes harrowing journey in the music business as well as his whole life before fame.

"I've always had to scrap and claw for every damn inch I feel like I've



(Above left) For the “I’m to Blame” video, Kip and his band dressed up in lightly colored tuxedos to crash a wedding; (below right) Kip cruises the streets in the “Young Love” video; (below left) the colorful album artwork for *Wild Ones*, captured during a live show.



gotten in my life,” he grunts. “And you get around people, it seems that stuff just falls in their lap. I’ve just never been that guy. Sometimes I wish I was that guy. That was a statement song for me, because I’m not going anywhere. The second you count me out is the second I’m gonna prove you wrong.”

Ultimately, that may be as good an explanation as any of why Kip didn’t give up completely after “Dirt Road” fizzled. Writing and singing has become like a commitment for him that isn’t predicated on commercial gains, so he’ll just keep right on doing it, thank you very much.

“Money never entered my mind, fame never entered my mind,” he

says. “It was always like, I wanted to be a master at my craft. And truly feel like I’ve done something great in my mind and I truly feel like I’ve created something great. And I still don’t feel that. So it’s like I’m searching for that thing.”

That restless nature of Kip’s writing habits extends to all areas of his life. He doesn’t stay in one place for too long; he doesn’t have many material possessions outside a small two bedroom house he bought in 2013; and he regularly travels to surfing hot spots alone, the vast expanses of ocean granting him clarity and calm.

“I feel like I’m always searching for that joy and peace,” he says, quietly. “That might sound like a very simple

thing to a lot of people but I kind of have a chaotic mind and I feel like I’m searching for the ever-elusive joy and peace in my life. I have it in fleeting moments I’ll feel it for a moment, and it slips back by me again.”

“I find it a lot of times when I’m surfing,” he continues. “I’ll find it early in the morning. I’m out there before the sun comes up or I’m out there when the sun goes down. It overflows on me, and I have this sense of peace and joy and I’m right where I’m supposed to be and I’m satisfied in the work I’ve created. And then I lose it and I’m trying to get it again.”

For now, Kip and his fans can take comfort in knowing that likely means plenty of new songs. **N**



HOT SHOT

AVID HUNTER **CHRIS JANSON** HAS HIT THE BULL'S-EYE WITH HIS SONG "**BUY ME A BOAT**," BUT HE STILL MAKES TIME TO VISIT THE WOODS.

PHOTOS BY
TYLER ANDREWS



Though his days off are few and far between as his single “Buy Me a Boat” races up the charts, Chris still makes time to head into the woods and hunt. As he gets ready for hunting season, he keeps his skills sharp by target shooting.



Chris is right at home in his man cave.

If anyone can testify that life can change with just one song, it would be Chris Janson. Earlier this summer, his song “Buy Me a Boat” exploded across radio and sales platforms, busting the gate wide open with opportunities from people who loved its blue-collar message. Before then, Chris was a respected-but-underappreciated performer who released the single “Better I Don’t” and co-wrote Tim McGraw’s head-turning single “Truck Yeah.”

“It went from a normal pace of life that we were used to, to like a million miles an hour quick,” Chris says, laughing. “‘Buy Me a Boat’ was a major surprise to us with how it’s played out. We were actually talking about it the other night going, ‘Can you believe all this is happening in this short amount of time?’ It’s shocking to go out and see 25,000 people singing your song, word-for-

word, standing up with their hands in the air. It’s nuts! It makes touring a lot more fun when you have something they are really attached to like ‘Buy Me a Boat.’ Beforehand, I had to really win them over. We almost have something to walk in now with. I’m the ‘Buy Me a Boat’ guy, and I’m proud to be that. I love that.” In addition to “Truck Yeah,” Chris has dozens of songs recorded by other artists including LOCASH, Jerrod Niemann, Frankie Ballard and Randy Houser, among others.

With this newfound fame comes a grueling schedule that has Chris on the road five days a week, including opening dates for Toby Keith’s Good Times & Pick Up Lines Tour. When he has time off, Chris spends it with his family—wife Kelly, their son Jesse, daughter Georgia and his two “bonus kids” Graham and Chel—or preparing

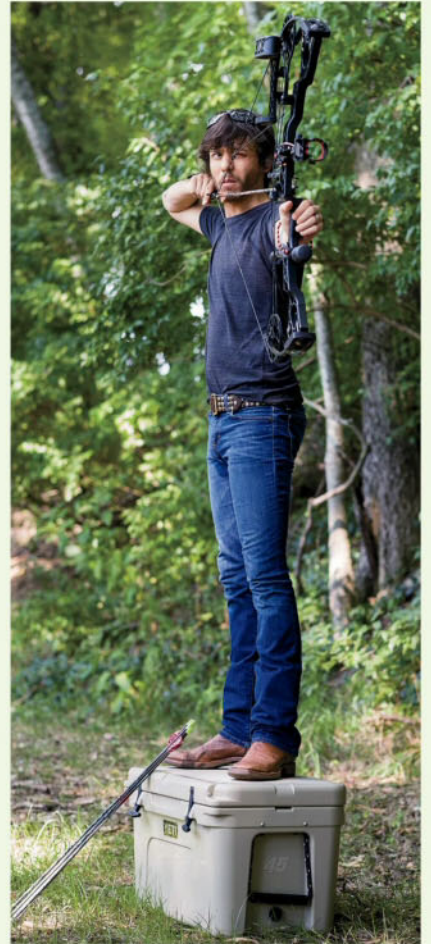
for deer season. *Nash Country Weekly* was fortunate to catch up with Chris on one of his rare days off to shoot (with a camera, of course) the avid bow hunter on his property, to talk family and getting ready for deer season.

“I start getting geared up for deer season the day that it ends each year,” says Chris, settling into one of the cowhide chairs in the “man cave” portion of his home in the Nashville area. It’s scattered with various keepsakes collected during his hunting adventures. “Every time I’m in the woods, I’m picking something up,” he says, pointing across the room at a pile of antlers yet to be displayed. “You can ask my wife—when I’m not thinking about work or family or Jesus, I’m thinking about, where can I hang a trail camera? Where can I kill the next big deer? And did I get my license?”

In an effort to multi-task on his



Chris looks on as NCW scribe Alanna Conaway tests out her own new Bounty bow, courtesy of Bear Archery.



With his trusty bow and arrow drawn back, surrounded by the nature on his property, Chris is right in his element.

CHRIS JANSON CONTINUED

days off, Chris also tries to incorporate his family into his numerous hunting trips, though they don't share his same passion for the pursuit. "My bonus kids have been hunting with me before," he says. "I don't know if they really get into it, but we have fun. I was talking to Georgia—my 4-year-old—the other day. She was like, 'Dad, I think I'm going to start hunting with you this year.' I said, 'Alright, good!'"

Even if the hunting bug doesn't bite Chris' kids, there are still plenty of other outdoor activities for them to enjoy as a family, including the new kayaks they recently purchased following the success of "Buy Me a Boat." "Kayaking is really the first time that we've actually done something as a family in the outdoors that everybody liked at one time,

which was really good," notes Chris. "Whether or not they ever want to hunt with me, that's fine. I kind of take it so damn serious that I'm not really fun to be around, honestly. I took Kelly when we were first dating, and it was an experience for her!"

"Some people look at hunting like some stupid hobby that you can do anytime," adds Chris. "For a guy like me, it's really a part of who I am and how I breathe and roll. The interesting thing is, I didn't grow up with parents or a family that was as serious about hunting as I am. I got serious about it from a very young age. I'm kind of my own deal when it comes to all this stuff."

Chris understands that the upcoming hunting season will be a little more difficult to swing now that he's enjoying a hit single and put the finishing touches on a highly

anticipated album for Warner Bros. Records. Even so, he guarantees there will be time for both music and hunting, now and always. "Here's the deal: music pays my bills and hunting doesn't," he says, smiling. "Hunting has always been my hobby. Jobs, no matter what you do, dry up sometimes. I hope I don't hit that for a long time. I hope I have a plethora of success with it, good Lord willing. But I will always be able to hunt."

"I just want healthy kids, and as normal of a life as my wife and kids can have outside of the music business," he continues. "The rest will fall into place if it's supposed to or fall out of place if it's supposed to. But, I do hope I have more hits than 'Buy Me a Boat,' and I hope we always get to continue touring on the level that we are . . . and that I will still be somewhere hunting deer!"

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A black and white portrait of Billy Sherrill. He is seated, leaning forward with his chin resting on his right hand. He is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt with a ruffled front panel and a watch on his left wrist. The background is dark and out of focus.

Billy Sherrill

1936-2015

*The Country Music Hall of Fame
producer/songwriter helped
establish greats like Tammy Wynette
and George Jones.*

BY BOB PAXMAN

Billy Sherrill put the “Tammy” in Tammy Wynette, helped define the sound known as “countryopolitan” and convinced George Jones to record “He Stopped Loving Her Today,” winning \$100 in the process. The legendary Music Row producer and songwriter, who served as a guiding light to some of country’s all-time giants, died on Aug. 4 at age 78 following a brief illness.

A native of Alabama, Billy was exposed to rockabilly and pop as a youth, and incorporated those influences into his production style. He moved to Music City in 1962 to manage the Nashville studio of Sun Records before working for Epic Records as an in-house producer. Billy favored sweeping productions using piano and strings as the melodic base instead of traditional country instruments, giving rise to the term “countryopolitan” for its amalgam of country-inspired subject matter and pop-laden production. Billy’s first major success came with David Houston’s “Almost Persuaded,” which Billy co-wrote with Glenn Sutton and also produced. The song hit No. 1 on the country charts in 1966 and peaked inside the Top 25 on the pop charts.

But it was Billy’s work with Tammy Wynette that solidly established his genius. Billy began working with the young singer in 1966 and involved himself in every aspect of her career, down to the choice of her stage name. He rightly noted that the moniker she was using at the time, Wynette Byrd, would never work, and suggested “Tammy” to go with Wynette. Billy wrote a number of Tammy’s early hits, including her first solo No. 1, “I Don’t Wanna Play House,” in 1967, which eventually copped a Grammy award.

In 1968, Billy and Tammy scored their biggest triumph with a song they completed during a short break at a Nashville recording session, “Stand by Your Man.” The song leaped to the No. 1 spot on Nov. 23, 1968, slightly more than a month after its release, and stayed at the top for three weeks. But in an era of burgeoning feminism, “Stand by Your Man” also antagonized many female listeners, who felt that the song promoted a subservient attitude. Billy staunchly defended it through the years, maintaining that “Stand by Your Man” was simply another way of saying, “I love you.”

Billy’s collaborations with George Jones, beginning in

1971 when George moved over to the Epic label, proved his most enduring. Billy produced George’s first No. 1 with the label, 1974’s “The Grand Tour,” as well as George’s classic duets with Tammy Wynette, “Golden Ring” and “Near You.”

Easily the most famous story surrounding Billy and George involved a wager between the two over the song, “He Stopped Loving Her Today.” George adamantly refused to cut the song, insisting that listeners wouldn’t buy “that morbid son of a b-@*%.” Billy bet George \$100 that the song would become a hit, and it was surely the easiest C-note the producer ever came by. “He Stopped Loving Her Today” hit No. 1 in July 1980, won the Country Music Association awards for both Single and Song of the Year and is generally considered the greatest country tune ever written. And yes, George paid up.

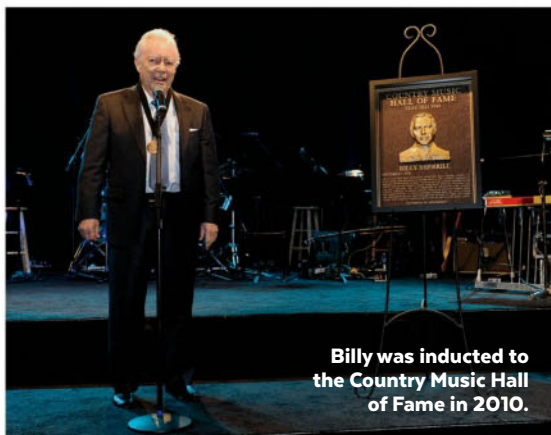
Billy took other artists under his capable wing, including Janie Fricke, Moe Bandy, Johnny Paycheck and Charlie Rich, and helmed projects by rock singer/songwriter Elvis Costello and Ray Charles, among many outside the country realm. Billy helped Charlie’s career soar to the upper stratosphere with his productions of “Behind Closed Doors” and “The Most Beautiful Girl,” propelling the R&B-influenced singer to the Country Music Association Entertainer of the Year honor in 1974.

Janie Fricke was an in-demand session and duet vocalist when she began her association with Billy in late 1980. He believed that Janie was limiting herself and had the goods to become a successful solo artist.

“Billy Sherrill was the first producer to give me a push to start [doing] my own recordings,” Janie told *Nash Country Weekly*. “I was a

busy backup singer and was not sure about going solo.” On the heels of Billy’s encouragement, Janie enjoyed a breakout year in 1982 with a couple of No. 1s, “Don’t Worry ’Bout Me Baby” and “It Ain’t Easy Bein’ Easy.” She won the Country Music Association award for Female Vocalist of the Year in 1982 and 1983.

For his contributions to the country genre, Billy was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2010. “Billy was one of the greats in our music community,” Moe Bandy commented to *Nash Country Weekly*. “He definitely left his mark on country music that will last forever.” Amen to that. **NCW**





Trying Times

REBA McENTIRE AND HUSBAND NARVEL BLACKSTOCK SEPARATE AFTER 26 YEARS.

With the recent swell of divorces and deaths, it's been a trying few months for the country music family. And when news broke on Aug. 3 that Reba McEntire and her husband of 26 years, Narvel Blackstock, had separated, things got a little sadder.

Their love story began with Reba fronting her own band, which included Narvel as her steel guitar player. The relationship grew professionally and personally as he eventually added "manager" to his credentials and the couple became husband and wife. They tied the knot in 1989, exchanging vows in a private ceremony in Lake Tahoe. While Narvel had three children from a previous marriage, the new couple welcomed a son, Shelby, in 1990.

But it wasn't just in their personal life that the couple flourished. Narvel and Reba began to grow their Starstruck Entertainment empire. Starting as a management company, which helped guide the careers of Reba, Blake Shelton, Kelly Clarkson, Linda Davis, Brett James and Caroline Kole, it gradually became a comprehensive entertainment company with the addition of state-of-the-art recording studios, a broadcast facility and a publishing arm.

Reba also added actress to her résumé, starring in films (*Tremors*, *The Little Rascals*), television (*Reba*, *Malibu Country*) and onstage (*Annie Get Your Gun*, *South Pacific*), while Narvel was an executive producer on many of the projects. Clothing and home goods lines came along, and soon Reba, who had taken a break from music to focus on acting, returned to recording and touring, even reconnecting with her friends and duet partners, Brooks & Dunn, for a successful run at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas in June and July of this year.

It would seem that they had it all. There were no rumors of a marriage in crisis, infidelity or dissension that typically accompanies a high-profile rela-



tionship, so when a quiet and dignified announcement was made in early August that Reba and Narvel had separated, a collective gasp could be heard throughout the country music community. The statement simply read: "Narvel Blackstock and Reba McEntire have announced that they have been separated for the past few months after 26 years of marriage. Despite this being the end of their marriage, they continue to support each other. They have worked together for 35 years and will continue to do so. They have asked that you respect their privacy during this time."

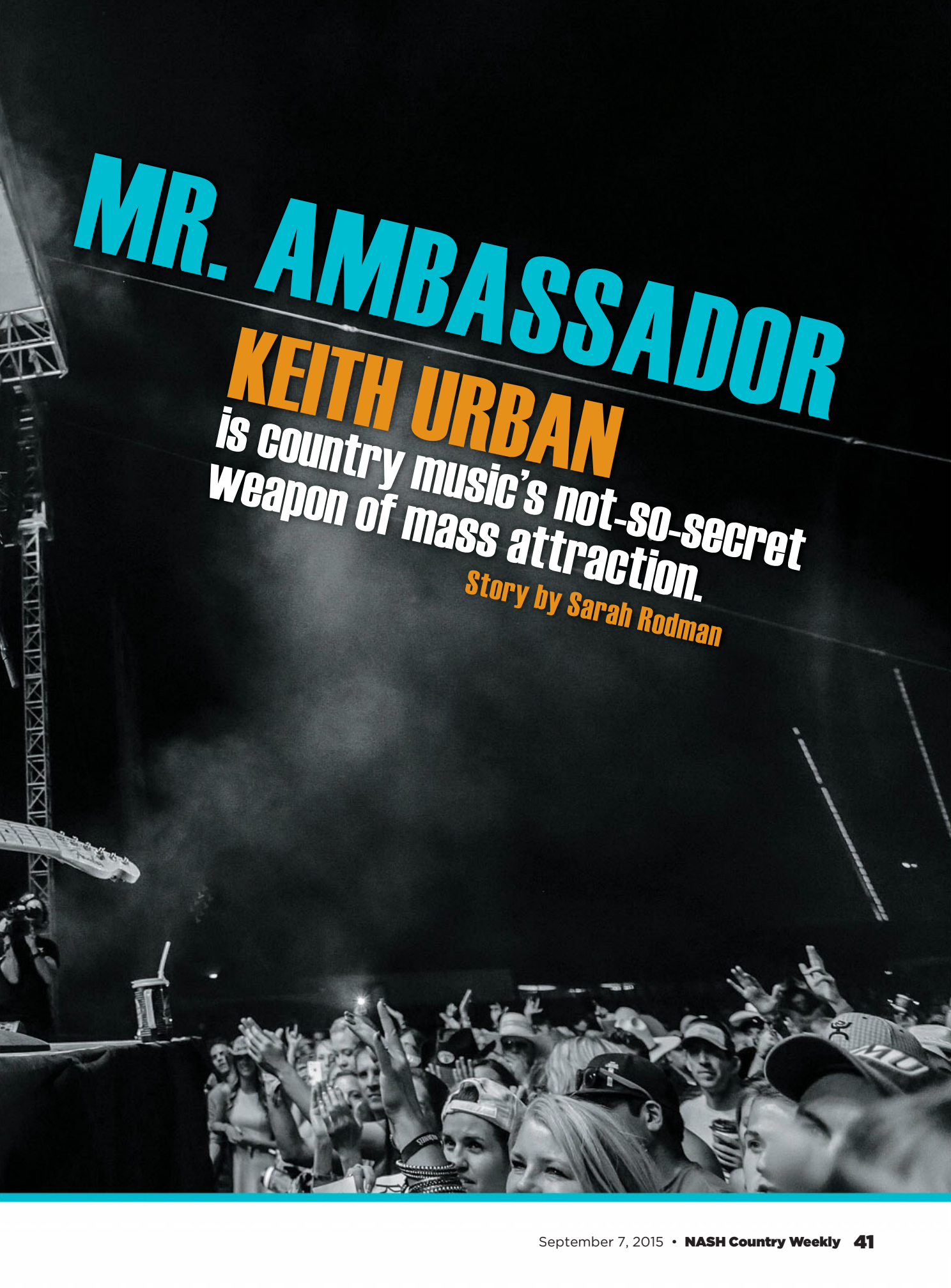
And it would seem that it is, indeed, business as usual. Reba recently released the second single, "Until They Don't Love You," from her new album, *Love Somebody*. She sang the new tune on the *Tonight Show* on Aug. 12 along with performing a hilarious "Close-Up Serenade" skit with show host Jimmy Fallon.

Although the official statement on Reba's website says that the marriage has ended, no mention of divorce has been made. Whether that means there is room for reconciliation or that the couple is attempting to proceed as quietly and privately as possible remains to be seen, but we wish both Reba and Narvel the best and commend them on their gracious respect of each other during this delicate time.

TAMMY RAGUSA



Photo by Andy Snyder/Guitar Monkey



MR. AMBASSADOR

KEITH URBAN

is country music's not-so-secret
weapon of mass attraction.

Story by Sarah Rodman



The many collaborations of Keith: (clockwise from above left) “We Were Us” with Miranda Lambert; All for the Hall with Vince Gill; “Long Hot Summer” No. 1 party with Richard Marx and Dann Huff; ACM Superstar Duets with John Anderson; the ACM Awards with Eric Church; “All for the Hall” rehearsals with Merle Haggard.



IN ITS 40-YEAR HISTORY, no country artist had ever played the Festival de Quebec. It seems somehow fitting that, in July, Keith Urban became the first to break that barrier, playing hits like “Raise ‘Em Up,” “Long Hot Summer,” “You Gonna Fly” and “John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16” to an enthusiastic audience of 70,000. A truly global artist, the New Zealand-born, Aussie-bred superstar travels the world evangelizing for country music in word and deed and he was thrilled that fans responded so enthusiastically.

“We’ve played a lot of festivals in our life, including Live 8 in Philadelphia, but that Quebec audience was indescribable with the energy they were giving us and how connected they were,” says Keith, on the phone from another Canadian tour stop shortly after his historic performance, where organizers declared that, thanks to Keith, more country will come to the festival in the future. “I walked offstage and I said to the band, ‘I don’t know how many shows I’ve done in my whole life, but that may be the best gig I’ve ever done.’ It was just one of those magic nights. It just might be my favorite gig of all time.”

While Keith clearly has his hands full out on the road conjuring the live magic as he continues to promote his hit 2013 album *Fuse*, he’s already ruminating about his next album. Will it be influenced by recent collaborations, including his appearance on the Jason DeRulo single “Broke” with Stevie Wonder and his noodling in the stu-

dio with Rock and Roll Hall of Fame producer and artist Nile Rodgers (David Bowie, Madonna) of Chic? Even he doesn’t know yet, but he’s excited about the prospect of making and releasing new music.

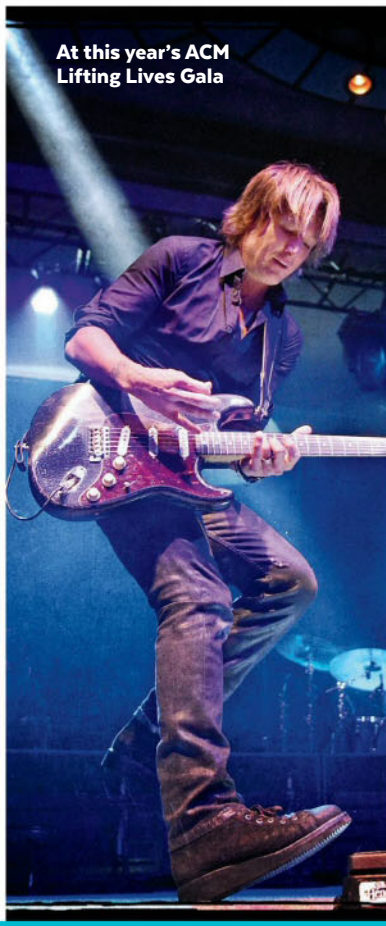
Keith, who returns to judge the final season of *American Idol* in early 2016, was so excited that he released “John Cougar” as a single, even though there is no title or release date for the album yet. The slinky slice of country funk, penned by Shane McAnally, Ross Copperman and Josh Osborne, was just too good not to release says Keith. “If we’ve come to the end of an album cycle and there isn’t any new music but there is, there’s a song, I don’t see why you can’t put a song out.” He figured correctly since the tune became the fastest seller of his nearly 15-year career. But Keith says fans shouldn’t necessarily look too closely at “John Cougar” as a bellwether of what is to come musically, especially since he is determined never to repeat himself.

“Everybody’s got their own feeling on those sorts of things but I think historically, and particularly with *Fuse*, it would be hard to pinpoint what that record was just by any one song,” says Keith of the stylistically diverse outing that moved from tender piano ballads to stomping rockers to pop-flecked anthems. “So, I don’t know that my specific fan base ever thinks that one song would be indicative of an entire album. At the very least, hopefully the energy is always indicative. I

Vince & Keith by Frederick Braddon/CHOC; Keith Richard & Dan by Rick Diamond/Getty Images; Keith performed by Jason Merritt/Academy of Country Music; Keith & Merle courtesy Merle Haggard Twitter; Keith & Eric by Larry Busacca/Academy of Country Music; John & Keith by Michael Buckner/Academy of Country Music; Keith & Harry by Faye Sadou/Retna/Corbis.



At this year's ACM Lifting Lives Gala



GOODBYE, A.I.

The upcoming season of **AMERICAN IDOL** will be its last, and **KEITH URBAN** knows that he will miss his fellow judges, particularly good buddy **HARRY CONNICK JR.**

"We may just put together some low-budget, pathetic thing where we do it in his basement or something, a little bit like Wayne's World, but it will be auditions for singers," says Keith with a laugh. "That would be great wouldn't it? Harry's World!"

In all seriousness, Keith, who will have sat at the judges' table for four seasons by the time the show ends in 2016, expressed sadness at the news. *"I really love doing this with Harry and Jen [Lopez] and Ryan [Seacrest]. I wish this foursome had been able to be there awhile before."*

But, he says, the door may not be completely closed on the show that introduced Carrie Underwood to the world.

"There's really nothing concrete about any of that but I can't tell you the amount of people who I have run into everywhere who say, 'Will it start back up again, maybe somewhere else?' So I think even the people involved in the show are still open towards the future," says Keith.

He cites Season 12 finalist Angie Miller as a favorite. *"The standout will always be when was she was in Hollywood week and she sang an original song, 'You Set Me Free.' It was an empowering, emotional, extraordinary song, and I remember thinking if that performance right there was released right now everybody would go crazy for it, so she definitely stood out to me."*

think the sounds, the rhythms, the tempos, the subject matter, all these elements may all be very different from one another, but I think the spirit and energy of 'John Cougar' is very much what the next record will be. But subject matter-wise I think it's going to run the gamut of a whole lot of things just like *Fuse* did."

Those subjects come to him all the time, day and night. "I jot lyrics down a lot, just jabs of lines and poetry and things," says Keith. "I have lots of songs that need to be finished out. It's like I have suburbs and suburbs that have these homes that are being built but they're not finished and I've got to get people to help me finish them so people can move in and live in them," he says with a laugh. "I need a bigger construction crew."

Who exactly will be on that crew has yet to be determined, but longtime co-producer Dann Huff—who has been behind the boards for all or part of the recording of Keith's last six albums and on "John Cougar"—agrees that the album could take just about any shape and believes Keith's longevity is proof he is the real deal.

"I think more than anybody I've worked with, I've learned the most from him," says Dann, who has worked with everyone from Faith Hill to Thomas Rhett. He believes Keith's staying power comes from "his insistence for himself to grow and explore, but also knowing full well that it's not just exploration, he's got to make hits, and that



GUITAR HERO

Many artists also double as pitchmen, and for Keith Urban, what better product to extend his brand than guitars?

The acclaimed axe master began selling his signature Urban Guitar Collection exclusively through the Home Shopping Network in 2013 and sales have been as hot as his solos.



KEITH URBAN CONTINUED

ain't easy when you've been doing it for over a decade." One element both men credit as contributing to Keith's body of work is the power of collaboration, something that they share, and that Keith has also explored with other artists and songwriters.

"A lot of times in our collaborating I feel like it's more to expose where his head is," says "John Cougar" co-writer Shane McAnally, who also co-wrote the dreamy "Come Back to Me" on *Fuse*. "I don't think it's always with the linear intention of writing a song for the record, it is to write and explore and also to send us back into the world knowing where he's at."

Keith helps figure out where it's at both in the solitude of writing and playing guitar and in brainstorming with different people. "I really have no system and it's a blessing and a curse," says Keith of his scattershot approach. "Everybody's got a different language

and some songs I think require that kind of craftsmanship, to carve out the lyrics and shape them right. Other times I feel like a song just wants to speak, it doesn't have to be cleverly rhymed. If I'm collaborating with someone I will specifically seek out those kinds of writers who don't feel like they have to write to a particular form or structure. I like rule-breakers a lot. That's why I've always been such a fan of Taylor [Swift]'s work as a lyricist."

That penchant for rule-breaking is part of the reason Keith so thoroughly enjoyed his time with Nile Rodgers, although it's unclear if the music they worked on will make the finished product.

"He's one of the greatest rhythm guitarists of all time," rhapsodizes Keith of the man who has put his stamp on everything from disco to hard rock. "His particular style is legendary, he's an icon just for the way he pockets that right wrist

"I'm so not a salesman, but I'm passionate about something I believe in and there's no nonsalesman way to say this but, truly, HSN has done exactly what I hoped they would do: make a really great guitar that's affordable," says Keith.

The success is particularly gratifying since learning to play guitar was so crucial to his own sense of self-expression.

"For me the biggest thing of all is when a person finds whatever it is they're good at," says Keith. "We have all had that moment in some form: 'Oh, this is the thing that helps me express myself!' And maybe not even to other people. I may just sit in my room and play a little bit of guitar. It's therapeutic for me as a person or it gives me confidence, or whatever it is, it has this profound effect on the quality of my life."

That epiphany, says Keith, "is just as, if not more, important than someone who is going to go out and become a fully professional musician because it's not just about that. I would think the large majority of people that buy our guitars aren't necessarily going to become full-on professional working musicians. They just want to play a little." He adds with a laugh, "I don't want to be a pro golfer but I just like to get the ball around the course."

and the way he dances with strings with his left hand as he's chording. It's extraordinary to sit in the studio with him and just jam, which we did for, oh my god, hours and hours and hours. We got a little groove going and we just played. The first night we worked together we didn't write anything, we just played. It was like two kids in a sandbox who had just been given



Keith HSN photo by Garardo Mora/HSN; perf by Eban Miller/Gaety Images; Nile & Keith courtesy Keith Urban Instagram; Taylor & Keith by Chris Hahn/ABC



Above: With musician and producer Nile Rodgers on the set of the American Idol finale



Below: From the ABC special CMA Music Festival: Country's Night to Rock with Taylor Swift



brand-new Tonka trucks and we just like played for hours and hours grinning at each other. I can't speak for Nile, but from my standpoint it was so effortless and almost like finding a long lost brother. So, I do hope something we've done will not only make the record but I hope that several things we've done will make the record."

Nile is one name on a long list of artists with whom Keith would like to work, but no matter who he shares the studio or the stage with—from Eric Church to Miranda Lambert—he knows his sound will always intrinsically be his own. "It's funny, because I'm so strongly involved in the production of my records and always co-produce, if not actually produce certain tracks myself, I think that's what helps glue it all together," says Keith. "My fingerprints are going to be on it no matter what it is."

One place his fingerprints can be felt is on the current wave of country artists who are incorporating an EDM and R&B feel to their songs through the use of synths and loops, something Keith has been doing for years.

"I think that was inevitable," he says. "We're at a time in country music's history where the influences are more immediate. Artists aren't pulling from their youth from 10 years before, they're pulling from now and in a much quicker fashion than they did before. That's why it's an interesting time. The thing everybody has to be very careful of is not doing a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy, send in the clones, basically. It's so important to keep staying true to ourselves as artists but also reaching for the next thing."

And whether it's breaking ground for country around the globe or working with diverse artists, reaching for the next thing is what you can expect Keith to do. **NCW**

MIX

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA

LEE BRICE GOES
OLD SCHOOL WITH
A NEW RELEASE.

MASTER



Earlier in 2015, Lee Brice was faced with a problem. His fans were demanding new music, but he wasn't due to release another album for at least a year. Bucking the usual approach, he did what any other self-described "people pleaser" would do and released one anyway.

"I get a record every two years, so these fans that follow me and have been coming to these shows all this time, they get a maximum of two songs on the radio a year and a record every two years," Lee explains. At six-feet and change, with hands the size of dinner plates and the physique of a linebacker, Lee is an imposing figure. His omnipresent smile and mischievous eyes, however, suggest he's more gentle teddy than grizzly.

Record label scheduling typically determines if and when artists can release new music, but the numerous artists on each roster means that there's a long queue for everyone to get a turn. Those releases also need time to cycle through the system and—in the case of singles—work their way up the charts. It's often an impediment for hard-touring artists like Lee, who exhaust their current albums on the stage but have nothing new to tide people over during the gap.

"People want more. They want more music, they want more content, they want it now," he says. "I was

like, 'How could I get more music to my fans?' I just felt like they deserve more music; they deserve more than two songs a year on the radio."

How did Lee handle the demand from fans? He shook things up by releasing an old-school mix tape, appropriately titled *Mixtape*.

"I figured I'd just put a few songs together and just slip it out there and if people wanted it, they could have it



or they could buy it or they could do whatever and if they didn't, it's OK, but I wanted to give them the option to just have some music." And the songs are just simply favorites of the country star. "It's stuff that I love and it's stuff that's fun and it's stuff that I'm passionate about," he says.

Lee quietly slipped the project to a few friends and to the folks who attended his fan club party this year, but it didn't stay under the radar long. "It got back to the label a little

bit and they were like, 'We don't care if you want to put this music together and do it as a side thing between records just to keep music flowing,'" he explains. "So that's what I did."

Mixtape became available for download in July (media people actually got a promotional cassette tape), but it doesn't appear to be a one-time-only affair. The positive response to *Mixtape* has only inspired him to do more. "The more I started thinking about it, I thought, I could do this more often and then the next mix tape, I could call it *Mixtape Volume 2*," he says, "and maybe it's an acoustic record, just me and a guitar, or maybe it's a gospel record or maybe it's a Christmas record, or maybe it's all love songs, I don't know. It gives me freedom to do whatever I want, whatever kind of music, whatever my heart is inspired to do at that moment, and it doesn't have to be within radio boundaries. I can just have a guitar and play some music and give it to the fans. So, I'm going to continue to do it—*Volume 2, Volume 3, Volume 4*."

In doing so, Lee is showing a keen understanding that fans—his fans—are the reason he gets to make music for a living. Without them, nothing happens. "You might come to Nashville without fans, and get a record deal without fans, and get a song on the radio without fans. But from that point forward, you're not going to have a career—you're not going to



We asked Lee if he were to put together a mix tape for his wife, Sara, what might be included. Some of his choices may surprise you!

“BABY GOT BACK”
Sir Mix-a-Lot

“ONLY GOD COULD
LOVE YOU MORE”
Jerrold Niemann

“WILD HORSES”
Rolling Stones

“ALL OF YOU”
John Legend

“TO MAKE YOU
FEEL MY LOVE”
Garth Brooks

“I WILL ALWAYS
LOVE YOU”
Dolly Parton

“PINK”
Aerosmith

“LOCKED OUT OF HEAVEN”
Bruno Mars

“I BELIEVE IN YOU”
Don Williams

“THE SCIENTIST”
Coldplay

“MEET VIRGINIA”
Train

“ONE MORE DAY”
Lee Brice

LEE BRICE CONTINUED

have that dream of actually playing for folks that spend hard-earned money to come to your shows, buy your T-shirts and basically pay your bills, pay your way, feed your family and live your dream—without fans. They are the blood in my veins of music.”

That isn't an overstatement. Lee's success wasn't the overnight or even moderately quick kind—he had to spend several years toiling in obscurity before things began to pick up steam. “I came up the hard way. I had to go in a van, all over the country for years and years for nobody, for like 30 people who didn't know me,” he recalls. “But the next time, there might be 60 people there and they were fans.

Then the next time I played that bar, there might be 200 people and it just started multiplying. We built a true fan base, so if radio stopped playing my songs or a record label dropped me, anything that could possibly happen, they could not take away my fans.”

Breaking into a smile, he adds, “We've grown up together. I'm thankful for the new fans that I'm getting, but I'm just so blessed to have fans that started with me when I was just begging to have some place to play. And the fans kept me coming back.”

That is partly due to Lee's passionate, heart-on-sleeve live performances, but also his aforementioned kind, teddy bear nature—a trait he exemplifies in business dealings as well as with fans. “I just like to be nice, no matter what. And in the business world, I've always felt like it will come back to you in the end. So, if you give and you give, and just be patient and turn the other cheek, I just believe that it will come back to you in the end,” he says. “It's not like you're doing some-



“PEOPLE WANT MORE. THEY WANT MORE MUSIC, THEY WANT MORE CONTENT, THEY WANT IT NOW . . . THEY DESERVE MORE THAN TWO SONGS A YEAR ON THE RADIO.”

thing to get something back, but it will all work out, so as long as you treat people the way they should be treated, the way you want to be treated. And even in the music industry, even if you're a jaded soul in the music industry, you kill someone with kindness for long enough, they're not going to have something bad to say about you.”

He laughs and adds, “I just try to be the person that my mama and daddy raised me to be.” **NCW**

OUTSIDER PERSPECTIVE

Craig Morgan returns to The Outdoor Channel with the latest season of his hit hunting show.

If there's one thing that Craig Morgan loves as much as making music, it's being in the great outdoors on a hunt. Fortunately, Craig gets to show his passion with his award-winning series *Craig Morgan: All Access Outdoors*, which has returned for a sixth season on The Outdoor Channel.

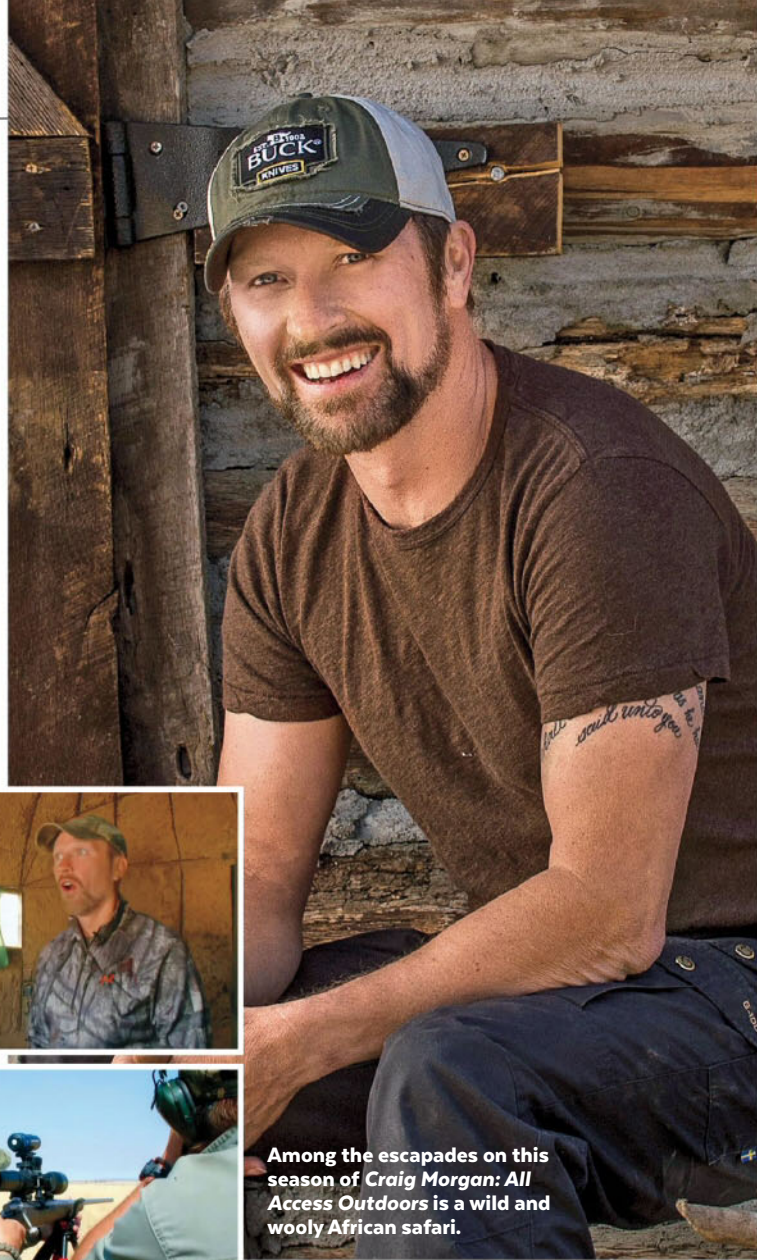
"Lord, it's hard to believe it's been six seasons already," Craig tells *Nash Country Weekly*, laughing. "For me, it was kind of like the music; I thought that it would last for a year or so and I'd be done. So every day we get to keep doing something like that is a real blessing."

As with past seasons, the new installment of *All Access Outdoors* boasts high-octane hunts, including an African safari that gave Craig a different perspective from the time he had spent in Africa while in the military.

"I had been to the continent of Africa before, but I never hunted in Africa—not for animals, anyway" says Craig. "That was real special and a real treat. I swore I would never go back to that part of the world again, but I'm glad I did."

Another trip likely to be on the docket this season is Craig's recent moose hunt. "It was only the second or third time that I had hunted moose," Craig explains. "I am just eaten up with it now. It is just an amazing animal. They truly are like ghosts out there in open-range area."

In addition to stocking his four freezers at home with just about every kind of wild meat you can imagine, Craig's experience from hunting has also given him the gift of patience from all his time in the wilderness. "Most people who know me know that I am extremely energetic. Matter of fact,



Among the escapades on this season of *Craig Morgan: All Access Outdoors* is a wild and woolly African safari.

most people think that I am on drugs most of the time because I run pretty hard," he says, laughing. "Hunting has really taught me to be patient, and it's taught me to stay calm. It's taught me to not rush to do things.

"What's really funny, is it's translated into the rest of my life," he continues. "I am very OCD so it's hard to stop doing some-

thing until it's completely accomplished. Hunting is not that way. My wife thinks it's funny because I can hardly sit through an entire movie, but I can sit in a tree stand for hours on end and not get bored."

The current season of *Craig Morgan: All Access Outdoors* runs through September and airs Sunday nights at 11 p.m. EST on The Outdoor Channel.

ALANNA CONAWAY

Meet Me in Montana

COUNTRY NEWCOMER STEPHANIE QUAYLE TIES THE KNOT IN HER SCENIC HOME STATE.

“It’s every Montana girl’s dream to get married in Montana.”

That’s what singer Stephanie Quayle said back in May shortly before she exchanged vows with North Carolina real estate developer David Couch. And when Stephanie and David finally made it official, it was against a gorgeous Big Sky Country backdrop in the appropriately-named town of Paradise Valley, Montana.

Stephanie and David said their “I do’s” in an intimate ceremony at their family ranch on June 20. The bride was breathtaking in an Augusta Jones dress that Stephanie had modeled as the cover girl for *Montana Bride* magazine. But when it came to making the final decision on a dress, Stephanie cut it really close: just a month from her wedding, she still hadn’t chosen one. “I had never even tried on a wedding dress,” she said, laughing. “Well, except when I was nine years old I put on my grandma’s wedding dress with my stepsister. My mom took a picture. It’s super-cute.”

The look for Stephanie’s big day was finished off with Lane boots, a veil and a cascading bouquet of pink and purple flowers including garden roses and peonies.

As an independent recording artist whose “That’s What I’m Talking About” hit radio and the Internet earlier this summer, Stephanie showed her devotion to David by showing off her talent. With the help of David’s daughter, Stephanie serenaded her new husband and guests with a song she and Mark Carson wrote, titled “Meant for You.”

The theme from that song extended even further: as guests dug into the couple’s yummy wedding cake of alternating layers of German chocolate and carrot chamomile, they noticed that lyrics from the song had been incorporated into the cake’s fondant icing.

With a wedding like that, every girl should want to get married in Montana.

TAMMY RAGUSA






JOSH GRIDER

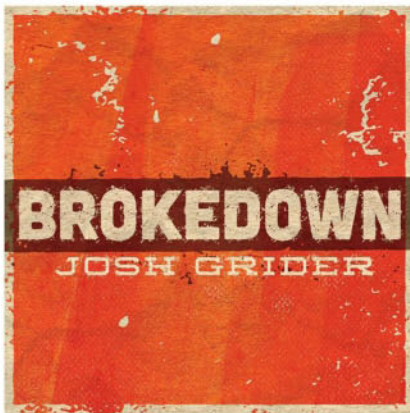
WHEN AN ARTIST'S CAREER BEGINS on the Texas/Red Dirt circuit, playing big and loud in honky-tonks and dance halls is usually the way to start. But where does it go from there? For Josh Grider, who has already done big and loud with previous albums, including *Luck & Desire*, *The Gettin' There* and *Live at Billy Bob's Texas*, the next step was stripping it down.

"Out on the road in the live world, there's two ways of playing: broke-down acoustic or full band. That's where *Brokedown* comes from," Josh explains.

At first, it wasn't just the production he was breaking down, but also the distribution. Josh had planned on releasing *Brokedown* to his fan club. But as the seven-song acoustic EP began taking shape, the plan changed. "It kept getting cooler and cooler," he says excitedly. "Once Bobby Hamrick, who co-produced this with me, and I got into it, it was like no, this isn't just a fan club thing. I want to put it out for as many people as want it. And I thought that it might just catch fire and grow its own little legs and make a good run for me."

Josh put the project out on his own with no big record label budget or push. And, in a way, he couldn't have made an album like *Brokedown* if he did have those. He explains, "When you work with a label, you define a goal and you go in and record with that purpose in mind. But I own this record, so to make a really cool sounding acoustic EP and have one song that I could put out to radio were really my only goals. To me, I achieved all of those goals. I think three of the songs are over four minutes. In today's modern, commercial recording world, that's a pretty big no-no. And I eclipsed it at least three times and I never even thought

<p>ORIGIN Las Cruces, New Mexico</p> 	<p>PRIME PICKS "Lone Star Highway" "One Night Taco Stand" "Skin and Bone"</p> <p>BIGGEST HIT "Summer and Sixteen"</p>
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about it. It was very, very freeing to make this kind of record."

Josh's previous album projects, *Luck & Desire* and *The Gettin' There*, paired him with Texas scenester Trent Willmon producing and the AMP record label for promotion. "I love those projects, don't get me wrong," he says happily. "They afforded the opportunity to be able to do an acoustic *Brokedown*, but at my heart, at my core, what I will be long after all the rest of this is over is a singer/songwriter, a guy who likes to write songs and play them."

As a songwriter, Josh is sort of a southwestern James Taylor, both lyrically and vocally. On *Brokedown*, he offers a glimpse into what is important in his life. "This thing is about family and struggles and passion, and it's an extremely personal record," he says. "I think you can listen to this and in your mind if you go,

'Man, it sounds like he thinks this,' you're probably right. It's pretty honest. It's pretty wide open."

It reveals another facet of this talented artist, which was another goal he had for the release of *Brokedown*. "I want to show these new fans that have come on board since the release of those records that there's this whole other side to what I do, it's not just 'Taco Stand,' and 'White Van,' and all of that, which again, I stand by 100 percent," he explains. "I love those and I love honky-tonking it with my band, but I think diversity is the key. This is a whole other aspect to what I think I can bring to the table as a performer. You can get the quieter, more intimate of a *Brokedown*, but I'm not afraid to 'One Night Taco Stand' it, too."

To Josh, the release *Brokedown* is another way of deepening the bond with loyal fans who have been there from the start. "There's a lot of people that when I sing, 'Can't Help But Love Her' on this new record, they know exactly who I'm talking about," he says. "I've been married for 10 years this year and my wife has been there. I share pictures of my family, my sons, so a song like 'Welcome to Earth,' people know who I'm talking about. I think people want to hear an intimate show where I talk about my family and my life and my struggles and my joys."

Josh laughs and adds, "They don't want that every night. Some nights you just want to go out and dance."

So, what's next? Josh is thoughtful before he says, "There might be some middle ground that makes sense. You never know. As I said before, I'm never afraid to take a right-hand turn from the left lane unprotected."

TAMMY RAGUSA



ROBBINS' HOOD



Chase by Chris Schwagler/Corbis, Jon Nite: Shane by Alyssa Garklan/Schmidt Relations, Jimmy: courtesy, ASCAP



It's hard to go anywhere or do anything these days without having cellphone in hand. The first time Jon Nite wrote with Shane McAnally and their mutual buddy Jimmy Robbins, he had his phone close by, as his wife was trying to firm up plans for that evening.

"She was asking where we wanted to go that night," Jon recalls. "She had friends lined up to go out. I was like, 'Honestly, I don't really care. Wherever you want to go, I'm in.' Guys don't care where we go, so we started talking about it at the write, and it kind of became the subject of our song."

Jimmy likes to come to a writing session with a lot of musical ideas, which always helps to get the ball rolling with a song. "I was just super-excited about this co-write in general because Jon and Shane are two of my favorite writers and people," notes Jimmy. "Every day when I write, I tend to have at least have three ideas, so I was anxious to see which one they would lean toward."

During Jon's texting conversation, Jimmy pulled out one particular guitar riff that sparked his friends' interest immediately. "Shane right off the bat got really excited about that one," says Jimmy, smiling. "I usually don't know what's good or not because I'm too close to it. I go into the office every day and do that stuff."

Once they had their music and general idea figured out, the three writers began to let the creative juices flow, eventually landing on the hook of "Gonna Wanna Tonight."

"It didn't take us a long time to write once we stumbled upon a title," says Jimmy of the song's sexy lyrical content. "We really wanted to make an effort to have some cooler visuals in it. It's one of those songs that talks a lot about the stuff that other songs talk about, but we wanted to try to do it in a fresh way. We put a little bit of quirkiness in the lyrics.

"It was definitely one of those days where we were finding the song, and

"GONNA WANNA TONIGHT" CHASE RICE

WRITERS: Jon Nite, Shane McAnally, Jimmy Robbins



**Jon
Nite**



**Shane
McAnally**



**Jimmy
Robbins**

WORLD MUSIC

JON NITE and JIMMY ROBBINS are on the charts together again with "Top of the World," the latest single from Tim McGraw. The two co-wrote the song with Josh Osborne.

those are my favorite days," Jimmy continues. "You don't feel like you wrote it; it feels like you found it."

Once they finished "Gonna Wanna Tonight," the song floated around Nashville for a couple years before finally finding its way to Chase Rice. Chase recorded the tune for his *Ignite the Night* album, releasing it as his second single from the project.

"We thought this song was huge when we wrote it, and then it took so long for someone to cut it," says Jimmy. "It's so funny because you never know how that's going to go. Now it's taking a really long time on the charts, so it's had a long life."

"Sometimes there's magic in the first songs you write together," Jon surmises. "It's weird. You get in there, and everybody is a little on edge, but this particular time, everything really fell into place perfectly."

As for Shane, the hit songwriter is just happy he was in the room. "Jon and Jimmy have written some great songs together," he says, "so I am just glad I can have my name attached to one with them. It was just a really easy day."

ALANNA CONAWAY

TOP 25 BILLBOARD ALBUMS

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	—	KILL THE LIGHTS LUKE BRYAN
2	1	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT
3	17	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
4	—	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY
5	4	JEKYLL + HYDE ZAC BROWN BAND
6	2	ANGELS AND ALCOHOL ALAN JACKSON
7	6	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH
8	7	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN
9	9	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
10	12	NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL COUNTRY, VOLUME 8 • VARIOUS ARTISTS
11	10	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
12	16	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN
13	11	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT
14	15	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
15	3	GREATEST HITS SO FAR ... ZAC BROWN BAND
16	8	IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE
17	17	SPRING BREAK ... CHECKIN' OUT LUKE BRYAN
18	18	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD
19	14	BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON
20	27	35 BIGGEST HITS TIM MCGRAW
21	20	THE BIG REVIVAL KENNY CHESNEY
22	13	THE BLADE ASHLEY MONROE
23	23	COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL
24	28	PLATINUM MIRANDA LAMBERT
25	22	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD

TOP 25 BILLBOARD SINGLES

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	2	LOVING YOU EASY ZAC BROWN BAND
2	3	YOUNG & CRAZY FRANKIE BALLARD
3	4	HOUSE PARTY SAM HUNT
4	5	HELL OF A NIGHT DUSTIN LYNCH
5	1	KISS YOU IN THE MORNING MICHAEL RAY
6	7	CRASH AND BURN THOMAS RHETT
7	10	BUY ME A BOAT CHRIS JANSON
8	11	JOHN COUGAR, JOHN DEERE, JOHN 3:16 • KEITH URBAN
9	12	LOSE MY MIND BRETT ELDRIDGE
10	13	SAVE IT FOR A RAINY DAY KENNY CHESNEY
11	6	KICK THE DUST UP LUKE BRYAN
12	14	LIKE A WRECKING BALL ERIC CHURCH
13	15	FLY MADDIE & TAE
14	16	GONNA WANNA TONIGHT CHASE RICE
15	17	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
16	18	LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL
17	20	NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY
18	19	REAL LIFE JAKE OWEN
19	21	BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION
20	22	LONG STRETCH OF LOVE LADY ANTEBELLUM
21	23	I'M TO BLAME KIP MOORE
22	24	BURNING HOUSE CAM
23	31	STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN
24	25	RUN AWAY WITH YOU BIG & RICH
25	26	I'M COMIN' OVER CHRIS YOUNG

TOP 10 AMERICANA AIRPLAY

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	1	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
2	3	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
3	4	STILL RICHARD THOMPSON
4	2	THE TRAVELING KIND EMMYLOU HARRIS & RODNEY CROWELL
5	6	WATKINS FAMILY HOUR WATKINS FAMILY HOUR
6	5	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD
7	8	DIDN'T IT RAIN AMY HELM
8	12	BITTERSWEET KASEY CHAMBERS
9	10	LARRY CAMPBELL & TERESA WILLIAMS LARRY CAMPBELL & TERESA WILLIAMS
10	9	TRAVELLER CHRIS STAPLETON

SOURCE: AMERICANA AIRPLAY CHART

rdio TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY SONGS*

TW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	KICK THE DUST UP LUKE BRYAN
2	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT
3	IF IT TAKES A LIFETIME JASON ISBELL
4	ON TO SOMETHING GOOD ASHLEY MONROE
5	WHAT DO YOU WANT JERROD NIEMANN

TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY/AMERICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS*

TW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	KILL THE LIGHTS LUKE BRYAN
2	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY
3	HITS ALIVE BRAD PAISLEY
4	CHIEF ERIC CHURCH
5	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN



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Of course Miranda Lambert—I saw her just south of Memphis in North Mississippi and she was amazing! She connects with the crowd and she’s badass and she doesn’t care what you think. She’s awesome.

BRITTANY BARTHOLOMEW
PORTLAND, ORE.

Miranda Lambert also, because she’s a rebel. That’s what I love about her. She does what she wants to do and in a very traditional part of the country, that’s huge. And it’s empowering, it’s amazing. I love her.

LEIGH BANDY | PORTLAND, ORE.

Keith Urban and Vince Gill’s All for the Hall. It’s a benefit concert they did here [Nashville]. Because you could tell they really loved the cause that they were working for and no one that performed in the concert made a single penny and all of the money went to charity.

MICHAEL CASSELMAN
NASHVILLE



I definitely think the best country music concert I’ve ever seen was the Zac Brown Band. I think they have just a super-fun concert. And everyone is just enjoying themselves. They have such great different styles, with *Jekyll + Hyde* out, it’s different sides of their music and it’s really entertaining.

NIA NEWSOME
ROCKY MOUNT, N.C.

Last night I saw Carrie Underwood. I’ve never seen her and I always wanted to see her. She performs really well and sings really well, so probably Carrie Underwood.

KEVIN FERREE | COLUMBUS, IND.



I’ve seen all kinds of them. Alan Jackson. I love Alan Jackson. I stood 17 hours one day at Ernest Tubb’s store [to see him].

MARGIE LOCKEY | GOODLETTSVILLE, TENN.



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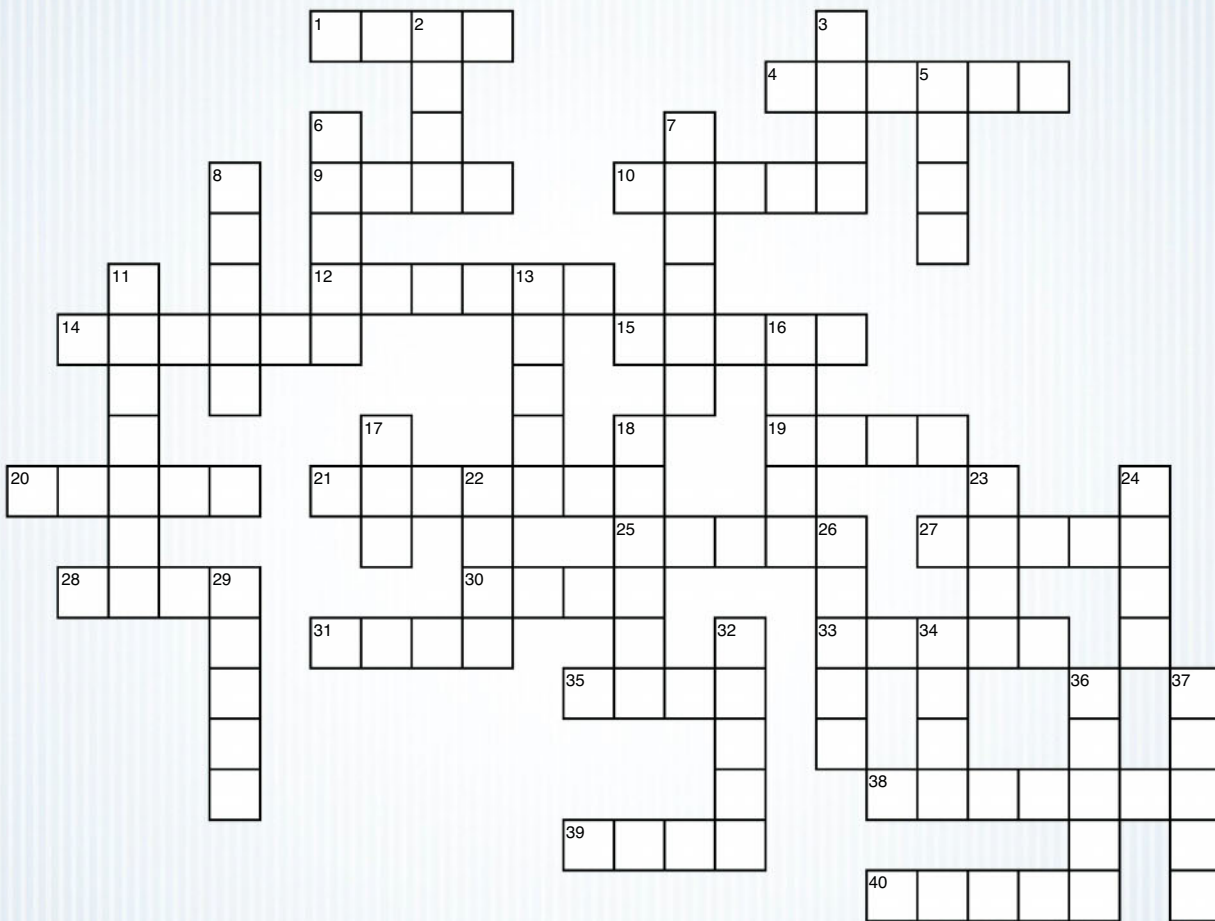
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CROSSWORD

by John Reiman



ACROSS

- 1 Luke Bryan's album _____
- 4 City in North Carolina
- 9 New artist Olivia _____
- 10 _____ cash
- 12 "She Cranks My Tractor" singer
- 14 Vicious _____
- 15 Tyler Farr's album *Suffer in _____*
- 19 "It Must Be Love" singer
- 20 Hunter Hayes' "I Want _____"
- 21 Dixie Chicks' "_____ You"
- 25 NFL Commissioner Goodell
- 27 Homonym for #15 Across
- 28 Kenny Chesney's "Pirate _____"
- 30 "You Lie" singer
- 31 "Letter to Me" singer
- 33 Brantley Gilbert's "More Than _____"
- 35 Arches National Park is here
- 38 Miami's MLB team
- 39 "Let Me See Ya Girl" singer
- 40 "The Shoes You're Wearing" singer

DOWN

- 2 Bryan White's "Rebecca _____"
- 3 William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the _____*
- 5 Toby Keith's "_____ on the Rocks"
- 6 Ashley Monroe's album *The _____*
- 7 "Dibs" singer
- 8 U.S. Senate Majority Leader McConnell
- 11 Olympic swimmer Phelps
- 13 Coeur d'Alene is here
- 16 New artist Dunn
- 17 "I'm to Blame" singer
- 18 "Carried Away" singer
- 22 _____ and fast
- 23 The Band Perry's "All Your _____"
- 24 Mark Wills' "Wish You Were _____"
- 26 Clay Walker's "_____ Has It"
- 29 Holly Dunn's "You Really Had Me _____"
- 32 Rascal Flatts' "Take Me _____"
- 34 *Girls* actress/creator Dunham
- 36 Justin Moore's "_____ at You"
- 37 Action movie star Statham

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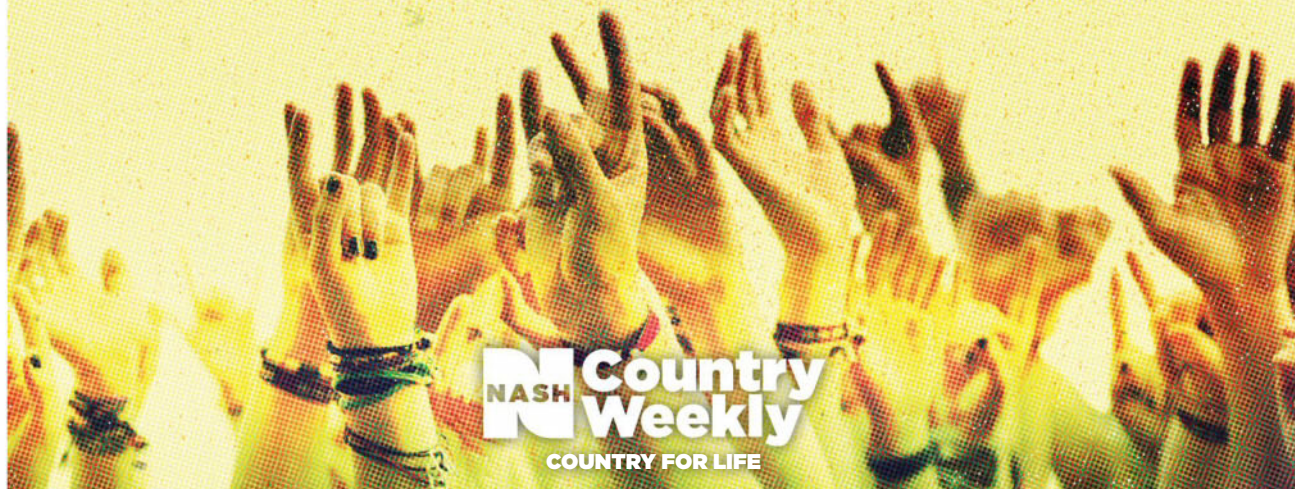
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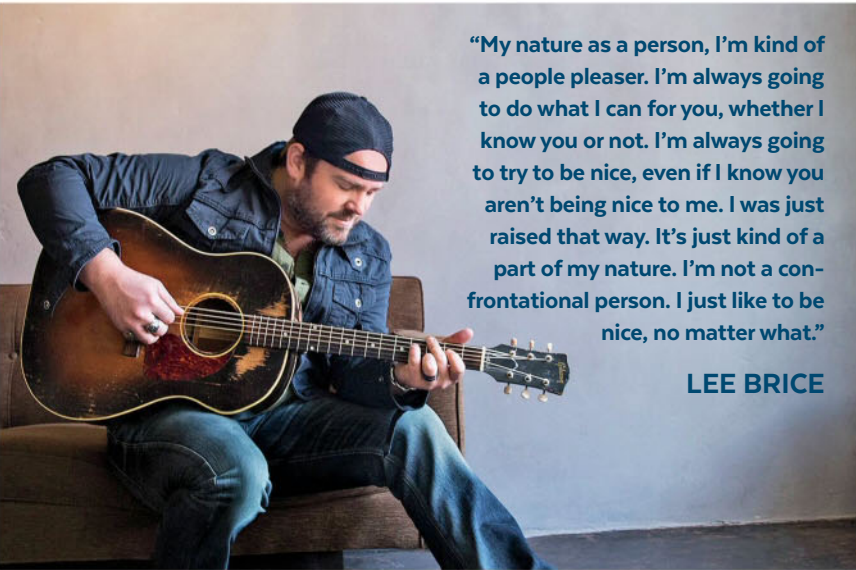
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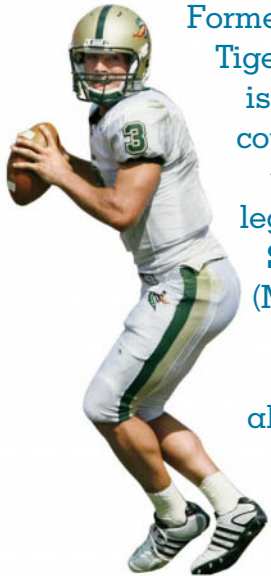
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“My nature as a person, I’m kind of a people pleaser. I’m always going to do what I can for you, whether I know you or not. I’m always going to try to be nice, even if I know you aren’t being nice to me. I was just raised that way. It’s just kind of a part of my nature. I’m not a confrontational person. I just like to be nice, no matter what.”

LEE BRICE



Former Clemson Tiger Lee Brice isn’t the only country artist to play college football. **SAM HUNT** (MTSU/UAB) and Chase Rice (UNC) also chewed up a little turf on the gridiron.

GROWING UP AS THE YOUNGER OF TWO BROTHERS, **KEITH URBAN'S** NICKNAME WAS “SUBURBAN.” GET IT? SUB-URBAN.



“I don’t know how you write about desperation from an honest standpoint, if you’re not desperate—if you’re not truly feeling that inside. And I still feel that inside. I still feel like I have so much to prove with myself to other people. I still feel that sense of angst and it’s kind of flowing through me.”

KIP MOORE

BILLBOARD NO. 1 SONGS FOR 2015 DEBUT SINGLES



Craig Wayne Boyd
“MY BABY’S GOT A SMILE ON HER FACE”



A Thousand Horses
“SMOKE”



Kelsea Ballerini
“LOVE ME LIKE YOU MEAN IT”

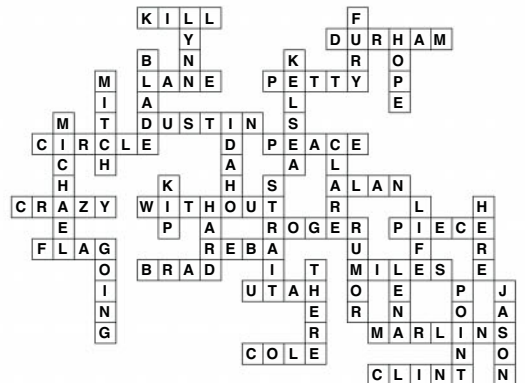


Michael Ray
“KISS YOU IN THE MORNING”

JOSHING AROUND

Josh Grider comes from a long line of country music Joshes, including Josh Abbott, Josh Turner, Josh Thompson, Josh Dorr and Josh Gracin.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION (SEE PAGE 60)



Lee by Joseph Lanes/Shore Fire Media; Sam by Mike Zarr/Getty Images; retro Keith courtesy Keith Urban Facebook; Kip courtesy The Greenroom PR; Josh courtesy GlassRoots Promotions



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