

close up

January-February 2003

Toby Keith • Merle Haggard • Lila McCann



**Lonestar
Continues to
Amaze the
Music
Industry**



close up

January/February 2000

features

- 4 cover story: **Lonestar** *by Angie Crabtree*
Amazed over their success.
- 6 focus on: **Town Meeting**
See what the sold-out audience discovered as key executives discussed the future of the music industry.
- 8 **1999 Industry Wrap Up**
The year of the woman.
- 10 up close and personal: **Toby Keith** *by Chris Gusa*
Finding inspiration and opportunity amongst the moles and gophers.
- 13 **1999 CMA Awards Point-Of-Purchase Winners**
- 14 legend: **Merle Haggard** *by Angie Crabtree*
On the record...for the record.
- 16 the write stuff: **"Quotes" Worth Repeating**
Bits of songwriting wisdom from the experts.
- 18 **20 questions with John Berry** *by Chris Gusa*
Find a candid yet in-depth look at the man who moves people.
- 24 the buzz: **Lila McCann** *by Angie Crabtree*
What does the future hold for this young star?
- 28 on location: **Media Achievement Award**
CMA manages to surprise this year's recipient with a reception held in her honor.
- 30 in their words: **Mark Wills** *by Christy Grealis*
Making his "Mark" - permanently.
- 36 debut spotlight: **Rebecca Lynn Howard, Jerry Kilgore, Redmon & Vale, Keith Urban**
Watch for these four up-and-coming Country Music acts.

departments

- 12 **INTERNATIONALLY SPEAKING**
- 20 **UPATE: Awards, New Companies, Newline, On The Move, Signings, Videos**
- 23 **IN MEMORIAM**
- 26 **NAMES IN THE NEWS**
- 32 **NEWS TO USE**
- 39 **NEXT MONTH**
- 40 **CMA CALENDAR**

editor's letter

Changes are on the horizon for CLOSE UP and the editorial staff at CMA is excited about it.

You will be receiving CLOSE UP every two months starting with this issue. The editorial staff has worked hard to develop ideas that will make CLOSE UP more beneficial to our members and we look forward to implementing them in this new format.

Even though there will be fewer issues published, the magazine will be expanded to 40 pages and will include more in-depth coverage of the music, CMA events and issues for our industry.

We wish you the very best in the new millennium.

The Editorial Staff of CLOSE UP

Executive Editor, Angie Crabtree
Assistant Editor, Chris Gusa
Associate Editor, Dixie Weathersby
Editorial Contributor, Christy Grealis
Design, Evamarie Oglander of McConnell & Associates
Separations/Film, Commercial Engraving
Printing, Harris Press

CMA STAFF

Ed Benson, *executive director*
Tammy Genovese, *associate executive director*

EXECUTIVE

Peggy Whitaker, *director of board administration*
Christine Maggs, *executive assistant*
Angela Ramler, *executive assistant*

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Rick Murray, *director of strategic alliances*
Lara Henley, *coordinator of strategic alliances*

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Cindy Miller, *director of finance and administration*
Rainey Brown, *membership services manager*
Amy O'Dell, *financial services coordinator*
Amber Pennington, *financial services assistant*
Rhonda Richardson, *staff accountant*

INFORMATION SERVICES

Daphne Larkin, *senior manager of information services*
Joey Boone, *information services support assistant*

OPERATIONS

Kristen Pridgen, *operations assistant*

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Bobette Dudley, *director of events and program development*
Patti Burgart, *event services manager*
Jamie Downing, *special projects manager*
Shannon Kasakevics, *meetings and events coordinator*
Kris Wolstenholm, *event coordinator*

CREATIVE SERVICES

Angie Crabtree, *creative services manager*
Chris Gusa, *creative services assistant*

MEDIA RELATIONS

Dixie Weathersby, *media relations manager*

COMMUNICATIONS

Christy Grealis, *communications coordinator*

MARKETING

Rachel Petrie, *marketing coordinator*
Tammy Thornton, *event marketing/promotions manager*

Jeff Green, *senior director of international and new business development*

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Chris Felder, *manager of internet services*

INTERNATIONAL

Katie Dean, *manager of international development*
Laura Elkins, *international and new business development assistant*
David Bower, *UK/Ireland director*
Bobbi Boyce, *international operations manager*
Jan Garich, *G/S/A representative*
Trevor Smith, *Australia representative*



On an unusually warm day in November, I walk into Havana Lounge in downtown Nashville where the members of Lonestar are taping their first CMT Showcase Artist of the Month feature. Since they were in the middle of recording the live performance segment of the show, the sign on the door demanded silence to all that entered. My first thought, as I quietly made my way into the room, is that I'm hearing a *track* of their smash single "Amazed," but when I finally reached where everyone is gathered to watch I realize this is *live*. This isn't a studio-perfected sound I'm hearing; yet it couldn't sound any more perfect.

What was even more amazing, was that they sounded this good considering they had been on the set since 6 a.m. that day. Once the afternoon arrived and they are wrapping for the day, the guys were feeling somewhat giddy. Little did I know that sitting down for an interview with them would be like living in a 30-minute sitcom. It was a mixture of sidesplitting laughter, "inside" jokes and an occasional serious answer to remind us of why we're here.

A lot of good things have happened to you guys this year and put you more in the public eye, but you don't have a bad track record. You've been gathering number-one hits and awards all along. What do you think made this year different?

Dean Sams: It's really ironic that everybody's starting to pay attention to us now, and of course we just had the big hit "Amazed." We're very thankful to have a song that has touched so many people. Not just the success we've had from it,

We feel like the music now is Lonestar more than ever.

Lonestar

but just the fact that it really has touched a lot of lives. We've had three number ones before "Amazed." One of them, "No News," was a three-week number one. Another big achievement we had was the Academy of Country Music award. In 1996, we won New Vocal Group of the Year. So, we've had some success but I think it took "Amazed" to send us over the top.

I was just reading that LONELY GRILL went platinum after 10 weeks, only behind George Strait and Tim McGraw as the top debuting album of the year (at that point).

Michael Britt: That's a throw for us. We wanted this album to do well and to do better than our previous two. We're very thankful that everything happened so quickly. We were just hoping we had enough good songs on it to go platinum, but we never imagined it would go platinum in 10 weeks.

Richie McDonald: I think Britt said it best one time. We'd always look at the album charts and SoundScan to see where we were, and I think the highest we ever got up there with the LONESTAR album was 23.

Dean: Britt goes, "Man, I wait for the day when we get above Roy D. Mercer." And we did. "Look, we're above Roy D. Mercer! Volume VII!"

What do you think has been the turning point in your career? Do you think it was "Amazed"?

Richie: We have to give credit where it's due and that's to [our producer] Dann Huff. Don Cook and Wally Wilson, our previous producers, were the ones who got us to where we were. But we felt we could go a little bit further and could change our music a little bit. Dann Huff is actually responsible for all of this - creating a new sound for us, going in kind of a new direction. I think he's the reason for all this success. He brought great songs to the table, he enabled all of us to be a part of it, and that's what we wanted all along. We feel like the music now is Lonestar more than ever.

Speaking of songs, I know the producer brings you a shortened list of what you actually get pitched. Is it really hard for all four of you, since you're not just one artist, to all agree?

Keech Rainwater: I don't think it's hard for us to agree on something. It's pretty unanimous about whether a song is going to be cut or not. It just depends. Every once in awhile it's hard to decide, there are just so many good songs to choose from. It's not really a problem. We just talk about it and talk about why a song isn't as good as another song and usually come up with a good decision.

Dean: Also, if we're stuck, we pretty much try to let Richie be the deciding vote, because he's the one that has to go in and sing it and perform it to where people will believe what he's saying. That's the great thing about this band. I think that's probably the biggest part of our success. We all pretty much have the same focus and same idea of music and our goals and everything. So, it does make it a lot easier.

Has there ever been one song that somebody had to fight for?

Richie: There was actually one song, "Don't Let's Talk About Lisa." I don't think we all agreed on that one, but I think that from the label to Dann to all the people involved, the people that liked the song outweighed the people that didn't. That was one of the songs that we weren't unanimous on, but it's still on there. It's a fun song. It's different. I can see why someone wouldn't like the song. It's a ditty.

Michael: It's quirky, but at the same time you never know which one of those quirky songs is going to really catch people's ear and twist it

Richie: "No News" is different too. I think "Don't Let's Talk About Lisa" really falls into the same category. "No News" is probably a little more rocking as far as the music, but lyrically it's quirky. We do ("Don't Let's Talk About Lisa") in our live show. It's pretty wordy, but it's fun to sing. It's the kind of song you can get the crowd involved. What we like to do is find someone in the audience whose name is Lisa and get her up on stage and tell her, "We wrote this song especially for you, it's a beautiful little ballad we wrote." Then we kick it off.

Dean: And on top of that, Richie not only gets to be a Country artist, but he also gets to show off his rap skills. He's MC Richie.

(Richie breaks out into a rap of the song as the band accompanies him with various body-part instruments.)

Are all of you songwriters?

Richie: We all write, and we write with the intention of getting songs for our CD. It's getting tougher and tougher because in the beginning a lot of writers in this town were giving us songs, but I don't think they were giving us their best songs. When you go back in the studio and you've had a little success, people start pulling out their "A" songs for you. It makes it even harder for us as writers to get songs on our own project. We don't care what songs are on there, honestly we don't. It'd be nice if we all had a song on the album, but we're just looking for great songs.

Everyone says that the strongest part of this band is its live show? How would you convince someone to see Lonestar live?

Michael: Basically, we pay people \$50 a piece to come see us.

Dean: Don't print that!

Michael: No, I'm just kidding. We feel like we started this band to play live and make money, so that's kind of always been our strongpoint. We've spent a lot of time and a lot of hours trying to make our live shows better and better. I think we just try to have an energetic show and we try to play the music as best we can. The bottom line is that Richie just sings his butt off live and

continued on page 35...

We keep trying to make the music better and better and hopefully we'll follow in their footsteps.

CMA TOWN MEETING DEEMED AN OVERWHELMING SUCCESS



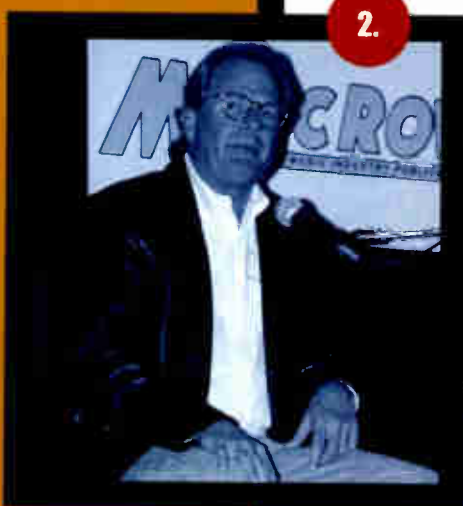
A sold-out audience of more than 500 registrants turned out, November 16 for CMA's first Town Meeting in more than a decade. Presented by CMA at the Nashville Convention Center, the Town Meeting focused on two important challenges and opportunities facing the music industry today: the Internet and corporate consolidation. Registrants for the Town Meeting came from virtually every area of the music industry, including heads of record labels, publishers, business and music journalists, booking agents, lawyers, publicists, representatives from performance rights organizations, bankers, talent buyers, video producers, managers and radio station representatives.

The first 90-minute panel, entitled "Music & The Internet: The Future is Now," featured moderator Mark Geiger, president and CEO of ARTISTdirect in Los Angeles and panelists Ed Pierson, executive vice president of business affairs for publishing giant Warner/Chappell in Los Angeles; acclaimed producer Phil Ramone, now consulting Lucent Technologies in online music; and Hilary Rosen, CEO of the Recording Industry Association of America in Washington, DC.



Rosen assured the capacity crowd that privacy on the Internet is under control and cited the fact that currently 27,000 albums per year are released and 10,000 new songs per week are being posted on the Internet. "While geometric growth of households online in the U.S. is about 25 percent per year, growth is also accelerating internationally," she said. "You should remember to think of the Internet as a global community." But

Pierson, representing one of the largest music publishing conglomerates, cautioned that writers and publishers only reap the benefit when their music is sold, and their rights are being eroded by free Internet downloads. "We can't sacrifice the licensing rights of the songwriter simply because everyone has this fever to make the Internet happen," he challenged. Legendary record producer Ramone prophesized that the first Internet hit will come within the next six months and pointed out that Internet radio is a good way to distribute the music. Geiger, a former label executive and booking agent who now heads the leading online music company to connect music fans directly with artists, postured that this is all





4.

about new money. "Get to know your customer in order to realize new revenue streams," he urged. "Focus on content and programming on your website, not technology."

The second 90-minute session, "Consolidation: Is Bigger Better For Me," was moderated by CMA Executive Director Ed Benson and featured expert commentary provided by artist manager Gary Borman; Steve Ennen, vice president and general manager of CBS/Infinity Broadcasting's WUSN Radio in Chicago; Luke Lewis, president of Mercury Nashville; Rob Light, head of the personal appearances department of Creative Artists Agency in Los Angeles; and Larry Wilson, chairman and CEO of Citadel Communications in Las Vegas. The panelists were candid about the changes that consolidation is making in their respective businesses, but remained upbeat about new opportunities being created and adjustments that displaced staff could make in the wake of mergers and acquisitions. Pointing out how consolidation makes one think differently, Lewis said, "You're forced out of the box; you don't have to be bright." Ennen and Wilson repeatedly defended group radio ownership against fears of the creative community such as all stations may someday be programmed by one corporate programming executive. "Great radio stations have to be focused on their local market," observed Ennen. "What we all need is great music to work with." Questioned about the rapid consolidation of the concert promotion business, CAA's Rob Light clearly stated that he felt there are opportunities out there. "Business may be different, and we have to be willing to adjust accordingly," he asserted. "But change is not bad unless we are unwilling to embrace it and figure out how to do business in a new environment."

Sponsors for the event included American Airlines, BellSouth, emusic, LiquidAudio, and Music Row. "We are extremely pleased that this new event was received so enthusiastically," offered CMA board member Jeff Walker of AristoMedia, who chaired the Town Meeting task force. "The exchange of dialogue and sharing of ideas on the profound changes in

our industry has never been more crucial. Hopefully everyone in attendance will be better armed to face these challenges through new insight and knowledge gained during these three hours."



5.



7.



6.

1. Mark Geiger, president and CEO of ARTISTdirect in Los Angeles, moderates the first panel, "Music & The Internet: The Future is Now." He explains "This meeting is about easing the fears surrounding the Internet and getting to the real reason we're all here - making money."

2. Luke Lewis, president of Mercury Nashville

3. Artist manager Gary Borman, Borman Entertainment

4. Steve Ennen, vice president and general manager of CBS/Infinity Broadcasting's WUSN Radio in Chicago

5. Larry Wilson, chairman and CEO of Citadel Communications in Las Vegas

6. Rob Light, head of the personal appearances department of Creative Artists Agency in Los Angeles

7. Ed Pierson, Phil Ramone and Hillary Rosen discuss the future of the music business on the Internet.

Female Artists Score Big

Shania, Faith and Dixie Chicks Drive the Country Music Format Consolidation Becomes the Buzzword for Music Row



In a format traditionally powered by males, 1999 proved to be a year when females roared to the forefront, dominating sales charts and exhibiting a strong presence on pop and adult contemporary charts as well as in national media and on the international front. Shania Twain emerged as an international superpower, becoming the number one selling artist in the UK, while topping the charts in Germany and Australia as well. She continued her assault on the record books, becoming the first female artist in any genre of music to reach the 11-million sales mark with back-to-back solo projects. Faith Hill gave Warner Bros./Nashville its first-ever number-one album debut with *BREATHE*, and, along with Shania, graced the fashion world as a national cosmetic spokeswoman. The Dixie Chicks sold more than 10 million albums without receiving airplay outside the Country format, and were the first Country duo or group to have an album debut at number one in the history of SoundScan. As the year ended, *BILLBOARD* presented Emmylou Harris the Century Award for distinguished creative achievement.

Recognizing that teenagers are increasingly flexing their buying muscle, many labels added teen-aged performers to their roster. Alecia Elliott (MCA), Rebecca Lynn Howard (MCA), Jessica Andrews (DreamWorks), the Clark Family Experience (Curb), South Sixty-Five (Atlantic) and Jennifer Day (BNA) all attempted to tap into the burgeoning teen phenomenon and join already-established Country teen sensations LeAnn Rimes, The Wilkinsons and Lila McCann.

In spite of the fact that consolidation dominated the industry on all fronts, Country Music experienced great growth and diversification potential on the Internet. The world wide web also stands to accelerate the rapidly growing global interest in Country artists. In November, CMA sponsored its first Town Meeting in more than a decade to address the growing interest in the Internet as well as consolidation. Numerous facts indicate that Country Music remains a strong contender in an increasingly competitive marketplace:

touring:

- According to *AMUSEMENT BUSINESS*, George Strait is among the top 10 touring artists of the decade. Since 1990, Strait's tours have grossed \$158.3 million, placing him in the company of The Rolling Stones and The Grateful Dead, and ahead of such legends as Pink Floyd, Elton John and Billy Joel.

- Two Country artists ranked among the top grossing tours of 1999: George Strait's Country Music Festival Tour and Shania Twain. More than 3.9 million people attended Country concerts for gross receipts of \$116.3 million.

radio:

- Country remains the leading radio format in number of stations. As of November 1999, there are 2,136 stations that program Country full-time. News/Talk now counts 1,695 stations and Adult Contemporary has 784. (M Street Corporation)

- Each weekday, nearly 28 million Americans listen to Country radio stations nationwide, leading the second largest format, adult contemporary, by over 500,000. (SMRB)

- George Strait is the most-played Country artist this decade, according to *BILLBOARD*. He tops the magazine's list of the 40 most-played acts in Country with more than three million spins over the past 10 years.

- Several singles held onto the top spot on the Country airplay charts for multiple weeks. Leading the charge was Lonestar's eight-week stranglehold with the number one spot on the *BILLBOARD* (nine weeks in R&R) chart with "Amazed," which established a modern-day record for a Country group or duo. Singles by Tim McGraw ("Please Remember Me" and "Something Like That"), Martina McBride ("I Love You") and Kenny Chesney ("How Forever Feels") also held the top spot for five weeks or more each.

- Country Music continues to appeal to a much broader listening audience. Shania Twain ("From This Moment On," "You've Got A Way," "Man! I Feel Like A Woman"), Faith Hill ("This Kiss"), Lonestar



("Amazed") and Martina McBride ("I Love You") have all received extensive airplay in multiple formats exposing Country Music to larger audiences.

record sales:

•Garth Brooks is the only solo artist in history with four Diamond albums. With sales of 89 million albums, he has been recognized by the RIAA as the top male artist of the decade. Only the Beatles have sold more albums than Garth in the United States.

•According to the RIAA, Shania Twain's COME ON OVER has sold 14 million units and spent an unprecedented 103 weeks on the BILLBOARD 200 album chart, making it the second highest selling album by a female artist in the history of the recording industry. Shania also scored back-to-back Diamond certifications with COME ON OVER and her sophomore release, THE WOMAN IN ME. The Dixie Chicks WIDE OPEN SPACES has topped the eight million mark.

soundtracks:

•Arista Nashville released its first-ever soundtrack for the movie "Happy Texas." The label took most of the original music out of the movie and replaced it with material by Country artists Pam Tillis, Emmylou Harris, Alison Krauss and even a duet that paired Lee Roy Parnell with Keb' Mo'.

•The summer blockbuster, "Runaway Bride," which reunited Julia Roberts and Richard Gere, featured music from both the Dixie Chicks ("Ready To Run" and a re-make of The Supreme's "You Can't Hurry Love") and Martina McBride's "I Love You."

•Another Julia Robert's romantic comedy, "Notting Hill," featured Shania Twain's "You've Got A Way."

•Trisha Yearwood contributed the beautiful "You're Where I Belong" to the soundtrack of the Christmas mouse-tale, "Stuart Little." Trisha also provided a cut on the soundtrack for the Eddie Murphy/Martin Lawrence movie, "Life." Her "Follow The Wind" was produced by R. Kelly.

•LeAnn Rimes added "Leaving's Not Leaving" to the soundtrack of the Susan Sarandon/Natalie Portman movie "Anywhere But Here."

•Billy Ray Cyrus sang the Scooby-Doo theme song for the made-for-video animated movie, "Scooby-Do and The Witch's Ghost."

television:

•Nearly 37 million people tuned into "The 33rd Annual CMA Awards." Going head-to-head against season premiere programming on ABC and NBC for the third year, the CMA Awards telecast live September 22 on the CBS Television Network, placed first for the night in households, viewers and all adult demographics. The annual live CBS special broadcast 8-11 PM (EDT) won every half-hour among households and adults 25-54. The Awards struck a responsive chord in younger viewers, delivering the highest adult 18-34 demos since 1996. The Awards averaged a 12.3 rating/20 share.

•Reba, Clint Black and Naomi Judd starred in holiday made-for-television movies on CBS-TV. Reba's "The Secret Of Giving" aired over the Thanksgiving holiday as did Clint Black's "Going Home." Naomi's "A Holiday Romance" was a Christmas-themed movie.

•A number of Country artists made guest appearances on some of television's top-rated series, including Trisha Yearwood (in a recurring role on "JAG"), JoDee Messina ("Touched By An Angel" and "Nash Bridges"), Wynonna ("Touched By An Angel") and Lila McCann ("Walker, Texas Ranger").

•Deana Carter, Travis Tritt, Brooks & Dunn, Faith Hill, The Mavericks and Trace Adkins placed songs on the soundtrack for the FOX series, "King Of The Hill." Clint Black and Mac Davis both provided voices for the animated series on an episode about a local high school football game, and The Dixie Chicks guested on a November episode of the popular series.

•Gary Allan played early rock 'n' roller, Eddie Cochran, in the CBS mini-series, "Shake, Rattle & Roll."

continued on page 34...

up close and personal

TOBY KEITH



Toby Keith speaks of triumphs and hardships, good times and bad, inspirations and opportunities...but no matter what, Toby Keith speaks his mind. Ever since he released his debut single, "Should've Been A Cowboy," in 1993, Toby has felt the success, struggles and reality of where he's been as a songwriter and an artist, and he's up for any competition to get wherever he wants to go.

The Oklahoma native has had his fair share of accomplishments, including nine number-one hits, four gold and one platinum album, but his recent signing with DreamWorks Records in January, 1999 has been the mark of his current contentment. "You change labels and everything starts moving for you. You just get that attitude that everything is moving right now. It all fits in nicely," he explains.

With his recent album release, HOW DO YOU LIKE ME NOW?!, Toby shows no signs of compromise. "There's always this little voice in the back of your head when you're doing an album that says, 'This song could really make my career bigger. It could make it all move. But what if my label isn't behind it because they don't think radio will play it?' That voice says you're not compromising 100 percent, but you're bending things just a little bit and you hope it will pass the test. I don't have that at DreamWorks. My producer is the label president, James Stroud, so there really isn't anybody to turn the album into except him. When I'm done with it in the studio, I don't have to go impress anyone with it. If the head of the label says, 'We're still a couple of songs short on this album. I don't feel like we've got it all,' then we just work harder. I don't have that middleman or that little voice in the back of my head anymore.

Give me something that's going to make me just pull over to the side of the road and go, "God almighty!"

About the time you think the ground you're standing on is real firm, these little creatures can move in without you even seeing them.

I can just go into the studio and just be as wide open as I want. I think each album, from now on, will continue to be more wide open and more American than anything else."

When it comes to getting his songs played on the radio, Toby explains there are reasons why some artists make it and some don't. "First of all, you'll hear interviews from other artists and a lot of them will say, 'I don't care if radio plays it (songs) or not.' Well, those people aren't having any success at radio so they can say that. I've always had success at radio. You have to be smart enough from the business side to understand that if you want your whole album heard, then the things that you send to radio are expected to be something different.

"I try to give everybody a different reason to listen other than just the same old hashed-out things. Some songs are just so hashed over that you get sick of hearing the same ideas. Eighty percent of the time you can hear what's coming in a song. Give me something that's going to make me just pull over to the side of the road and go, 'God almighty!'"

The singer/songwriter may mostly be known for his singing, but underneath that deep voice is a songwriter at heart. He wrote or co-wrote nine of the songs on his current album, but says he has a certain approach to his songwriting. "When I finish, I take a break from writing and I won't write anything for seven or eight months. It refills my tank. I just sit back and forget about it, and I absorb. Then when it comes time to begin a new project, I make a conscious effort to start thinking and putting things together, and it comes in bunches. I start opening up. Any writer will tell you, when you get a great idea and the concept is great and you really want to nail it. It will drive you nuts! It will consume every minute of every day. You'll be trying every second you have (to finish it) and it will just eat you until you've conquered your goal."

And when it comes to writing with others..."I trust very few people in writing. There are so many 'yes men.' If I was just a writer, I'd be writing with a guy that was trying to write a hit. If I'm writing with a guy that just wants a cut on the album, he's going to do his best to please me so whatever I'm happy with, he's happy with. And that doesn't work.

"Chuck Cannon," for example, "is a guy that will sit across the table from you and say, 'Hey, that sucks. That ain't going to work.' You have to be able to take that constructive criticism. You sit and fight word for word. You struggle and you struggle, and you make it as good as you can make it. There's magic between us, and he'll tell you."

Between 1993 and 1999, Toby was tossed back and forth between PolyGram Records, A&M Records and Mercury Nashville before landing his deal at DreamWorks. It wasn't because he didn't have the success to make it in the music business, but because of the ways of the industry. Toby realized that the magic wasn't always there. "It was time (for those changes), but I continued to have number-one records no matter where they stuck me. Through it all, it didn't matter who was working my records. The music still got through.

I had number ones at Mercury. I had number ones at Polydor. Through it all, I think the music spoke for itself.

"It's a very cold business, and it can change underneath the ground. Moles can move in, and gophers underneath can upset the structure that you stand on. About the time you think the ground you're standing on is real firm, these little creatures can move in without you even seeing them. You have to keep an open mind enough to be able to spot them coming. If you ever get the chance, just stomp the hell out of them! I don't think any songwriter, artist or musician would disagree with me. There are a lot of people in charge of a lot of things where their background does not involve this business, as far as what we do. What we do is make music. So, if you can't write and you can't sing and you can't play guitar, then how can you tell me how to do any of the three? There are a lot of people in this business that do that and a lot of people in this business that take advantage of the situation. They get into positions where they can take advantage and make themselves richer by doing it and that's why it has such a bad reputation."

From these learning experiences come opportunities. Opportunities to really shine, and Toby plans on doing it in every way possible. On top of his latest album release, the singer is venturing towards television. His latest projects involve a television ad for 10-10-220 with football legend Terry Bradshaw and a made for TV movie called "The Dukes of Hazzard: Hazzard in Hollywood." Sharon Allen, Toby's publicist, explained that the executive producer heard Toby's voice on a morning radio show in Los Angeles and thought he'd be the perfect candidate for the film. "Although he was pitched the part a few weeks prior, that radio show solidified his part," she said. He was originally tapped to be the narrator of the two-hour CBS special, but his luck turned and they wrote him into the script. "I play myself. They've got three of my songs throughout the movie" including Toby's opening tune "Jackie Don Tucker."

But it hasn't always been as easy as walking on the set or getting heard on the radio. "When things don't work for you, and some people have it easier than others, you have to go create your own luck. When you get a machine functioning for you - you've got your label behind you 100 percent, you've got great management, a great publicist, a great band and crew, and everything's working for you, the horsepower just starts to multiply. When you have those moles I was telling you about, under your substructure, you never have anywhere to go and you just run in place."

But whether it's with his songwriting, his albums, his label or his new ventures in television, Toby is doing it his way - without compromise. His resilience and fortitude will prove successful in the long run as he reaps what he has sown for as long as he is bound and determined.

Chris Gusa

When things don't work for you, and some people have it easier than others, you have to go create your own luck.

CMA INTERNATIONAL AWARD RECIPIENTS NAMED



1 - CMA's Ed Benson (left) presents Paul Fenn with the 1999 CMA International Talent Buyer/Promoter of the Year Award as CMA UK/Ireland Director David Bower looks on.

2 - Left to Right: BBC's Mark Hagen, Trevor Dann, CMA Executive Director Ed Benson and CMA UK/Ireland Director David Bower.

3 - Dieter Vulpus is presented with his International Broadcast of the Year Award. Pictured (left to right): CMA Senior Director of International and New Business Development Jeff Green; Manager of International Development Katie Dean; CMA G/S/A Representative Jan Garich; Vulpus; and CMA Executive Director Ed Benson.

CMA recently recognized the efforts of internationally based Country Music supporters, with recent presentations of the Wesley Rose International Media Achievement Award, the International Talent Buyer/Promoter Award, and the 1999 International Broadcaster Awards.

Trevor Dann was presented with the Wesley Rose International Media Achievement award in London by CMA Executive Director Ed Benson. The award was created in 1990 to recognize outstanding achievements in the media that further the development of Country Music outside North America. Radio, print and TV journalists, authors, editors, television writers and producers who reside outside the United States are eligible to win this award. In his role of Head of Music Entertainment for the BBC, Dann oversees contemporary music for BBC Television, as well as much of the programming duties for national networks BBC Radio 1, Radio 2 and the World Service. He is credited with the BBC's continued investment in music TV programs such as "Top of the Pops," "The Ozone," and the hugely influential "Later With Jools," all of which have served as U.K. showcases for such Country luminaries as Mary Chapin Carpenter, the Mavericks, Wynonna and Garth Brooks. Trevor has created numerous programming opportunities in the U.K. from which Country artists have benefitted; the flagship of which is the bi-media TV and radio broadcast of the CMA Awards, which is carried by the BBC.

Paul Fenn was presented with CMA's International Talent Buyer/Promoter of the Year - a recognition he has now received three times. This award was established to honor that individual who has contributed the most to the advancement of Country Music by creative artist packaging, new artist development and producing new and creative Country promotions. Fenn formed Asgard Promotions Ltd. in 1969, and the firm is now the U.K.'s oldest established independent agency and promotion company. Along with a large number of major names from Nashville and Texas, they represent such artists as James Taylor, Jackson Browne and Tom Waits, and are responsible for the recent arena tour of the U.K. for the Mavericks.

The international Country Broadcaster Award was created in 1997 to recognize outstanding achievement by radio broadcasters outside North America who have made important contributions to the development of Country Music in their country. This year's recipients were Dieter Vulpus and Bernd Schroeder of Hessischer Rundfunk (HR1) in Frankfurt; Trevor Smith of "The Outback Club" network program in Australia; and Ruud Kegel of Country FM in Rotterdam. Vulpus and Schroeder have been on the German airwaves for more than 27 years, where they broadcast a weekly, hour-long radio show on HR1. Smith's syndicated radio program "The Outback Club" is heard twice weekly on over 80 stations. The "Club" opened its doors in 1996 and reaches nearly a million listeners in Australia. Ruud Kegel is the Head of Programming for Country FM, the Netherlands' first full-time Country Music station, which debuted in January, 1998. The station reaches nearly 96% of the country and has approximately 1.5 million listeners.

Earlier this year, CMA named MCA Nashville Sr. Director/Publicity and International Sarah Brosmer and Universal Music International's London-based VP Kate Farmer as joint recipients of the 1999 Jo Walker-Meador International Achievement Award. Created in 1994, the Award recognizes outstanding achievement by an individual or company in advocating and supporting Country Music's marketing development outside North America. The pair were instrumental in the international success of the Mavericks and Reba McEntire.

Winners Announced In Annual CMA Awards Point-of-Purchase Contest

Winners have been announced in two divisions of the annual CMA Awards point-of-purchase display contest, held in conjunction with NARM.

The retail winner is Tower Records, #153, Chicago, IL.

Claiming honors in the Rackjobber division is Europac Warehouse Sales - Oceana Navy Exchange, #30155, Virginia Beach, VA.

Cash prizes totaling \$1,500 were distributed.



TOP. The creative display of the 1999 CMA/NARM POP Display Contest for the Rackjobber division - Europac Warehouse Sales/Oceana Navy Exchange in Virginia Beach.

BOTTOM. The Retail Chain winner of the 1999 CMA/NARM POP Display Contest - Chicago's Tower Records.



The Country Music Association and the Grand Ole Opry have created an opportunity to recognize four outstanding artists or groups based outside North America as part of a one-hour International showcase on the main stage on the first day of Fan Fair. To submit material for consideration, you must meet the following criteria:

1. Artists must reside outside North America.
2. Artist must supply eight (8) of the following for review by the Task Force: media kit, contact information, and full-length CD recorded between 1996-1999.
3. The material must be received in the CMA Nashville office by the submission deadline of February 1, 2000. Submissions are to be directed to Katie Dean, CMA, 1 Music Circle South, Nashville, TN, 37203.

Selections will be decided by February 13, and invitations will be extended immediately thereafter via fax, phone, or email. Artists selected to perform must accept the invitation to perform by February 26, 2000. Costs associated with travel to Nashville and lodging are the responsibility of the participating artist, management and/or record company. Fan Fair provides all staging and production requirements. CMA will facilitate rehearsal space for the artists selected to perform.

**New CMA London Address:
Bessborough House
17 Cavendish Square
London, England
W1M 9AA
Phone: +44 20 7665 1875
Fax: +44 20 7665 1245**

legend

MERLE HAGGARD



On the Record ... For the Record

In August, Country Music legend Merle Haggard released a double-CD set of hits. The album, **MERLE HAGGARD FOR THE RECORD**, boasts 43 songs, including 31 of Merle's number-one hits. Such music luminaries as Willie Nelson, Alabama, Brooks & Dunn and pop sensation Jewel join him on the collection.

In September, Merle's second autobiography, "My House of Memories: Merle Haggard for the Record," was released.

In October, Merle performed a live pay-per-view television special from the Las Vegas Hilton, which chronicled his legendary career.

"I've still got a voice and I'm amazed at it."

LAS VEGAS, NV, October 2, 1999 - Merle Haggard prepares for the "fight" of his life as he gathers all of his strength and courage to give his "performance of a lifetime," a three-hour live pay-per-view special that will lead him and the audience through the memories of his life.

Across town, boxers Cezar Chavez and Willie Wise are also getting ready to duke it out. But according to Merle, people probably aren't worried about the fight, "I think the odds at the Horseshoe Casino are on what round will the Hag go down."

CLOSE UP took advantage of sneaking a few moments of the legend's time after the show to hear about the new CD, autobiography and the pay-per-view event.

Where did the idea come from to do a pay-per-view special?

"I think we can probably safely say that it's Marc Oswald's (currently president of TBA Entertainment and Merle's road manager/booking agent 15 years ago) baby. He came up with the presentation early on this year. He took the idea to RCA and Joe Galante (chairman of RCA Label Group), and he was happy to be part of it. I had 43 records ready and recorded for [the album]. Then, it was about the same time that Albert Collins came along and wanted to do another autobiography. It all came together with the [pay-per-view] and the 43 songs that are available on RCA. Sort of a crescendo, I guess, of everything in my life."

Were you nervous about having to perform more than 30 songs for this one show?

"I didn't really think we could do it. I've done shows for 30 years and I was in doubt as to whether or not I could sing that long. I've

“Most people figured I’d be dead, especially the record companies.”

still got a voice, and I’m amazed at it. The high end is what’s hard to hold onto. If you’ve ever tried to hold on to it, you know what I’m talking about. [Laughing] Sometimes the high end is hard to keep after that long.

“Maybe we can get into the ‘Guinness World Book of Records.’ I don’t think I’ve ever heard of anybody hollering that long, let alone trying to sing. I think it was something like 35 songs. It’s surprising but it went by pretty fast. Of course, there are a lot of emotional moments. You’re dead in the middle of trying to perform a song and not get emotional about it and then again put enough emotion into it to do it justice. Sometimes, you ease on over to one side of the road or the other and you choke up.”

You have been doing some of these songs for 35 years. Do the same emotions still bubble up to the surface?

“Depends on my mood. I’m a moody person. [Emotions will surface] if I’m in a certain mood with certain songs, or if something in my life has occurred that makes me understand the words better.”

You’ve had more than 90 hits during your career. How did you choose the songs to include in a show that is supposed to be “the complete Merle Haggard concert”?

“We tried to pick the most important songs, not necessarily the ones that charted the highest. For example, ‘Just Between the Two of Us’ was never a number-one record, but may have been the most important song for me at the time because it was the first thing to take us on the national charts for 35 weeks. Bonnie (Owens) and I did that in 1965. So, instead of doing ‘I Take a Lot of Pride In What I Am,’ we chose to do ‘Just Between the Two of Us’ because of its significance in my career. She had a career going before she met me. She had songs on the charts. BILLBOARD knew her name, but they’d never heard of Merle Haggard. So we had to do that song even if it meant leaving out maybe four or five other number-one songs that were not of as much importance. There are a couple of places in the show where I chose to do a Bob Wills song, ‘Take Me Back to Tulsa.’ We also did a song from the late and great Jimmie Rodgers. Those are the people who mostly influenced my career, so I think it’s important to honor them.”

Do you think it was risky to re-record your songs that are considered “classics” for the new album?

“It’s risky, you bet, because it’s like performing an athletic event several years later, or trying to throw a dart in exactly the same place. A man my age does not kick as high on the wall as a man 30 years old. You just can’t do it. I had to mentally and physically get in shape for it. I recorded 65 songs, and the 43 that appear on the RCA collection are just the ones that RCA chose. It took about three years to do them.”

What has changed in Merle Haggard’s life over the last 15 years since your first autobiography “Sing Me Back Home” came out?

“It’s a different world, an entirely different world. The world I was living in at the time I wrote ‘Sing Me Back Home’ does not exist anymore. I have a new family. I have a new life. I have a new respect. I’ve been through all the things that you can imagine and managed to live through it. Most people figured I’d be dead, especially the record companies.

“Now, I don’t have any contract agreements with any record companies except my own. I’ve found that I’ve made more money off of 10 percent of the sale with my own company than I would make with some larger company. I’ve found out little things like that later on in my life. I’m proud to be alive. It’s nice to be Merle Haggard right now because people are really nice to you. It’s great to have your body of work appreciated to the degree that this has been.”

When we look back 5 years ... 10 years ... 20 years from now, will the definitive biography of Merle Haggard be this book or the 43 songs?

“I hope maybe there will be some more songs to record and another book to write.”

Country Music has changed a lot since you started in the business. Actually, everything has changed a lot since the early ‘60s. But with the changes in Country Music, do you see them as being good, bad or both?

“I’m not a fan of technology when it’s overdone. It seems as though we’ve reached a place where we can fix anything and make anything sound like it was done perfectly. I believe perfection is really one of the most boring things in the world. A lot of the music today is perfect, and that doesn’t turn me on. I wish it did. I wish I could tell them what to do and give them suggestions. It’s too slick for me. I find myself going back to my old tapes. Not *my* old tapes, but the old tapes I listen to, the things that I have enjoyed - things that still have a lot of human error involved. Sort of like the difference between Babe Ruth and Mark McGwire.”

What gives you thrills now? What turns you on? What are your passions?

“The small mouth bass. [Laughing] Sex has dropped down to number four right underneath loose shoes.

“I enjoy being with my family at home. We’ve got a lot of fishing out there around where I live. Those times are so few here lately. That’s what really turns me on is being with them. A man my age, with a 6-year-old boy and a little girl who’s 10. They haven’t even started to realize anything about my career, or that Dad might be well-known all over the world. They love me for other reasons.”

What are your plans for the future?

“I’ve never really tried to look forward and plan things. Someone once said, ‘If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans.’ It works real well for me. I don’t have an itinerary very far ahead. I won’t let anybody book me very far ahead. I drag my feet as much as I can.”

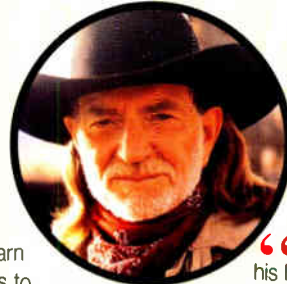
Angie Crabtree

“I believe perfection is really one of the most boring things in the world. A lot of the music today is perfect and that doesn’t turn me on.”

January 2000

In the 15th Anniversary issue of AMERICAN SONGWRITER, the magazine featured a compilation of quotes gathered by columnist Al Caudell. He says the collection was "culled from years of interviews with songwriters, music publishers, producers and administrators; the industry professionals from all genres of music who really work with and understand the songwriting process."

The staff at CLOSE UP thought these little bits of wisdom were worth sharing with our readers.



Willie Nelson

“Believe in yourself, don't just take anybody's opinion. Learn who has an opinion worth listening to. The best way to do that is to go to someone who's had success. So have your feelings and stick with it. Don't give up too easily, and live in your heart.”

LARRY HENLEY-songwriter (August 1984)

“If you need to pay the rent, you've got to be commercial, and there's nothing shameful about that.”

WILLIE NELSON-songwriter/artist (October 1984)

“I think people who write songs are like plumbers; they have a knack for something...putting words and music together. I think any job should be something you love. Life's too short to work at something you hate.”

EVEN STEVENS-songwriter (January 1985)

“Someone once told me, 'If you can live without it-don't do it.' I think to be a great songwriter, songwriting is almost something you can't do without.”

BECKY HOBBS-songwriter/artist (July 1985)

“Everybody in Nashville writes good songs; you can't hardly get bad. Good don't mean anything nowadays; it's got to be great.”

STEVE DAVIS-songwriter (July 1985)

“You have to know that if you're going to be a songwriter, come to town prepared to be a songwriter. Learn as much as you can about both sides-the successful and the unsuccessful-and realize that once you are a success, you can always go back to the other side. You have to be prepared for that so you can handle it if it happens.”

TOMMY ROCCO-songwriter (July 1987)

“To be a songwriter in Nashville you need the heart of a poet and the hide of a rhino.”

BOB MORRISON-songwriter (September 1987)

“I've said this many times, you look at people who have long careers creatively, who didn't burn out or go crazy or become alcoholics, and they all have one thing in common. They get up early every morning and do it and they quit at the same hour. They try all day and then the monkey's off their backs; they've done the best they could that day.”

BOB McDILL-songwriter (January 1988)



Dolly Parton

“I noticed early in the game...little children liked my music more than the grownups did. I have a silliness about me that allows me to be flippant with my music. I think good writers are the ones who can really look at life and laugh.”

ROGER MILLER-songwriter/artist (September 1988)

“A great songwriter has got to really show an event, a feeling in his heart, rather than just tell it.”

BILLY SPRAGUE-songwriter/artist (November 1988)

“I think one way a new writer can hurt himself right off the bat is to pitch things that aren't right and aren't good enough. Having someone who can filter your good ideas from the bad is a big help.”

KENT BLAZY-songwriter/publisher (November 1989)

“When you write a song, it better be as good as the greats...The Stones, The Beatles. Don't ever take the attitude, 'well this is good enough'...to get me a deal or for a first record. I think the attitude of being satisfied means you lose. You know there is always another rung to climb.”

JON BON JOVI-songwriter/artist (January 1990)

“You've got to be willing to sacrifice. You have to be willing to pay that price. I've never seen it done any differently unless you're the luckiest person in the world...”

DOLLY PARTON-songwriter/artist (March 1990)

“You have to have a certain shamelessness to write. You have to be willing to drop your pants in front of anyone that might want to look. And you don't do that because you're proud of it; you do it because you could not go through a day without writing.”

RICH MULLINS-songwriter/artist (March 1990)

“You have to take your time...because there are no new words, no new notes, and no new chords. The same...notes, chords, and basically the same words...have been used since the days of Beethoven and Bach. So I just try to say it in a different way and make the best of what I have to work with...what makes a song is a timeless thing...I basically write about love and life because they are always current.”

SMOKEY ROBINSON -songwriter/artist (November 1991)

“I'd say, if you're really into it, move to Nashville. You can watch baseball on TV, but if you're going to play the game, you've got to go where they're swinging the bats...so move here, get a job, learn to drive with these people at 5 p.m. rush hour.”

GARTH BROOKS-songwriter/artist (May 1991)

“Great songs make great careers. If it's only musically or lyrical-interesting, but not both, then you can't make a very good record out of it...it all counts.”

ALLEN REYNOLDS-songwriter/producer (September 1991)



Garth Brooks

“Quotes” Worth Repeating

“When I think about the songs that touch me, they’re the ones that go beyond the brain to somewhere deep in your soul.”

RUSS TAFF-songwriter/artist (March 1993)

“It’s good to have some sort of rules, but after a while they should really be thrown out. Rules are made to be broken.”

BRUCE HORNSBY-songwriter/artist (July 1993)

“Realize that your competition is not the other guy that’s down the street writing, it’s the people with hits on the charts. That’s your competition and you have to write as good as those people do.”

TRAVIS TRITT-songwriter/artist (May 1994)

“You have to be critical of yourself, but you can be overly critical. So you have to be a little bit kind to yourself, especially on days when it’s just not happening. Be confident in the notion that it will get better.”

DON HENLEY-songwriter/artist (September 1994)

“As a songwriter, you have a responsibility. The goal is to share...your deepest feelings, your strongest emotions, your most personal moments. The responsibility is to make sure your heart and head are in tune with each other and the times.”

MICHAEL SETTLE -songwriter/artist/journalist (January 1995)

“I have a theory that the only original thing any of us do is screw up. You can be taught how to do something perfectly...how to reproduce something that someone else has done...but only you can screw up in your own unique way. That’s where true ingenuity comes in.”

BILLY JOEL-songwriter/artist (March 1995)

“Songs are a gift from God. Any true songwriter will tell you, if you’ve got the channel open...God will send you words and music.”

MARTY STUART-songwriter/artist/producer (May 1995)

“I don’t care who you are...a great artist or just someone trying to fake it, the hit process still begins with a great song. There’s no getting around that.”

KENNY “BABYFACE” EDMONDS
-songwriter/artist/producer (September 1995)

“Writing songs is not like writing a letter, not like painting a picture, not like writing a symphony, but it has all those elements in it. It happens on such a deep subconscious level...that’s where the magic comes in.”

ARLO GUTHRIE-songwriter/artist (November 1995)

“Great songs are very precious when you come across them. When you can emotionally connect an artist’s ability with what the lyrics are trying to convey, an audience really feels that. It’s a magic combination.”

RANDY SCRUGGS
-songwriter/artist/musician/producer (November 1995)



Travis Tritt



Marty Stuart



Bill Anderson

“If it’s a new artist, I need a song that will get them on the radio. If it’s an artist in the 300,000 category, I need a song that will move them to gold. If they’re gold, I need a song that will move them to platinum. Writers need to think of that when they’re pitching songs.”

DOUG JOHNSON
-songwriter/A&R Executive (January 1996)

“You definitely must write about what you know, even if it’s something as horrible as your own pain. You must do that rather than total fiction, because it just won’t ring true otherwise.”

ROBERT LAMM-songwriter/artist (March 1997)

“It’s incredibly rare for a writer to walk into town and blow people away. It’s been done, but no one should come to town expecting it. You can ask any professional songwriter, and they’ll tell you this wasn’t something that came to them overnight. They wrote a bunch of bad songs before they wrote really good ones.”

SCOTT HENDRICKS-producer/record executive (May 1997)

“I’ve heard this said and I believe it’s true. One of the most important qualities of being a great songwriter is being a good listener. You’ll gear great titles if you shut up and listen. People say them all the time.”

HENRY PAUL-songwriter/artist (May 1997)

“When you’re hot, everybody treats you nicer. Even your pets treat you nicer because you exude good feelings when things are going well. But the people I hold precious are the ones who were nice to me when things weren’t going well.”

BOBBY BRADDOCK-songwriter (May 1997)

“Songwriting is one of the most intimate, personal acts a person can attempt.”

HAL KETCHUM-songwriter/artist (July 1997)

“One of the great mysteries of songwriting that I don’t think I’ll ever understand is that marriage of lyric and melody...for some reason the two things just come together and I don’t understand that process.”

JIM MCBRIDE-songwriter (January 1998)

“You’ve got to do what feels right and what you’re proud of, no matter where the business end of it looks like it’s taking you. Nobody really knows who you are but yourself.”

MATRACA BERG-songwriter/artist (May 1998)

“Never take rejection personally. There’s a lot of it and it’s painful. You have to let it roll off your shoulders or it will kill you...or make you stop, which could be worse!”

ROBIN LERNER-songwriter (January 1999)

“Music has the ability...to affect people’s lives, and sometimes we sell out and don’t do that. I think sometimes, in an effort to be all things to all people, we skirt that. I don’t think we (songwriters) should.”

BILL ANDERSON-songwriter/artist (May 1999)

JOHN BERRY



1. **Latest album:** WILDEST DREAMS, Lyric Street Records

2. **Stats:** Wife Robin, married 12 years this summer. Kids: TaylorMarie (age 9), Sean Thomas (age 5) and Caelan James (age 4)

3. **Place of residence:** Franklin, TN.

4. **What was the worst job you ever had?** The worst job I have ever had was painting apartments in Atlanta during the summer. It was a job right out of highschool.

5. **What was the craziest thing you've ever done?** Back in 1987, I was still single and lived way out in the country and I literally lived in a tool shed. I lived in it for about a year and a half. Come to think of it, that proba-

bly isn't the craziest thing I've ever done. The craziest thing I've ever done was getting married and having *Robin and I* live in that thing for three months while our house was being finished. It was a '2' x 24' tool shed!

6. **What is the song that describes your current romantic status?** "Family Tradition." No, just kidding. "Annie's Song" by John Denver. Because that is what Robin does for me - she fills up my senses.

7. **What was the last CD that you bought?** Prince, 1999. We're working up a real funky version of that song for our New Year's Eve concert in Kalamazoo, Mich'gan.

8. **If you only had \$5 left, what would you spend it on?** An ad in the newspaper to get a job. (laughs) You've got to work!

9. Who is the one person you want to do a duet with?

Aretha Franklin. How cool would that be?! I just sang with Patsy (Cline) on the new Patsy Cline record. The producers actually erased the tracks around her voice and recorded her with a new band. They brought her into 1999; instead of us going back in time they brought her into the future.

10. When did you know that you wanted to make a career out of singing?

When I was 15. I remember being in a distributive education class at school and the teacher went around the class and asked the folks what they wanted to do (for their career) when they get out of school. I said, "Well, I want to sing." And she said, "That would be a great hobby, but what are you going to do to provide for your family?" I was completely offended and I said, "Obviously, you haven't heard me sing." (laughing) I copped an attitude in tenth grade!

11. What is different about WILDEST DREAMS from your past albums?

We changed producers. I didn't write for this record; well, actually I did write for this record but I found other songs that I felt stronger about. We used a lot of different writers that I had not used in the past, a different engineer, different musicians, and as silly as it sounds, I used a different microphone. Every microphone sounds different on every voice, and the microphone that I had found that I loved so much didn't work for me anymore after my vocal chord surgery. The mic I was using was an old 1956 vintage microphone and the one we ended up using was a brand new mic. It was just magic; I loved it.

12. What song from the album represents you the most? "Salvation." The line that goes: "A guy like me needs all the help he can get; so as a gentle reminder I'm not perfect yet." That would be me. (laughing) I need all the help I can get!

13. Your music effects people in so many emotional ways. What was the one letter, situation or story that moved you the most?

For a two year period I would come out in the crowd and I would dance with people as I sang "I Never Lost You" as an encore. The ladies just got a kick out of it! One night, I turned around and there was a young lady in a wheelchair. So I knelt down and danced with her. Right as I finished and went back towards the stage, I glanced back and her mom and dad and sister were in tears. They were absolutely in tears! A little while later I received a letter from the mother. They had come to a number of shows in the past and I had danced with the sister one time. Well, the little girl in the wheel chair had told her mom, "Boy, I sure would love to dance with John at one of the shows." And her mom said to her, "Well honey, that's just not possible because you're in a wheelchair." And when I danced with her that night, they just were floored. I had also signed an album for her before and when I sign for kids, I always put, "To Bill or to Jane, Dream Big." When her mom told her it wasn't possible and that she couldn't dance with me, she

said, "Well I can always dream." And then when it happened, it was a huge deal for that family. Just the littlest thing you do can make a huge impact in somebody's life.

14. What is your favorite memory of being on the road? Coming home. (laughs) One of the coolest moments of being on the road was when we pulled into Kalamazoo, MI and turned down the street the State Theatre was on and I saw "Sold Out" on the sign. That was a pretty cool moment.

15. What advice would you give to an artist just starting out?

1. Think out of the box.
2. Be aware - the people who can help you, can help you. Be physically aware. For instance, if you live in Nebraska and want to sing Country Music, you probably aren't going to be able to live in Nebraska long. I finally took my own advice and moved to Nashville. For years I didn't live here, and the reason I moved was to make things more convenient for our family and to take care of business at the same time.

16. Do you think songwriting is a key ingredient in becoming an artist?

I think it helps. If you are doing your music and you are expressing who you are, people can identify you. I wrote everything on my first five independent albums; good or bad I wrote everything. But now, I want to really focus on it and work with people that I know and co-write and just become a better writer.

17. Who is the biggest influence in your life? My dad was a big influence. He always wanted me to grow up to be who I wanted to be. When I was young, he built me a recording studio in the basement of our house so I could record and learn how to record. He was very supportive of what I did.

18. If you could ask one person, one question, who and what would it be? It couldn't be just one question. I would love to talk to my mom. She died when I was 19 and I was just a kid, and I never really got to know her. I would love to do that.

19. If you couldn't be a singer, what would you be? You mean, other than dead? I can't imagine anything else. It's all I've ever wanted to do.

20. What is your goal for the year 2000? For the year 2000, I need to figure out how I can make money selling used or barely used generators. Just kidding. I want to better balance my time. I know that sounds like a simple thing but it's actually very difficult. If I balance my time right, I can allot a certain amount of time to focus on songwriting; I can focus on being a better dad; I can find time to spend time with just me and my wife and nobody else; I can balance the time to be sure my family makes it to church on Sunday morning; and all those things. But it all comes down to balancing time. It really turns into a life organization thing, and it's very important to me that that goal comes together. It's a very difficult thing for me to do.

Chris Gusa

AWARDS

Terry E. London, CMA board member, president/chief executive officer of Gaylord Entertainment Company and Oklahoma State University graduate, has been named to the **College of Business Administration Hall of Fame** at OSU. Being the

highest honor the college bestows, the Hall of Fame was created in 1964 to recognize graduates who have distinguished themselves in their professional careers, who have demonstrated effective leadership and who have made exemplary contributions to their communities.

The Recording Industry Association of America has recognized **Garth Brooks** as the best-selling solo recording artist of the century with 89 million in U.S. sales (95 million sales with his **DOUBLE LIVE CD**). Coming in second to the Beatles as the overall best-selling recording act of the 20th Century. He was also recognized as the top Country artist of the century.

BMI President/CEO and CMA Lifetime Board Member **Frances W. Preston** was recently inducted into the **Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame**. Preston was honored for her achievements as a "defender of copyright" among her many other charitable endeavors.

Emmylou Harris received **BILLBOARD magazine's Century Award** at the 1999 **BILLBOARD AWARDS**. The award is the magazine's highest honor for artistic creativity.

NEWSLINE

RCA's famed **Studio B** recently closed its doors to the public indefinitely. The

Alan Jackson enlisted the help of Cledus T. Judd for his latest video "Pop A Top" from his new album **UNDER THE INFLUENCE**. The video features Jackson performing while various characters, including Cledus, are magically transformed from regular joes into high society. Pictured (left to right): Arista/Nashville VP of Creative Services, Maude Gilman; Director, Steven Goldmann; Judd and Jackson.

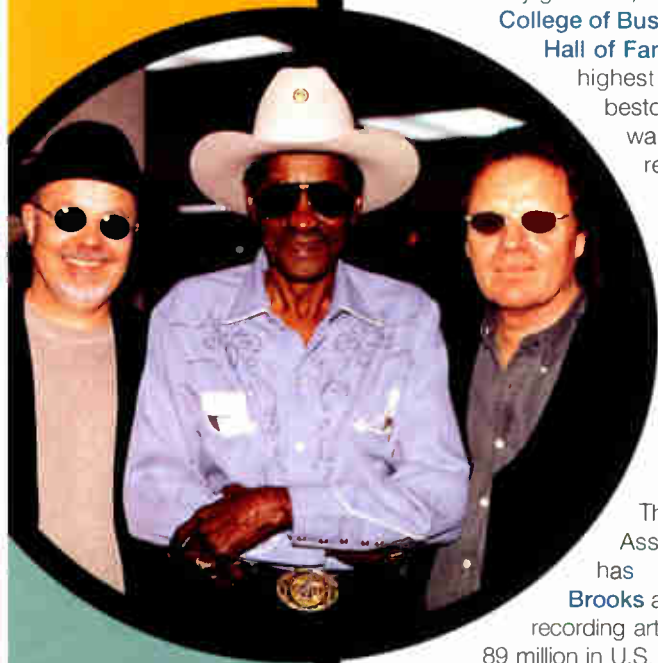
studio, a stop for Music Row tourists and the site of many recording sessions by artists from Elvis Presley to The Monkees, is owned by the Country Music Foundation and was a part of the Country Music Hall of Fame tour ticket for many years. Because the Hall of Fame and Museum is moving to downtown Nashville in 2001, executives felt the need to close the doors due to shifts in staffing and the longer travel time for its tours. Executives comment that the studio is an important part of the Country Music recording history, and the Foundation is looking into creating different ways to incorporate the studio with the museum once they've moved downtown.

TNN and **MUSIC CITY NEWS** magazine is no longer coupled for their annual Country Music awards show during June's Fan Fair week. **COUNTRY WEEKLY** magazine is now taking its place to telecast "COUNTRY WEEKLY Presents The TNN Awards." TNN's new magazine choice is a biweekly publication that claims circulation of 400,000 copies.

Sony Music Nashville and **DKC Music** recently announced the move of the DKC imprint to Sony Music's **Monument Records**. This move, which was effective November 1, has shifted Wade Hayes to Monument Records and will provide the DKC music label opportunities to grow and break new acts.

Nashville-based, independent record label **Broken Bow** has formed an alliance with **The Carole Sund/Carrington Memorial Reward Foundation**. The label will assist in raising public awareness and revenue for the Foundation, which provides resources to families to help law enforcement officials locate missing loved ones and bring violent criminals to justice, through artist tours and records sales.

Dolly Parton recently announced that she is planning on expanding her Dollywood theme park in



Blues Hall of Famer Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, whose Country recordings include Bob Wills' "Take Me Back To Texas" and Little Jimmy Dickens' "May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose," recently presented some of his career memorabilia to the archives of the Country Music Hall of Fame. On hand for the ceremony include songwriter Gary Nicholson (left), Brown and Delbert McClinton.



Pigeon Forge, TN. May 2001 is the expected date Dolly will open a major waterpark near her already famed entertainment complex.

ON THE MOVE

Mercury Nashville has made the following staff promotions/changes: **Danny Bess** has been elevated to senior director of finance. He will be responsible for budgeting, planning and financial reporting for Mercury Nashville and MCA Nashville. **Jim Kemp** has been upped to vice president of creative services. In his new position, Kemp will oversee all aspects of visual mediums for Mercury including album and publicity shots and videos. **Ben Kline** has been named vice president of sales. Mercury's promotion department has been restructured as follows: **Michael Powers**, vice president of promotion, will head up the staff. **Haley McCrary** is promotion coordinator; **Chris Stacey** has been named vice president of national promotions; **John Ettinger** is vice president of midwest/northeast promotion; and **Rocco Cosco** is vice president of southeast promotion.

RCA Label Group has announced the following changes/promotions: **Cindy Mabe** has been promoted to manager/marketing and artist development; **Cindy Heath** has been elevated to sales product manager; **Shane Tarlton** is administrator/creative services; **Cheri Cranford** has been named administrator/label operations; **Jim Saliby** has been tapped as senior director of national account sales; **Rachel Fontenot** is appointed to sales assistant; **Jimmy Rector** is promotion manager, northeast region for BNA; **Suzette Tucker** has been promoted to director of promotion for mid-atlantic region for RCA; and **Darcy Miller** joins the RCA promotion team as promotion coordinator.

Musicland Stores Corporation recently named **Douglas M. Tracey** as senior vice president of e-commerce and logistics. In addition to his new position, Tracey will continue to head the company's distribution network. **Lisa Mellas** has also joined the company as director of e-commerce merchandising and marketing.

Shannon Myers has been named management associate at **Bob Doyle & Associates**. Myers will handle day-to-day artist management responsibilities under Bob Doyle.

Scot Sherrod has been promoted to creative director for **Major Bob Music**. Sherrod will represent the catalogs of Major Bob Music writers Garth Brooks, Billy Currington, Mark Luna, Buddy Mondlock and Neil Thrasher.

Lauren Bufferd has been named **Country Music Hall of Fame** library director. Bufferd's responsibilities will include the development of library policies as well as the development and management of the museum's collection of more than 200,000 recordings, 60,000 historical photographs, 5,000 films and videotapes, thousands of posters, books, songbooks, periodicals, sheet music and hundreds of audio tapes.

Gaylord Entertainment Company recently hired **Jay Smith** for a newly created position of chief creative officer. In the new position, Smith will develop cooperative projects involving Gaylord Entertainment's diverse business.

Country.com has appointed **Edward Morris** as its music news correspondent. Morris' responsibilities will include reporting on both the consumer and industry sides of the music business.

Jeffrey C. Wayne has been promoted to president and COO of **Jones International Networks Ltd.**

Eddie Tidwell has been named creative director, **Jim Williams** is catalog manager and **Tarryn Smith** is promoted to creative manager for **Muy Bueno Music Group**.

Clyde Russell has been hired as tournament director for **The Vinny**, Vince Gill's annual pro-celebrity fundraiser for Tennessee Junior Golf and youth programs. Russell assumes the post as part of his new position as director of special events for the Tennessee Golf Foundation (TGF).

Universal Music Publishing Group has announced the following staff changes/promotions: **Tammy Helm** has been named manager of administration; **Alisa R. Tate** has been named administrative coordinator; **Mark Corminy** is upped to manager of business and technology services; **Katie Dalton** is promoted to creative assistant; **Gina Gamble** is administrative assistant; **Cherie Greear** is catalog manager; and **Clint Newcom** has been named catalog assistant.

Ross Schilling has been named associate manager at **Vector Management**.



Currently working on his fourth album, **Wade Hayes** (left) was seen in the studio getting a little help from his producer and long-time friend **Ronnie Dunn** of **Brooks & Dunn**. Music from the new album should be out by early next spring.



A life-size bronze statue of legendary producer and musician Owen Bradley was recently unveiled at his own park on Nashville's Music Row. Commissioned by the Bradley family and created by Utah-based artist Gary Ernest Smith, the one-ton artwork depicts Bradley seated at a seven-foot grand piano, with the sheet music to "Crazy" and "Sweet Dreams" on the music stand. On hand for the unveiling ceremony was Owen's wife, Katherine Bradley, seated at the piano, and daughter Patsy Bradley; standing are son Jerry Bradley, grandson Clay Bradley and wife Sara; Ray Stevens; artist Gary Ernest Smith; Ricky Skaggs; and daughter-in-law Connie Bradley.

Famous Music's Nashville Division has promoted **Curtis Green** to senior creative director. Green is responsible for signing new songwriters, working with the company's roster of songwriters and songwriter/artists and promoting its catalogue.

Scott Stern has joined **FORCE** to head up the publicity department.

Vanessa Davis has joined **Atlantic Records** as director of media relations.

Jody Van-Alin has been appointed southeast regional promotion/marketing representative for **DreamWorks Records Nashville**.

MCA Nashville announced the following staff promotions: **Guy Floyd** is promoted to director/marketing and product development, **Rene White** is upped to senior manager of A&R and **Ken Robold** has been tapped chief financial officer for MCA and Mercury Nashville.

Angela Goldsberry has joined **Life Music Group** as executive/administrative assistant.

Toby G. Cannon has joined **BMI** as director/training and development, general licensing. In her new post Cannon will lead training of new and current licensing employees for BMI Nashville.

Rebecca Brown has been promoted to associate vice president of writer/publisher relations for **SESAC** and will now handle the day-to-day affairs of the Nashville writer/publisher relations division.

Storme Warren has joined the **Travis Television** production staff as producer/creative director.

Audium Entertainment announced the following newly appointed staff: **Chuck Rhodes** to director of promotions, **Richard Helm** to office manager and **Ally Wells** to receptionist/office assistant.

NEW COMPANIES

The Bobby Roberts Company, Inc. recently announced the formation of **The Reno/Roberts Agency** (a division of the Bobby Roberts Company, Inc.) which will specialize in booking bluegrass music. Both offices can be reached at P.O. Box 1547, Goodlettsville, TN 37070-1547. Phone: (615) 859-8899, Fax: (615) 859-2200.

Industry veterans **Nick Hunter** and **Simon Renshaw** have recently opened Nashville-based label **Audium Entertainment** in hopes to "foster ties with radio stations that have been overlooked by major labels," as well as "give established recording artists the grassroots-style marketing attention they deserve." Audium Entertainment is located at 20 Academy Place, Nashville, TN 37210. Phone: (615) 726-0060, Fax: (615) 726-3788.

SIGNINGS

RECORDING: **Travis Tritt** to *Sony Music*...**Sons of the Desert** to *MCA Nashville*...**Flatland Posse** to *Comstock Records*...**Steve Earl** to *Artemis Records*...**John Rich** to *BNA Records*...**Tom Mabe** to *Virgin Records Nashville*...**Girlfriendz** to *RCA Records*...**Joe Ely** to *Rounder Records*...**Damon Gray** and **Joanie Keller** to *Broken Bow Records*...**Marty Raybon** to *Tri-Chord Records*...**Rodney Carrington** to *Capitol Records*...**Nate Barrett** to *Lyric Street Records*. BOOKINGS: **Heather Myles** and **Jack Ingram** to *Ewing-Roberts Agency*...**Janie Fricke**, **Larry Cordle & Lonesome Standard Time**, **David Parmley & Continental Divide** and **The Reno Brothers** to the *Bobby Roberts Company*...**Billy Yates**, **Danni Leigh**, **The Lynns**, **Coley McCabe** and **Macky Hooper** to *Buddy Lee Attractions*.

MANAGEMENT: **Sue James** to *Full Court Press*. PUBLISHING: **Jim McBride** to *Cal IV Entertainment*...**Robin Haley** to *Hamstein Music Group*...**Bill Burnette** to *Sony/ATV Tree Music Publishing*...**Tim Ryan** and **Jeff Wood** to *Island Bound*...**Jon Nicholson** to *Broadvision Publishing*.

MUSIC VIDEOS

artist/label
Chris LeDoux/Capitol
Jo Dee Messina/Curb
Alan Jackson/Arista
Keith Urban/Capitol
Mark Wills/Mercury

title
Stampede
Because You Love Me
Pop A Top
Your Everything
Back At One

director/direction company
Michael Salomon
Lawrence Carroll
Steven Goldmann
Trey Fanjoy
Jim Hershleder

REX ALLEN SR.

Singer/actor Rex Allen Sr. died December 17 several hours after being hit by a car in his driveway in Tuscon, Arizona. He was 78. Known as the "Arizona Cowboy," Allen was an overnight success when he started his career in 1946. He replaced Country great Red Foley on the "WLS Barn Dance," a Chicago radio show that rivaled the Grand Ole Opry. He later moved on to record for Decca Records where he had some of his biggest hits including "Streets of Laredo" and "Crying In The Chapel." He starred in many western movies including "The Arizona Cowboy" and "Frontier Doctor." He also narrated more than 80 Walt Disney films. Allen is survived by four children: Rex Allen Jr., Curtis Allen, Mark Allen and Bonita Allen.

HOYT AXTON

Songwriter and actor Hoyt Axton died on October 26. He was 61. Son of the late Mae Boren Axton, a noted songwriter and entertainment executive, Axton first gained recognition when he penned classic tunes such as "Greenback Dollar," "Joy to the World (Jeremiah was a Bullfrog)" and "When Morning Comes." Also a well known actor, Axton appeared in "The Black Stallion," "Gremlins," "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" and "Austin City Limits."

BOB GALLION

Bob Gallion, booking agent, recording artist, songwriter and disc jockey, died in his West Virginia home on August 20. He was 75. Gallion began his music career as a disc jockey, and after becoming the number-one disc jockey in Mobile, Alabama and in Atlanta, Georgia, he began his singing career. Gallion recorded such hits as "Happy Birthday Darling," "Loving You (Was Worth This Broken Heart)" and "Wall to Wall Love." He also wrote songs for Kitty Wells, The Osborne Brothers, Patti Powell and Red Sovine. Gallion began his own booking agency/concert promotions business. Bob Gallion Productions, in the early '70s. He is survived by his wife June, his daughter Melody and his granddaughter Kristi.

DANNY MAYO

Nashville songwriter Danny Mayo passed away October 1. He was 48. Mayo suffered from heart problems that were complicated by diabetes. He was known for County hits such as, "The Keeper Of The Stars," "Feed Jake" and "Jesus And Mama." Funeral services were held at Crestwood Funeral Home in Gadsden, Alabama. He is survived by his daughter Aimee Mayo, his son Cory Mayo and his mother Opal Mayo.

MARY REEVES DAVIS

Former CMA Board Member Mary Reeves Davis, widow of Country Music legend Jim Reeves, passed away November 11. While on the CMA Board of Directors, Davis played an instrumental role in getting anti-piracy laws passed in 15 states. She is also credited with being the founder of the Jim Reeves Museum in 1980. Funeral services were held at the Springhill Funeral home in Madison, Tennessee. She is survived by her husband William Terry Davis and brothers Dr. Fred White and John White Sr. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Mary Reeves Davis' name to the National Alzheimer's Association.

DOUG SAHM

Doug Sahn, founder of the Grammy Award winning group Texas Tornados, passed away on November 18. Sahn began his career near San Antonio, Texas while playing at local Country dances and honky tonks. Before beginning Texas Tornados, Sahn founded Sir Douglas Quintet which had hits including, "She's About A Mover" and "Mendocino." His most recent recording entitled TEXAS TORNADOS: LIVE FROM THE LIMO, VOL I, was released in July 1999. Sahn is survived by sons Shawn Sahn, Shandon Sahn, sister Dawn Sahn and brother Victor Sahn.

HANK SNOW

Hank Snow, known as "The Singing Ranger," died December 20 of apparent heart failure. He was 85. Snow was one of Country Music's top stars during the 1950s. He made his first recording in 1936 and later placed 65 songs in BILLBOARD'S Top 40, with songs including "I Don't Hurt Anymore," "The Rhumba Boogie" and "The Golden Rocket." The Country Music Hall of Fame and Songwriters Hall of Fame member was a native of Nova Scotia, Canada where he appeared on radio shows. In 1950 he worked his way to Nashville where he joined the Grand Ole Opry. Snow is survived by his son Jimmy Snow, wife Minnie B. Snow, and sister Marion Peach.

the buzz



lila

M c c a n n

World Radio History

September 22, 1999 - It wasn't your average school night for 17-year-old Lila McCann. Far from the rigors of school-work and cheerleading, Lila was busy painting the town red on "Country Music's Biggest Night" with fellow Country Music artist David Kersh.

As the twosome hit the red carpet, they were bombarded with questions from the paparazzi regarding their appearance together, and when CLOSE UP sat down with Lila the day after the CMA Awards we asked the question ourselves.

"We're just buds. It's funny because when we were in the car [waiting to walk down the red carpet] we were discussing what we were going to tell [the press]. because obviously there's nothing going on."

Lila brings her voice down to a whisper and says, "He's a little old for me."

"We were just thinking up the funniest stuff to say, but we were really good. There was one interview, where they said something like, 'Lila, you're not going to be legal for another two months.' I was like, 'I'm legal in Texas and that's where David lives, so it's okay.'"

After making it down the red carpet and into the Opry House, Lila continued to catch people's attention.

"I had never met Merle Haggard. I walked right by him and he stopped me in the hallway, which I thought was the coolest thing. He goes, 'You're really good. I like what you do.' And I was like, 'Whoa ...' I was in awe.

"And I met one of the guys from 'N Sync. He came up and introduced himself to me and said he had my CD. I didn't expect that, so I thought it was really cool."

This past spring, Lila followed up her self-titled Asylum Records debut with SOMETHING IN THE AIR. So far, the album has produced two hit-songs, "With You" and "Crush." Lila yearns to be more involved with her projects and will have that opportunity later this year.

"We're probably going to go four or five singles into this record because we're not going to record again until next August - after I get out of school - because I want to come to town [Nashville] for it. I'm usually in Nashville for it but I don't get to spend a lot of time working on everything. I'm usually there when they do a little bit of the music and I'm there for the vocals. I really want to be a big part of it this time, so I'm going to stay in town for a while and do that."

In the year 2000, Lila will brandish a cap and gown for her high school graduation. As life as a full-time high school student comes to an end for Lila, she looks ahead to the future.

"I'm going to take some time off [after graduation], probably two or three years. It depends on what goes on. I want to spend some time on the road for a while, because every time I get used to being on the road I go back to school. Usually I'm only out for about two or three months, so I'm excited and looking forward to being able to do that, but I've enjoyed school too."

The future may include extensive touring, but it doesn't include making a move to Country Music's capital - Nashville.

"I'll probably stay in Seattle and then move to Los Angeles or something. I like the Northwest. I like that area. It's nice. I have to be by the water because I love it."

Along the road to fame lie the truly "cool" experiences that are unique to each artist, and Lila is probably not alone in naming "The George Strait Country Music Festival" as being the coolest.

"I've done a lot of cool things, but the George Strait tour was one of the neatest just because I got to make so many friends. I didn't know a lot of people in the business because that was my first year out, but being on that tour was so easy. You just got up everyday and we played and we got to watch everyone else sing. George Strait is just really cool and I got to know Tim [McGraw] and Faith [Hill] pretty well. They're nice people and we had a lot of fun."

After making a host of television appearances, Lila made her acting debut on CBS-TV's "Walker: Texas Ranger," starring Chuck Norris. What she thought would be a weird experience turned into a fun one, but for now acting will take a backseat to the many other things going on in her life.

"I don't really have time [for acting] being in school and doing all of that other stuff. Hopefully, when I graduate, I might do a lot more. I really want to try Broadway or something sooner or later. I think that would be really fun. I don't know when I'll ever find time to do it, but it would be cool."

After spending time with Lila, it's hard not to pick up on the verbiage of teenagers. In their world everything is cool and fun, which isn't a bad way to look at life. Her bubbly enthusiasm is infectious and apparent in her music and videos. So, in an attempt to speak the language ... Lila McCann is just way cool!

Lila gets "double" the attention at the 1999 CMA Awards. Pictured left to right: Ty Herndon, Lila and her date for the evening, David Kersh.



Angie Crabtree

CONGRATULATIONS

CMA Member and professional mufftar player (a cross between a guitar and a 1967 Ford Thunderbird muffler) **Doug Gabriel** was recently named Male Vocalist of the Year for the third year in a row at the Branson All-American Entertainment Awards. His famed, Branson stage show, "The Doug Gabriel Show," has also been named Best Morning Show five years in a row.

Tim McGraw was recently named PEOPLE magazine's "Sexiest Man in Country Music."

Pucker up buttercup! **Billy Ray Cyrus** was one of the few to receive the 1999 Blistex "World's Most Beautiful Lips" award. This is the second time Cyrus has been recognized in the company's 20th anniversary of the award program. Others also receiving the award included Michael Jordan and Tom Hanks.

Because of her hard work and efforts with organ donation awareness, **Deana Carter** was recently named one of the top 10 Women's Health Education Advocates by UCLA's Iris Cantor Women's Health Education Resource Center.

LENDING A HELPING HAND

We're waiting for the final tally! **George Strait** and his label MCA Nashville announced that they will donate a minimum of \$100,000 to St.

Jude Children's Research Hospital with some of the proceeds from George's new Christmas album, MERRY CHRISTMAS WHEREVER YOU ARE. According to R&R, the hospital will receive a contribution from every album sold after the first 500,000 copies.

Be sure to mark February 1, 2000 on your calendar. That's when you can give **Billy Ray Cyrus** a big cyber-smooch (but only until February 14). Log onto AmericanGreetings.com to participate in their "Cyber Smooch For A Cure" campaign where you can lay a big one on the Country star to raise money for the Billy Ray Cyrus Charity Foundation.

Move over Michael Jordan. Celebs including **Sherrié Austin, Kix Brooks, Claudia Church, Brad Paisley, Diamond Rio's Marty Roe, Mark Wills, Chely Wright** and many others teamed up to raise \$60,000 at the 10th Annual Vince Gill Celebrity Basketball Game and Concert. The money raised is used for scholarships and program enhancements for the Belmont University Athletic Department and The Curb School of Music Business.

Lyric Street Recording group **SHeDAISY** recently performed their hit song "Little Goodbyes" on the day-time soap opera "General Hospital." Pictured (left to right): **Kelsi Osborn** of SHeDAISY, General Hospital's **Amber Tamblyn, Michael Saucedo, Nancy Lee Grahn, Kristyn Osborn** of SHeDAISY, **Wally Kurth, Tava Smiley** and **Kassidy Osborn** of SHeDAISY.



CMA Award winning Diamond Rio kicked off the 1999 football season for the Tennessee Titans by performing the National Anthem as well as giving a free public concert after the game.

Dolly Parton recently announced that her Imagination Library program, which donates a book every month to each pre-school child in her native Sevier County, Tennessee, is expanding to include communities throughout the country so that kids everywhere will have the opportunity to enjoy reading.

BELLS AND BABIES

Hal Ketchum is a new dad. He and his wife Gina have adopted a two-year-old girl named Fannie Rose from Bulgaria.

Santa delivered an early package to the Warren household. Cole Daniel Warren was born December 10 to Brett Warren of the **Warren Brothers**, and to wife Raquel.

Asylum Recording artist **Monte Warden** wed his girlfriend Brandi Thomas on November 6. The two met in a Nashville recording studio in 1997.

MCA Nashville's **Lee Ann Womack** recently married record executive Frank Liddell.

HOLLYWOOD, HERE I COME

Look for Country couple **Tim McGraw** and **Faith Hill** after the first of the year as they make an appearance with the Big Bird himself on the PBS series "Sesame Street."

LeAnn Rimes has been tapped to star in a feature film from Warner Bros. entitled "Emily's Song." Described as a musical along the lines of "A Star Is Born," the film is the story of a father and daughter, both musicians, who are reunited through their music. It is expected to be the biggest music-to-film effort since George Strait's movie "Pure Country."

Be sure to catch the upcoming episode of "Malibu, CA." MCA newcomer **Alecia Elliott** grabbed the opportunity to star in an episode of the series where she will play herself and perform her debut single "I'm Diggin' It."

Barbara Mandrell has been filming the forthcoming CBS Movie "Stolen From The Heart." Inspired by actual events, the movie recounts the story of a single pregnant woman and her unborn baby who become unwitting victims caught in a volatile relationship between a woman and her abusive husband. Mandrell will play Ruth Wagner, a supportive mother who encourages her daughter to fight to win her baby back.

Kris Kristofferson has been tapped to play a detective in the upcoming CBS mini-series about the JonBenet Ramsey case.

BE VEVY, VEVY QUIET, I'M HUNTING WABBITS...

Being avid outdoorsmen, Eddie Montgomery and Troy Gentry of **Montgomery Gentry** will be the first entertainers to be featured on the new HuntingDigest.com website. The site is designed to bring hunters and sport shooting enthusiasts together with leading outdoors writers and celebrity hunting advocates.



Nancy Kerrigan and Billy Ray Cyrus took a break from the ice as they taped TNN's Christmas special "Holiday Celebration On Ice." The show featured two-time Olympic medalist Kerrigan among many other Olympic skaters performing to live music from Sawyer Brown, Cyrus and Lorrie Morgan.



Mark Collie shakes Kix Brooks' hand congratulating him on a job well done as the 1999 victor of the 6th Annual Mark Collie Celebrity Race for Diabetes Cure. This year's event raised nearly \$400,000 for research.

CMA HONORS COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT HAZEL SMITH WITH CMA MEDIA ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE correspondent Hazel Smith has been named the recipient of the 1999 CMA Media Achievement Award. CMA established the award to recognize outstanding achievements in the media as they relate to Country Music. Print journalists, editors, authors, television writers and producers are eligible for the annual award.

"Hazel Smith is a wonderful choice for this year's CMA Media Achievement Award," said CMA Executive Director Ed Benson. "Her passion for Country Music is unflinching, and she has demonstrated her commitment to the genre throughout her many journalistic and business pursuits during the course of her career in the past three decades."

Smith first came to Nashville in 1969 from her home in Caswell County, North Carolina. She secured a songwriting contract, scoring cuts from the likes of Tammy Wynette, before going on to work for Tompall Glaser, who hired her to do publicity. During this time, Smith coined the phrase "The Outlaws," in reference to Glaser, Waylon Jennings, Kris Kristofferson and Kinky Friedman, who would infuse Country Music with their own unique styles in the early '70s.

Smith was soon approached about writing a column for the brand new COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE, a job she holds until this day. Between her journalistic duties and her stint with Glaser, Smith variously managed several artists, including her sons, The Smith Brothers, ran Ricky Skaggs's office, worked with Dr. Hook's manager and constantly upheld the image and viability of Country Music. Smith put together compilation packages for K-Tel Records and has done innumerable liner notes, repackages and compilations for various other labels. These days, in addition to her column for COUNTRY MUSIC, she is the Nashville correspondent for WFMS, WIL, KKIK, KMAG, KKYR radio and syndicated by Heartland Radio.

Past winners have included Jack Hurst of the CHICAGO TRIBUNE, David Zimmerman of USA TODAY, noted Nashville music journalist and Country Music historian Robert K. Oermann, TENNESSEAN music writer Jay Orr and BILLBOARD bureau chief Chet Flippo.





1 A surprised Hazel enters the reception held in her honor.

2 After Hazel finally made her way through the crowd of well-wishers, CMA Executive Director Ed Benson presented her with the Award.

Among some of the artists on hand to congratulate Hazel were:

- 3 The members of BR5-49
- 4 Marty Stuart
- 5 Lee Roy Parnell



Mark Wills



While many artists usually fear "The Sophomore Jinx" — as it's commonly known in the music business for a second album release — Mercury recording artist Mark Wills didn't even think twice about the dreaded jinx. Instead, he had a different approach on the situation: three consecutive number-one hits and a platinum album; with the sophomore release, WISH YOU WERE HERE.

With the release of his third album, PERMANENTLY, Wills begins to garner success stories once again.

But in the midst of his musical credentials, Wills is quick to talk about two "other" things than his career - wife Kelly and 1-year-old daughter, Mally. Just talking about them for a brief moment, he flashes a smile that spans from one side of the room to the other.

When CLOSE UP sat down to talk with Wills about the past year, the conversation went in every direction from music and family life to his recent experiences on the "George Strait: Country Music Festival Tour" to his appreciation for a well-written song, nominations for CMA Awards, and probably his biggest passion, golf...

On his third Mercury release, PERMANENTLY...

"You know, this record even has a song on it I wrote for my little girl. It's got a couple of really thought-provoking songs and a couple that are up-tempo, feel good kind of songs. Overall, I think we've made another good record. I thought the first album was good but it was an introductory album. I thought the second album was really good because it had some cool songs on there. However, I think the third

album is a step beyond the second. Not just because it is number three, but I literally think a step beyond the second album, and I am pretty proud of that."

On the perfect album...

"I know that you're not going to like every song on the record, and no one ever does. Honestly, I cannot think of one record that I have ever bought in my entire life that I've loved each and every song on the record. I just don't think

"To me the misassumption of a song is that the artist makes the song. Without the songwriter, the artist doesn't have a song."

that happens very often. Statistically, I think we have a very good percentage of songs people will like on an entire record. That's kind of patting yourself on the back, but at the same time, we work really hard to put out a record that I feel is well rounded. You simply can't make everybody happy and you probably never will. Garth Brooks doesn't make everybody happy. The Beatles didn't make everybody happy. Elvis didn't do it. So it is impossible. But as artists, we give it a shot and we try."

On recording fast-paced, lyrically catchy song "ditty's"...

"If you listen to my songs, most of them have a meaning in there. I don't record a lot of ditty's, not to say that there is anything wrong with that, cause you know what? Ditty's have been some of the biggest hits that I can think of. I just never found a song (or a ditty) that I felt strong enough about to record. The songs that I have on my records are songs that are impact records, or I think they are really good up-tempo records. Some of those songs are thought-provoking songs, and that has been pretty evident with 'Wish You Were Here,' 'Don't Laugh At Me' and 'I Do.' I guess I am the Ballad King!"

On the "George Strait Country Music Festival Tour"...

"We just had a great time. It is very rare. With this tour, I thought I would be on stage and I would look to my right and there would be Tim McGraw watching my show. It was not like it was a bunch of individuals out together, but we were all pretty much like a family out there. We got out there, had a good time and just enjoyed ourselves. And that's what I wanted that tour to be. I don't like to have a tour where everyone sits on their own bus till its time for them to come off, do their show and go right back to their bus. I like everyone to interact and that's what it was."

On his admiration for songwriters...

"I may bring a song to life with words, but I didn't write the song. I had nothing to do with the song except singing. To me the misassumption of a song is that the artist makes the song. Without the songwriter, the artist doesn't have a song. Yeah, we can sing and we sing it the way we feel it. But, first there has to be a songwriter that writes it. Those lyrics have stirred some kind of emotion in the songwriter. If the song stirs emotion in whoever it's because the songwriter had the emotion first and they're the person who wrote it down. Then I come in and portray the emotion on the record."

"I don't like to have a tour where everyone sits on their own bus till its time for them to come off, do their show and go right back to their bus."

On not being nominated for CMA Horizon of the Year...

"We had a great year. I was very surprised that I didn't get nominated for Horizon this past year. I wasn't hurt, just surprised. I don't feel I would have won it, especially being up against Jo Dee (Messina) because she had a great year and Kenny (Chesney) also had a good year. But I felt like we all three had a great year, and I should have been in that category. Not that I am trying to be egotistical or anything like that, but I just felt like that was the one category that I should have been in that I wasn't. So out of all the categories we had, I really thought I would have been in that one."

On his goals for PERMANENTLY and the year 2000...

"I want a CMA Award. I want a triple platinum record. I am going to skip double platinum and go straight to triple platinum. I don't really set that kind of goal. We really don't know what is going to happen with each album. I think that we put it out there and if it does well for us, it does well. I feel deep down in my heart, that this is a great record and that people are going to like this record, but you never know. I had no idea of what people would think of the WISH YOU WERE HERE album. So I am going to put it (PERMANENTLY) out there and see what happens, and hopefully, people will like it and they will embrace it like they did before. I try not to set those kinds of goals because it is just so uncertain."

"Goals are great for things you feel very positive you can achieve. I feel like it is going to be a big success, but I don't want to set a goal for myself that is not in my hands. To me a goal is something you personally achieve by your own work or a team goal is something that your team achieves. When so much of this business is not in my hands, it is very difficult to say what my goal is because I am not really directly doing it day in and day out."

On golf...

"If I couldn't be a Country Music artist, I would be a professional golfer. Enough said."

On what Mally would say daddy should be in life...

"A professional golfer." (At least according to daddy.)

On having more kids...

"I love babies. Kelly loves babies, but probably not as much as me. It doesn't affect my figure like it does her. And she points that out to me. So, maybe later."

On his profession...

"It makes me feel good to know that I'm putting music out there that years down the road people will still like. To me that means I am doing my job."

Christy Grealis

news to use

TUNE IN TO YOUR KIDS

CMA AND THE AD COUNCIL PROMOTE THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING TO YOUR KIDS



A MUSICIAN NEEDS
A GREAT
EAR. ★
★ SO DOES A ★
PARENT.
★ TUNE IN TO YOUR KIDS. ★

The Advertising Council and the Country Music Association have teamed up to remind parents about the importance of listening to their children. The new public service campaign utilizes the talents of several Country Music artists, including Martina McBride, Tim McGraw and Wynonna. The campaign was created pro-bono by the highly acclaimed Austin, Texas based advertising agency, GSD&M. Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation endorse the initiative. The public service announcement was distributed to more than 7,800 television and radio stations nationwide. The radio campaign began mid-December, while television spots will air in early 2000.


With its tagline "Tune In To Your Kids," the campaign targets parents to improve communication between parents and children through the promotion of better listening skills. Research indicates that strong communication between parents and children helps prepare families to face difficult issues such as peer pressure, sex, drugs and alcohol. In the long run, by developing an open line of communication with their children, parents remain a helpful resource for them as they progress through adolescence.

The campaign's initial TV spot features CMA's reigning Female Vocalist of the Year, Martina McBride. Radio spots also feature the multi-platinum-selling McBride, as well as multi-platinum-selling and CMA Award-winning artists, Tim McGraw and Wynonna. McGraw has captured the CMA Album of the Year award the past two years, while Wynonna, as half of The Judds duo, won Vocal Duo of the Year for four consecutive years.

The television spot depicts McBride actively listening to her daughter, Delaney. The radio spots are humorous in nature, and feature children resorting to singing to get their parent's attention. "If our kids' words were set to music," the voiceover suggests, "maybe we'd all be better listeners."



"Music transcends generations. It's something parents and kids can enjoy and relate to," said Peggy Conlon, Ad Council President. **"The Ad Council supports efforts that benefit children, families and communities. This campaign touches all three audiences."**



According to GDS&M President Roy Spence, “The message we want to send is simple, yet so powerful. Spend time with your kids and really listen to what they have to say, understand the problems they face. One of the best things that parents can give their kids is an experienced, honest view of the issues their child is facing.”

TEN WAYS TO “TUNE IN TO YOUR KIDS”

1. **Start early** - young kids turn to their friends first, middle school kids and teens turn to friends
2. **Start talking** - invite the discussion; use an issue sensitive TV program as a starting point
3. **Tough topics** - chances are your kids heard about it on the playground and may have misconceptions
4. **Listen closely** - tune in; listening to your kids helps build self-esteem and can lead to valuable conversations about a variety of issues
5. **Open the door to dialogue** - be open and interested; encourage your kids to open up, without fear of consequences
6. **Values are important** - make your beliefs clear before your child becomes distracted by outside influences
7. **Honesty is the best policy** - children tend to fill in the blanks for themselves, creating confusion; honesty strengthens their ability to trust you
8. **Hear them out** - your patience will be appreciated; kids may take a long time to get a story out; resist the temptation to finish their thoughts
9. **Keep it casual** - try to avoid the “big talk”; a casual conversation will seem less threatening
10. **Say it again** - kids can only take in a small amount of information at one time

Listeners and viewers are encouraged to log on to the campaign's web site www.tuneintokids.com for listening tips, and more resources. Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation offer a number of tips on this web site to help parents communicate with their kids. For example, use opportunities such as driving in the car or watching a TV program to initiate discussions and wait patiently while your child verbalizes his or her thoughts before you answer. (Adapted from the Talking With Kids About Tough Issues Campaign by the Kaiser Family Foundation.)

“We think music is a great way to bring families together, to get them talking to one another,” said CMA Executive Director Ed Benson. “Families have always been an important theme in Country Music, and especially to the performers appearing in this campaign. We’re pleased to be able to join in this significant effort to bring parents and kids closer together.”

debut



jennifer day

RECORD LABEL: BNA Records

ALBUM: THE FUN OF YOUR LOVE

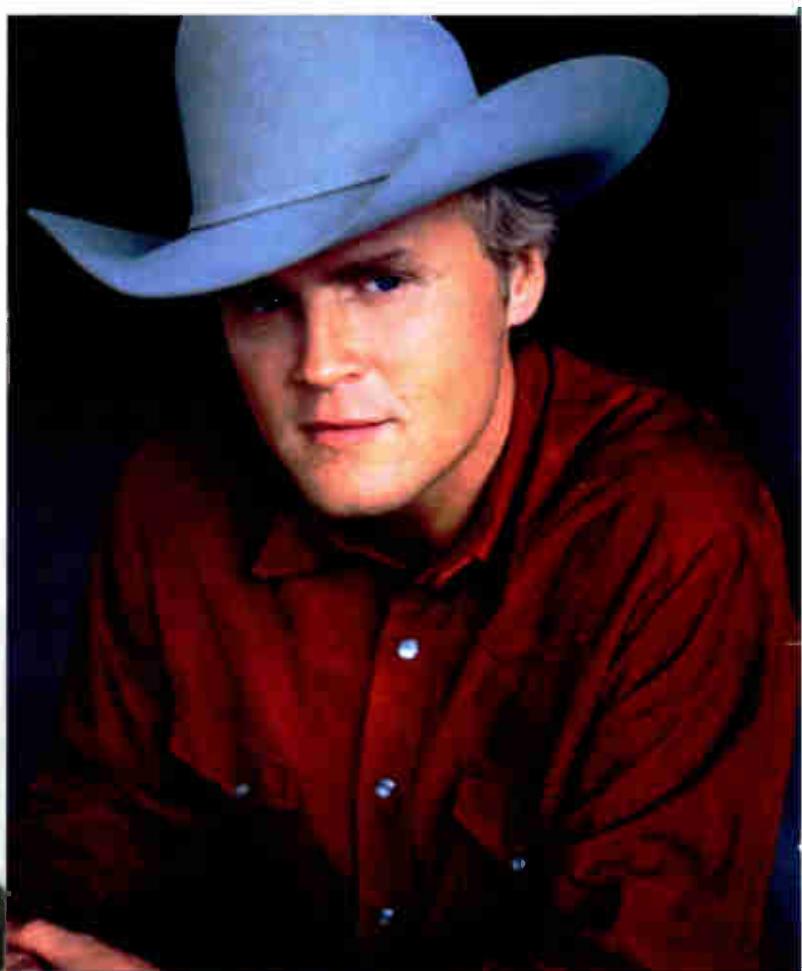
FIRST SINGLE: "The Fun of Your Love"

INFLUENCES: Patsy Cline, Willie Nelson,
Otis Redding, Mariah Carey

Jennifer Day was raised in McAlpin, FL, where her family runs a wholesale nursery. "Every night we would get around the record player and play music," she says. "'Islands in the Stream' and 'Walking After Midnight' were my favorite songs." At age 13, she discovered the music of Alabama at the Sewanee River Jam and instantaneously fell in love with Country Music. "I became a hard-core Country fan and began listening to Wynonna, Patty Loveless and Faith Hill."

Day may only be 5-foot-1, but her powerful voice was big enough to land her with BNA Records, and she has her poker-playing grandmother to thank for that. Granny Rosie played cards with the aunt of RCA Records' president Bob Jamieson. Jamieson passed Day's demo tape to Joe Galante, RCA Label Group's president. "Usually the stuff he sends down is terrible," Galante said. But not this time. After Galante listened he offered the 20-year-old a recording deal.

Day co-wrote four of the 11 songs on her debut album. The title track was added to the Kevin Costner movie soundtrack "For Love of the Game."



jerry kilgore

RECORD LABEL: Virgin Records

ALBUM: LOVE TRIP

FIRST SINGLE: "Love Trip"

INFLUENCES: Buck Owens, Merle Haggard,
Gene Watson

Jerry Kilgore always knew he wanted to be a Country singer. While his buddies were into the latest rock and pop hits, Jerry would sit home and listen to his family's Merle Haggard and Buck Owens albums. He practiced his guitar throughout his teens and sang at home through a small PA system that his parents had bought him. "I'd get in there and...just sing and play my guitar. It was all I would think about. I'd be out with my friends or something and I'd want to go home. I just wanted to get on the microphone and sing."

When Jerry was 20 he formed his own band. He played in honky-tonks for many years until he decided it was his turn to try Nashville. His first break came when "Love Lessons," a song he had co-written, went top 10 for Tracy Byrd, and another song, "Cover You In Kisses," hit number three for John Michael Montgomery. Determined to record his own songs, Jerry enlisted in the help of friends and famed songwriters, Steve Bogard and Jeff Stevens, to make a demo tape which they played for Virgin Records Nashville President Scott Hendricks. In January 1999, shortly after the label opened its doors, Hendricks offered Jerry a record deal making him the first male vocalist to sign with the label.



redmon & vale

RECORD LABEL: DreamWorks

ALBUM: REDMON & VALE

FIRST SINGLE: "If I Had A Nickel (One Thin Dime)"

INFLUENCES: Jim Clark (Tina's father), Patsy Cline, Martina McBride, Lynn Redmon (Allison's Mother), Wynonna, Trisha Yearwood

Allison Redmon and Tira Vale hit it off from the start. "It was amazing - we just clicked," says Redmon, "and it's not only that our voices mesh so well; we've been through so many of the same things." Although Redmon and Vale both set their sights on recording careers, the paths they took couldn't have been more different. While both women were influenced by the musical talents of family members, Vale's father was a piano man who took his family along as he toured throughout the country before the Vales finally settled in Des Moines, Iowa. On the other hand, Redmon's mother was the music director at the family's church in Lilburn, Georgia.

Eventually these two women from such different musical backgrounds both found themselves in Nashville, as part of a short-lived trio. Although plans for the trio didn't work out, Redmon and Vale were determined to continue on as a duo. The duo's determination landed them a recording contract with DreamWorks Records.



keith urban

RECORD LABEL: Capitol Nashville

ALBUM: KEITH URBAN

FIRST SINGLE: "It's a Love Thing"

INFLUENCES: Don Williams, Elton John, Glen Campbell, Dire Straits, Jackson Browne, Fleetwood Mac

Keith Urban picked up a guitar at the tender age of 6 and knew at 7 that he would go to Nashville to play Country Music. By age 8 he was winning Country Music talent shows, had steady work in a band as a teenager and later formed a three-piece band whose distinctive style charted four number-one singles in his home country. The native Australian grew up listening to his parents' record collection, which included titles from Charley Pride to Neil Diamond, but what really distinguishes Urban from many artists is the way he blends his influences. He not only blends Country with rock guitar, he incorporates R&B, pop and hip-hop. "I've never taken too much from any one person, I've tried to take a little from a lot of people and blend it all together."

Moving to Nashville in 1993, he formed the three-piece band, The Ranch, which led to a record deal with Capitol Nashville. Critics raved about the group's unique take on Country Music and Keith's incredible guitar playing. The group later disbanded but the label kept its interest in Keith and his self-titled album was released in October 1999.

**THERE ARE 52
WEEKS IN A
YEAR AND
ONE IS MADE
JUST FOR YOU.**



DEANA CARTER

June 12-16, 2000

**Tennessee State
Fairgrounds
Nashville**

**Co-Sponsored by
CMA and the
Grand Ole Opry**



BROOKS & DUNN

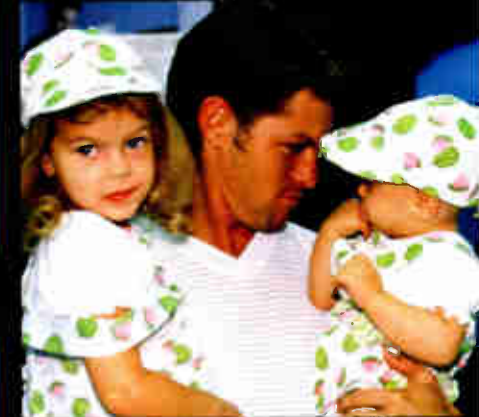


TY HERNDON

**Don't be left out of
the fun! We're
saving a place
just for you.**



TRISHA YEARWOOD



DAVID KERSH

www.fanfair.com

World Radio History

faith hill



john michael montgomery



andy griggs



next month

close up

one music circle south
nashville, tennessee 37203
periodical postage paid at
nashville, tennessee

www.CMAworld.com



*****CAR-RT SORT**C-010

6

TEDDY WILBURN
SURE-FIRE MUSIC
60 MUSIC SQ W
NASHVILLE TN 37203-3208

CMA events

FEBRUARY

3-4 CMA Board of Director Meeting / Orlando, FL

OCTOBER

4 34th Annual CMA Awards / Grand Ole Opry / Nashville, TN

datebook

JANUARY

17 Dick Clark's 27th Annual American Music Awards / Los Angeles, CA

FEBRUARY

16-20 NACA / Hynes Convention Center / Boston, MA

23 42nd Annual Grammy Awards / Staples Center / Los Angeles, CA

27-March 1 NARM Convention / San Antonio, TX

MARCH

1-4 CRS 2000 / Nashville Convention Center / Nashville, TN

10-18 SXSW (film) / Austin Convention Center / Austin, TX

11-14 SXSW (Interactive) / Austin Convention Center / Austin, TX

15-19 SXSW (Music) / Austin Convention Center / Austin, TX

Statements of fact and opinion are made on the responsibility of the contributors alone, and do not imply an opinion on the part of the officers, directors or members of CMA.

Copyright 2000 by the Country Music Association, Inc. Materials may not be reproduced without written permission.

CLOSE UP Magazine (ISSN 0896-372X) is the official bimonthly publication of The Country Music Association, Inc., One Music Circle South, Nashville, TN 37203-4312. (615) 244-2840. Available to CMA members only. CLOSE UP'S subscription price of \$25 per year is included in membership dues. Periodicals postage paid at Nashville, Tennessee. Postmaster: send address changes to CMA Membership, One Music Circle South, Nashville, TN 37203.



For information on CMA events, Call (615) 244-2840; Fax (615) 726-0314

For a world of information log on to www.CMAworld.com



Virgin Records Nashville artist Jerry Kilgore recently entertained the CMA Staff with songs from his new album LOVE TRIP. Pictured (left to right): Scott Hendricks, president & CEO of Virgin Records Nashville; Van Fletcher, General Manager of Virgin Records Nashville; Kilgore; and CMA Executive Director Ed Benson.

YOUR VOTE COUNTS!

COUNTRY MUSIC'S BIGGEST NIGHT™

CMA^{42ND}**AWARDS**SM

IN A TIE, ONE VOTE CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.

CMA Updates Awards Voting Procedure

For more than 40 years, the CMA Awards has been the bellwether in lauding the accomplishments of some of the greatest artists in Country Music. With the participation of CMA members from every corner of the music industry, with procedures defined carefully to ensure both comprehensiveness and fairness, this distinction was recognized from the beginning as the utmost honor given to the leading entertainers, singers, songwriters, producers, video directors and musicians in the genre by their peers.

The luster of the CMA Awards has endured in part through the efforts of CMA to monitor the process as well as the tabulation of each year's vote, in part to make sure that it maintained relevance in reflecting current technology and the sheer amount of talent in action as it grows from year to year.

Every vote counts.

minutes away from Music Row, at Vanderbilt University, where he holds a joint appointment in the Department of Mathematics and the School of Law. Equipped with a Bachelor of Arts from Swarthmore College and a Doctorate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Edelman is described in his prospectus as specializing in "social choice, measuring representation — voting power, law and economics."

Edelman began an investigation based on a review of CMA Awards rules, interviews with current and former CMA leadership and application of his own research, which ranges from analyzing how judicial decisions are rendered to critiquing electoral systems for the U.S. House of Representatives. The results led Edelman to propose two changes to the voting process for the CMA Awards. (see inside back panel)

"There is no perfect voting system," said Edelman. "But my sense is that the actions of the people who were behind the origins of the CMA Awards were very plausible. And because Country Music has grown so much since then, with different challenges facing it today than there were 40 years ago, CMA did the responsible thing in reviewing and updating these rules."

"From the beginning, the CMA Awards has represented the consensus of all the leaders of the Country Music industry," said Tammy Genovese, CMA CEO. "The changes made this year in our voting procedure allow us to adapt to the ongoing expansion of this art form and to be able to continue to guarantee the CMA Awards as a true measure of accomplishment by artists whose work is leading Country Music toward even greater popularity and relevance in years to come."

IT'S UP TO YOU TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.



"When I discovered the difference between winning and losing in some cases was only a few votes, I never again missed an opportunity to vote for the CMA Awards. It's so important to make your voice heard."

— Victoria Shaw

You'd be surprised how close the voting is sometimes.

"Country Music is an art form that needs to be protected, preserved and expanded. Voting for the CMA Awards is an important part of that process. It is something every artist making a living from the clubs to the concert stage can do to contribute to the greater good."

— John Rich of Big & Rich

