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MUSICROW

NASHVILLE'S MUSIC INDUSTRY PUBLICATION

PUBLISHER SPECIAL

George
Strait

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

The Song Pitch Meeting

WHAT YOU THINK

Publishers Speak Out

THE JV SQUAD

Pub Partnerships

OFF THE RECORD

Bobby Braddock
Carolyn Dawn Johnson
Stephen Allen Davis

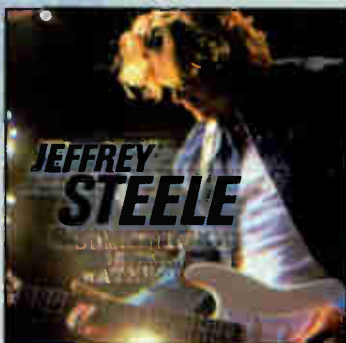
JEFFREY STEELE

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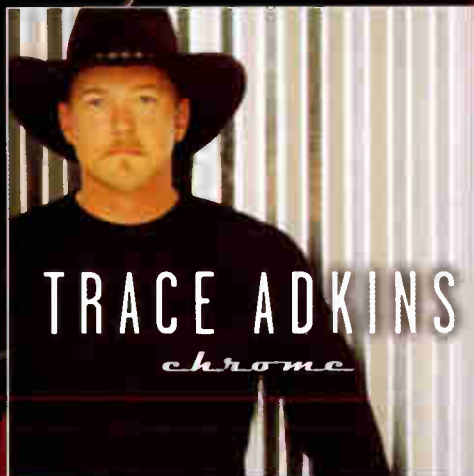
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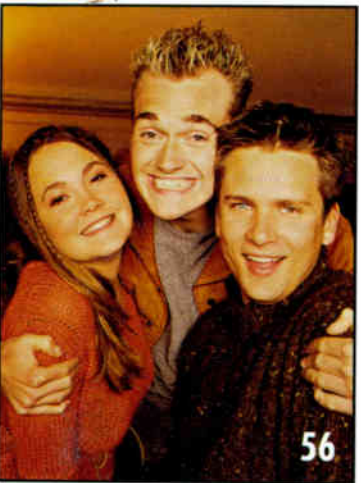
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On the Cover George Strait

Current Single: "Run"
Current Album: *The Road Less Traveled*
Current Producers: George Strait and Tony Brown
Hometown: San Antonio, Texas
Management: The Erv Woolsey Company (Erv Woolsey)
Booking: The Erv Woolsey Agency (Danny O'Brian)
Recent Hits: "If You Can Do Anything Else," "Go On," "The Best Day," "What Do You Say To That"
Awards: Dozens, received from CMA, ACM, TNN/Music City News, AMA, Country Weekly, Billboard, and R&R.
RIAA Certs to Date: Numerous, including *Blue Clear Sky* (3x platinum); *Caryin' Your Love With Me* (3x platinum); *Pure Country Soundtrack* (6x platinum); and *Strait Out of the Box* (7x platinum).
Birthdate: May 18
Special Film Appearances: Starred in *Pure Country*

Outside Interests:

Steer-roping,
Hunting,
Fishing,
Skiing, Golf



MUSICROW
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David M. Ross
Publisher/Editor
 ross@musicrow.com

★★
 Susana Ross
Administrator
 s.ross@musicrow.com

Chuck Aly
GM Operations
 c.alymusicrow.com

★★
 Eileen Shannon
Receptionist
 eileen@musicrow.com

Richard D. McVey II
Managing Editor
 mcvey@musicrow.com

★★
 Robert K. Oermann
Single Reviews

Christie King
Art Director/Prod. Mgr.
 christie@musicrow.com

★★
 O'Neil Hogaman
Financial

John Hood
Senior Writer
 hood@musicrow.com

★★
 Alan Mayor
Photography

Contributing Writers: Lisa Berg, Larry Wayne Clark, John Norris, David Smalls, Ron Young

Music Row Publications Inc., P.O. Box 158542, Nashville, TN 37215 • Tel: 615-321-3617 • Fax: 615-329-0852 • e-mail: news@musicrow.com • www.musicrow.com
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Labels, Publishers Agree; Music City Artists Forms; Mercury Gets Front Page

NEWS

LABELS, PUBLISHERS AGREE ON ONLINE LICENSES—A major roadblock has been removed for planned online music subscription services. Record labels have agreed that streaming of music on demand and/or limited-time downloads requires a mechanical license. The new agreement between the National Music Publishers' Association (NMPA), The Harry Fox Agency (HFA) and the Recording Industry of America (RIAA) calls for the RIAA to pay a \$1 million advance to HFA pending a rate determination. Should a rate not be agreed upon during the next two years, monthly advances totaling \$750,000 per year will be paid. This new agreement allows the labels to bulk license approximately 90 percent of all sound recordings produced and sold in the U.S.



Pritchard

MUSIC CITY ARTISTS FORMS—Steve Pritchard has announced the formation of Music City Artists in Nashville, offering booking services to major entertainment clients. The operation's first clients are comedy duo Williams & Ree and comedian James Gregory. Pritchard is a booking veteran

who previously spent eight years as Senior VP of the Jim Halsey Company as well as President of Pro Events, a music festival management company.

JODY WILLIAMS MUSIC GETS KING LIZARD—Jody Williams Music, along with joint venture partner Sony/ATV/Tree, announced the acquisition of the King Lizard Music catalog from former owners Kingsley Brock and Liz Rose. Jody Williams Music has also retained the exclusive song plugging services of Rose, who is also a staff writer for the company. Artists who have recorded King Lizard songs include Trisha Yearwood, Lee Ann Womack, Jo Dee Messina, The Judds and Clay Walker.

ASCAP, VIACOM SETTLE—ASCAP CEO John A. LoFrumento announced the company has entered into a long-term agreement with Viacom concerning the music performing rights fees for all of Viacom's cable networks. ASCAP and the cable networks have been involved in a court proceeding to set reasonable license fees since 1989. Late last year, ASCAP reached an agreement with the Turner Broadcasting System. The proceeding continues for the remaining cable networks.

CMA BROADCAST AWARDS—The CMA has announced the 2001 Broadcast Award

Winners. CMA Broadcast Personality of the Year winners are **National:** Bob Kingsley, American Country Countdown; **Major Market:** Skip Mahaffey, WQYK/Tampa, Fla.; **Large Market:** Karen Dalessandro and Scott Dolphin, WMIL/Milwaukee, Wis.; **Medium Market:** Paul Koffy, WSSL/Greenville, S.C.; **Small Market:** Wilhite and Wall, KKIX/Fayetteville, Ark. (Darren Wilhite and Tim Wall).

CMA Radio Station of the Year winners are **Major Market:** WQYK/Tampa, Fla.; **Large Market:** WFMS/Indianapolis, Ind.; **Medium Market:** WIVK/Knoxville, Tenn.; **Small Market:** WUSY/Chattanooga, Tenn.



Lewis

MERCURY GETS FRONT PAGE—Mercury Chairman Luke Lewis announced that FrontPage Publicity would join forces with the label's in-house staff to coordinate public relations efforts for the label. "To the best of my knowledge, this is a unique partnership," said Lewis. "Hiring an outside firm to assist our in-house staff in all levels is treading new ground. We look forward to having Kathy Allmand and Kay Clary as part of our team."



Allmand

MUSICAL CHAIRS

CMT announced the following promotions and additions to its Nashville-based staff. **Traci Todd** has been promoted to Director, Music Programming; **Susan Shockley** to Director, Talent Relations; **Tom Rima** to Director, On-Air Promotion; **Margaret Williams** to Director, Finance; **Suzanne Norman** to Director, Finance; **Ed Cheetham** to Director, Graphics and Design; **Laurissa Juzwiak** to Manager, Music and Talent; **Lisa Bolton** to Senior Writer/Producer, On-Air Promotion; **Stephen Chessor** to Senior Writer/Producer, On-Air Promotion; **Santos Lopez** to Senior Writer/Producer, On-Air Promotion and **Tracey Piel** to Promotions

Coordinator, Creative Services. **Amy Davis** joins as Manager, Graphics and Design...Americana Music TV recently announced the following additions and promotions: **Donald D. Whiteman** as COO; **Larry Scudder** as Executive VP of Distribution; **Alan McLaughlin** as VP Production/Programming; **Roger Sarchet** as VP Music Industry; **Ronnie Reno** as Music Director; and **Denise Hitchcock** as VP Administration/PR...**Abbe Nameche** has been promoted to Creative Director and **Brandon Hamilton** to Creative Manager for DreamWorks Music Publishing. **J. R. Arostegui** will assume Hamilton's administrative responsibilities...**Mandy West** has joined Whistler's Entertainment Group as Administrative and Client Relations Manager...Curb Records has announced the promotion of

Devin Durrant to National Director, Pop Promotion...Dualtone Music Group announced the addition of **Nancy Quinn** as Director of Artist Development...**Carole Ann Mobley** and **Jim Catino** have been named Directors of A&R for the RCA Label Group (RLG)...What A Trip! Inc. announced **Steven A. Saslow** has been named Chairman/CEO. Also, **Becky Sowers** was named Director of Marketing and **Lesley Cuttler** was appointed Promotions Manager...SESAC announced the promotion of **Kyle T. Jones** to Director, Writer/Publisher Relations and the addition of **Andy Conant** as Associate Director...**Kirk Boyer** has been named Director of A&R at Lyric Street. **Correction:** We ran the wrong picture of Steve Williams last month. We regret the error. **MIR**



Todd



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Garth Thinks With His Heart

Scarecrow Bows November 13



THEN DON'T TURN AROUND—Brooks praised Dr. Pepper, saying he wanted his first-ever endorsement partner to be a product he uses. It was also important to him that the campaign be positive and that fans “don’t see a logo every time you turn around.” Oops. Seated are Capitol’s Mike Dungan, AOL’s Andi Brokaw and Dr. Pepper’s John Clarke. Photo: Alan Mayor

After the Marine Corps. color guard and first graders singing “God Bless America,” it was Hazel Smith, of course, who kicked off the press conference announcing Garth Brooks’ first studio album in four years. “Like the kid in *Shane*,” she said, “what I really want to do is run after you screaming, ‘Come back, Garth! Come back!’”

Return Garth has, with what he says will be his final studio album. In many ways, however, this final campaign will differ greatly from what we’ve come to expect from country music’s most successful entertainer.

“I wanted it to be the end all, be all,” Brooks says of the album. “It didn’t take me long to abandon that.” He resolved to make an album to “stand beside” the rest, with producer Allen Reynolds’ catchphrase ringing in his ears: “Think with your heart.”

The mantra led Brooks to the disc’s title, his daughters reminding him that in *The Wizard of Oz* it was the intellectually-challenged Scarecrow who thought with his heart. Brooks’ girls figure in the new marketing approach, as well. The star has vowed not to tour in order to spend more time with them, taking one of the pillars of his career out of the equation.

An endorsement deal with Dr. Pepper and extensive Internet promotion through AOL (keyword: Garth Brooks) aim to take up some slack. More significantly, Brooks says, “I’m going to try to get in everybody’s living room.” At least, he says, “once a week before Christmas.”

Industry sources say Brooks is referring to a “short-term” music-based television series being planned for one of the major broadcast networks. If negotiations are successful, the show could reach millions more than his trademark tours ever did, and accomplish one of the marketing campaign’s goals. “We kind of hope,” Brooks says, “you’re sick of us by Christmas.”

—Chuck Aly

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SONGWRITER Cross Pollination

There seems to be a growing trend in the Nashville publishing community to pair Nashville writers with writers from other markets (New York, L.A., Miami, etc.). While their approaches vary, publishers agree it's an important way to get a foothold in other markets.

Dale Bobo, VP Creative for Warner/Chappell, is a fan of the song camp approach. "We bring together writers from Nashville, New York and Miami," he says of his company's song camp. "Each day we try to make sure the writer pairings are different. The big benefit is that these writers get to know each other and learn things from each other. They like to be challenged and this gets them out of their comfort zone. We've had writers go on to write together after the summer camps and we've had some benefits from that. There's a song on the new Jewel album that she wrote with some guys she met at one of the camps. They didn't write it at the camp, but still it's that ripple effect."

"We've done song camps," says **Pat Higdon**, Senior VP/GM of Universal Music Publishing Group, "but one of the things we do at Universal is have a weekly company-wide creative conference call. I have different people on my staff sit in and we try to identify writers from our other offices who would be good marriages of talent with some of our writers. We have a person designated to follow up and put those situations together. That person spends a large portion of their time pursuing alternative market opportunities."

Gary Overton, Executive VP/GM of EMI Music Nashville, says he prefers trying to match writers up to the song camp approach. "Our counterparts in other markets will call and say they have a writer who wants to write with Nashville writers. We'll get them some music from our writers to listen to. When someone like **Rob Thomas** from *matchbox twenty* comes here we'll set up a lunch for him and **Phil Vassar**. Let them have a chance to talk and get to know each other before throwing them in a room to write. When somebody like Rob Thomas comes here to write, our writers think, 'Wow, I'm going to write for *matchbox twenty*.' But when writers come to this market they want to write for it. If they want to write country we're fine with that, but we want to have a reciprocal arrangement where we can send our writers over to write for their market."

"It's usually initiated by the writers," says **Woody Bomar**, VP/GM Creative Services for Sony/ATV Tree. "We facilitate it by getting in touch with our counterparts in other markets and helping get the writers together. The benefit of doing that is more activity. We have a writer coming in from Australia. He writes both pop and country and wants to write with our writers. He used to be in a big pop band there and has had a lot of activity. It offers new opportunity for him to have activity here, but it also gives our writers a chance to have activity in Australia and have the songs worked by our office in Sydney."

Several publishers noted that getting cuts outside the country marketplace helps raise the profile of Nashville as a music center. "The songwriting talent in this town is second to none," sums up Higdon. "We're doing a good job of presenting that both with our writers and with the tools we use to exploit them. Ultimately, we become more of a music business contender than just Nashville divisions of corporate companies."

—John Hood



PARTICIPANTS OF WARNER/CHAPPELL 2001 SUMMER CAMP—Front row (L-R): Robbie Nevil, Wendell Mobley (on ground), Dwayne Wiggins, Lucy Woodward, Anthony Smith & Kasio Livingston. Back row (L-R): David Vincent Williams, Dillon O'Brian, Anders Wilkstrom & Fredrik Thomander.

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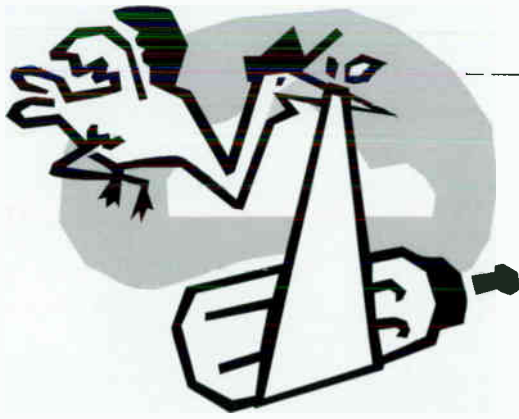


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Their Babies !

"Born To Fly" (Sara Evans)
(a special congrats to Darrell Scott on his quad nominees for the 2001 CMA's)
"I Hope You Dance" (Lee Ann Womack)
"I Would've Loved You Anyway" (Trisha Yearwood)
"If You Ever Feel Like Lovin' Me Again" (Clay Walker)
"Love Letters From Old Mexico" (Leslie Satcher)
"Please" (Pam Tillis)
"Sweet Summer" (Diamond Rio)
"The Way You Love Me" (Faith Hill)

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THE JV SQUAD: Publishing Partnerships

by Chuck Aly

The last decade has given rise to a middle class of publishers somewhere between fresh-faced independents and more mature corporate classmates. Aiming to marry the creative atmosphere and autonomy of true independence with the financial resources and multi-media reach of a major, the joint venture has become a publishing industry standard. So much so, in fact, that the independently-funded start-up is increasingly rare.

This shift presents new challenges in addition to its advantages, particularly in a receded market. While the entrepreneur's risk is largely negated, the journey to profitability becomes more difficult. Joint ventures also require compatibility and a rapport between the involved parties. And then there's the issue of this trend's effect on the broader marketplace, including the impact on remaining stand-alone publishers. No passing fad, these partnerships have established a publishing junior varsity that is making its mark on the Music Row campus.



Overton

New Breed

Like virtually every facet of the Nashville music industry, the evolution of joint venture deals must be considered in tandem with country music's early nineties boom. "Ten years ago there were two of them out there," EMI Executive VP/GM Gary Overton says. "Now there are dozens."

Success has taken Music City from corporate afterthought to proven profit mill worthy of investment, making truly independent start-ups much less common. "In the nineties it's tended to be almost exclusively joint venture," says Sony/ATV Tree VP/GM Woody Bomar. "Inside the company it doesn't look any different from any other independent publisher. You still have an independent spirit, and yet you've got the support and funding of a major corporation."



Bomar

Each joint venture has its own characteristics, but there is a basic structure common to most. Typically, the "independent" will cede half its publishing stake in copyrights covered in the venture to a major publisher. In return,

the major pays the smaller company's writer draws and demo costs, performs administrative work and issues a check to cover overhead for the term of the venture—anywhere from three to five years or longer. Overhead covers salaries, rent, equipment, utilities and other expenses. Depending on the deal and the relationship between the parties, the major can also assist creatively, plus provide access to other opportunities including film, television and commercials.

"Worldwide access to anything," says Tim Wipperman of the doors he is able to open for Warner/Chappell's joint ventures. "I can link you into any country, any movie, all sorts of things independents can't do."



Wipperman

And for Wipperman, the attraction to joint ventures is diversity. "As much as we work to maintain intimacy, some writers just aren't comfortable in a big company," he admits. "They want more of a boutique atmosphere." That theory extends to the professional side as well. "The real essence of a successful joint venture is finding partners who offer a

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perspective we may not have as a large company," Wiperman says. "There's a term in pharmacology called potentiation which means one and one makes three. If you have the right joint venture you potentiate much more than you could otherwise."

Bomar sees the ability to target a very specific need in Sony's multiple joint ventures. "In a large company like ours with a small plugging staff, we don't have a lot of opportunity to do writer development," he says. "We tend to work with the more successful writers. Joint ventures give us an opportunity to participate in that to a greater extent than we could on our own."

"Big companies tend not to grow proportionally," agrees Universal Senior VP/GM Pat Higdon. "They can easily overwhelm their staff with an expanding writer roster." Having been through four joint ventures before taking the reigns at Universal, Higdon also sees the advantages for start-ups in going that route. "I've said before, if



Higdon

you're a small publisher you have to be big enough to matter. Having one or two writers does not give you enough catalog to be able to service the market."

Rubber Meets Road

Such was the concern of Jody Williams, whose new venture is a partnership with Sony. "I couldn't do this in my house," he says. "I needed an office, to be accessible to people on campus. To network." Recognizing the shoe-string approach wasn't in the cards, Williams considered various funding sources. "I met with venture capital people, put together a prospectus, the whole nine yards," he says. "Part of that effort was explaining the industry and why it's a good time to open an independent publishing outfit. At the end of the day, there was a comfort level in aligning with a major publisher. You don't have to explain the industry to them. They just want to make sure you're not spending too much, and that they have a level of trust in you. We've had three singles and two dozen cuts in two years. We're a long way from recouping, but we're building a great foundation. It has increased our odds for success."

One thing Williams didn't count on was active participation from his venture partner. "You don't really expect a high level of help creatively. Traditionally, that's not been one of the highlights of a joint venture. But it's been amazing what Sony has done to help."

Tracy Gershon, who runs joint venture High Seas, concurs. "Generally it's more of a banking deal, truth be told," she says. "But Warner/Chappell has been very supportive. The professional staff is there when we've needed them—putting together co-writes, sharing information on projects they're aware of. It's been great."



Gershon

Like Higdon, Brad and Julie Daniel of

Island Bound have partnered several times, most recently with Windswept. "It comes down to deal points as to whether or not it makes sense," Brad says. "What's the cost of the money? It's kind of like the record label-artist relationship. If you're just starting out, there will be deal points you don't get."

Julie Daniels says they've been fortunate to find a partner that is excited about being involved in all aspects of the venture. "We wanted a partner that needed us like we need them, and we've found that in Windswept. They sold their catalog and needed catalog to work."

For anyone embarking on a joint venture, Brad encourages, "Have an understanding of overhead." Julie adds, "Pitch like hell, be right with the numbers and get lucky." (And, they concur, "Don't have a fire.")

Risk vs. Reward

Taking that six-figure overhead check does have its trade-offs. Sharing ownership means sharing revenue. "The disadvantage is the income split," Gershon says. "It's harder to make a profit."

"A common misconception," Higdon says, "is that joint ventures build in a lot of operating capital. In a best case scenario, it's more likely to build valuable equity." Universal doesn't currently have a stable of joint venture partners. "It's not that I'm against them, but the right situation hasn't come across my desk since the merger." Where he is making deals, Higdon has avoided the big payout. "We're in the process of developing some hybrid situations—hiring people who have a history with us to come in as independent contractors and work some old catalog. Those funds then finance the development of up-and-coming writers."



Brad Daniel



Julie Daniel

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The market adjustments of the last few years are changing the joint venture dynamic as well. "High overhead joint ventures are difficult to make profitable," Wipperman admits. "Margins are much smaller so you have to compensate either by not giving writers part of their own publishing or lowering overhead. Publishers will be more circumspect about the ventures they get into in this market."

Gary Overton isn't the least bit circumspect about the concept. "I don't think the joint venture model works," he says. "Not to make money." Overton's EMI has only one true joint venture, Sea Gayle, but the deal was structured incrementally to keep overhead as low as possible. "I'd rather not have any overhead," he says. "I'd rather the other entity develop the writer with us paying the advances and demoing. If you do the math, the piece that goes to recoup that overhead check is so little you can have a hit and it really doesn't bring the balance down. Consequently, a lot of these joint ventures end up moving around town because they get so far in debt they almost have to. Some majors use it as very expensive market share and to win awards. We're less concerned with that."

Solitary Refinement

Though clearly in the minority, there are companies braving the vagaries of music publishing without conglomerate support. "The true independent really hasn't changed much," Overton says. "That opportunity is still there. But it's a long term goal. It's not, 'Gee, I want to do this for two or three years then sell it back to someone for millions of dollars.' If someone understands business as well as creative and has patient money, minimum five years, they've got a shot. If you've got two years of funding or rip through a bunch—this is not the marketplace for that."

One rising independent is Courtyard Music. Wayne Jackson and Josh King have secured 10 cuts in 20 months working with one writer, Kevin Fisher. "We wanted to sign this guy and we did it for the right reasons," King says. "We loved what he did enough to put our own money on the line. If you can do it that way it's ideal." Their second writer is coming on board with the help of EMI in a modified joint venture. EMI will pay the draw and demo costs, but Courtyard receives no help with overhead. Jackson says their operation is lean enough to give them that flexibility. "We can have album cuts and do well financially."

As for the back room administration functions some joint ventures provide, Courtyard is content to go without. "I have an admin background," Jackson says. "It's really not that much work. And if you get so many cuts that it becomes too much you can probably afford to hire someone."

King and Jackson see another advantage in their ground-up approach. "Failure's not an option when it's your own money," King says. "You have a tendency to work pretty hard, just

because you believe so much in what you're doing. If you didn't, you wouldn't be doing it in the first place."

Major Bob GM Scot Sherrod says this is a good time to be independent. "I'm seeing a trend where writers want more attention," he says. "They want to feel like they have their own team." And he adds, "The autonomy is nice. It may be easier for a straight independent to adapt. We're a smaller boat so we can turn more quickly."



Sherrod

Alan Brewer of Brewman Music & Entertainment likens his independence to, "Finding my way through a highway traffic jam. I'm on a motorcycle and everyone else is in cars—bumper to bumper."



Brewer

A possible concern with joint ventures is the potential for more barriers in the A&R process, much like the producer/publisher alliance. "I'd love to believe that the song always wins out," Brewer says. "Unfortunately, given the pressure on all divisions of large corporations, I have to believe it influences decisions on which songs to cut." Jackson doesn't rule out the possibility, but argues, "If you've got great music, they'll keep meeting with you."

Success, Sherrod says, is predicated on your people, not your purse strings. "It's all about the talent you have, both on the writer and professional staffs," he says. "Aside from that, it really doesn't matter how much money you have."

Weighing Options

For those considering a new publishing endeavor, the choice between aligning with a major, funding it yourself or seeking other financing is complex. Bomar says that without substantial underwriting, securing proven writers who can quickly generate income is difficult. "The big mistake that a lot of start-ups make is thinking they can sign developing writers," he says. "But by the time those writers get developed enough to get cuts, you're a year or two into it."

At that point you're a year away from getting something released. Then you're a year away from getting on the charts. It may be five or six years before there's any noticeable activity. In the meantime, the overhead eats you up."

Entering a joint venture isn't always best, however. "If a joint venture partner is significantly unrecovered at the end of their term," Overton cautions, "not only is there no cash flow, no asset's been created. It's kept income going for employees, but it hasn't built anything."

For the entrepreneur, picking a major to partner with isn't necessarily about getting the best deal. "At the end of the day," Gershon says, "who are you relating with? It's about relationships."

From the other side, Bomar says, "We look for someone who is a player in the community. Someone with a fire for developing their own business." Higdon adds, "You look for someone who's smart, frugal and works on a realistic scale. Someone who's thinking long term rather than short term."

Ultimately, Higdon says, joint venture or true independent will not be the defining characteristic of new publishing companies. Most will be categorized by failure. "A lot will start up," he says, "but few succeed. We don't need a lot of start-ups, we just need a few good ones." **MM**

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How Traditional Is Traditional?

by Bobby Braddock

There was an interesting piece in *Billboard* about the demise of traditional country music and the advent of pop country and rock-oriented country. It reported that some in the industry were afraid country music would lose its identity and disappear completely. The article was written well over 40 years ago.

Music historians generally consider the first country hit to be a 1925 bare-bones rural-sounding funeral dirge called "The Prisoner's Song." There was no country genre back then, therefore no country chart, but this **Vernon Dalhart** recording was the most popular song in America, selling an unprecedented seven million records. Country's first star was a trained opera singer.

Three years later, **Jimmie Rodgers**, known as "The Father of Country Music," topped the *Billboard* and *Variety* pop charts with "Blue Yodel," also known as "T For Texas." Rodgers was influenced by African-American singers in his native Mississippi, and his recordings often included a Dixieland band. Even in its earliest days, country music was already a hybrid.

Al Dexter's honky-tonkin' "Pistol Packin' Mama" may have been the first real crossover hit (although there was no such terminology then), as it went to No. 1 on both

of *Billboard's* juke box charts, pop and "folk," back in 1943. Eight million people bought cowboy star **Gene Autry's** "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," which featured accordion and steel guitar and topped all the bestseller lists in Christmas of 1949. That was the year that **Hank William's** biggest hillbilly hit, "The Lovesick Blues," an old Tin Pan Alley song, climbed up the pop charts.

Someone once said, "The blues had a baby and they called it rock & roll," and I say the father was a hillbilly. In 1956, the hottest act in country music was also the hottest act in pop and R&B: **Elvis Presley**. Talk about a genre identity crisis! At the time, the term "pop" had been around for decades, and this NEW music had already been named for all time: rock & roll... yet the species that we so closely identify with the word "traditional" didn't even know what to call itself. Folk? Hillbilly? Country and western?

By the late 1950s, country had started calling itself country—and was trying hard not to sound like it. The axiom "country music is a lot better than it sounds" never aroused nearly as much controversy as "admit it, you love it" decades later. Just when people were predicting the death of our music, **Chet and Owen** invented the Nashville Sound, which was the ringing of cash registers accompanied by ooohs and ahhs, with a little doo wop thrown in. There's no denying that it sounded great. The word "crossover" became a part of our lexicon. But from this era came a country light that would shine on into the next century with acts like the **Dixie Chicks** and **Trick Pony**, and I'm talking about the Texas shuffle, popularized by **Ray Price**.

In the 1960s, **Patsy Cline** was thrilling audiences everywhere with her torch songs, but some of the crossovers were planted in country fields far away from Nashville. The Bakersfield boys, **Merle Haggard** and **Buck Owens**, didn't sound pop at all.

A big hero or villain in this country versus pop conundrum was **Billy Sherrill**. He is revered today as the man who did all those great traditional records with **George Jones** and **Tammy Wynette**, but at the time he was widely condemned, especially by the all-knowing

critics, for corrupting the sound of those great country artists with slick arrangements and big string sections.

Country music jogged along in pretty good health for several years until what is now known as the "Urban Cowboy" era, named after the movie that supposedly sounded the death knell for the music, as though **John Travolta** was single-handedly ringing the bell. The crossover hits of **Kenny Rogers**, **Dolly Parton** and **Willie Nelson** came to an end in 1984. A *New York Times* article about Nashville might as well have appeared on the obit page.

Then in rode the neo-traditionalists to the rescue. Instead of country crossing over to pop, pop started crossing over to country. Artists didn't have to appear on the *Billboard* and *R&R* pop charts to sell a gazillion records. Funny thing, though, about tradition. **George Strait** had played in a rock & roll garage band as a teenager. **Garth Brooks** had been influenced by heavy metal and pop acts. So one begins to think that "traditional" has as much to do with tradition as "country" has to do with farm animals. But when these guys, and others such as **Randy Travis** and **Alan Jackson**, opened their mouths to sing, well, you just knew it was traditional—great country singers singing great country songs.

So today, with all the poppy sounding girl-driven songs on the radio, the battle rages once more. To think that real country music is going to die would be wrong. But it would also be wrong to think that our music isn't going to fragment. It already has. Take the 15-year-old girl from the upper middle-class suburbs of Philadelphia who is a **Jessica Andrews** fan. Can you imagine her having a meaningful conversation about music with a 45-year-old truck driver from Moulton, Ala., who loves **Montgomery Gentry**? The girl would probably say, "Uh, I don't think so." But I think if we put up a very big tent and make the music as good and as believable as possible, our music will reach a big audience. The music will find the audience. We've always been the music of the people. If to reach all those people we have to diversify, homogenize and even polarize, well, that's part of the country tradition. **MR**

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Behind The Curtain: The Song Pitch Meeting

by Richard McVey II

There's some confusion in the waiting area at RCA Label Group (RLG). "Wait a minute," says EMI Publishing's Jon Mabe, looking at me and the receptionist with puzzlement. "I've got a 2:30 appointment with Renee Bell, too." That's when I explain I'm intruding on his song pitch meeting with the company's VP of A&R for the sake of journalistic insight. "Fine with me," he says amicably.

During an interview with Bell last year she related that it's difficult to fit everything into her day. After several calls from her assistant that start with, "Can we reschedule this for..." I fully understand what she meant. But finally, through Bell's tireless effort to give me a large block of time, I'm sitting in the waiting area with Mabe. So I bombard him with questions.

How do you prepare for a pitch meeting?

Mabe: Try to have some idea of who they're listening for. You can listen to the catalog and typecast your songs. That's one way. The other way is you call them up on the spur of the moment and say, "Hey, I've got one great song I've got to play for you." If you maintain that relationship, you're able to come and do that.

What's the best piece of advice you ever got?

Mabe: I've heard that it's not who you know anymore, it's who knows you. Because your relationships are the biggest thing you have. The worst thing you can do to yourself is not to be credible. In the long run a monkey can bring a song over here and press play on the CD player. You have to understand what they're looking

for at that particular time and be able to deliver it to them. Also, when they call up and say, "Come over and play me some songs," you've got to be able to tell them, "Thanks, but I don't have anything right now and don't want to waste your time." Or you say, "I've only got one thing right now." They respect that.

Is it hard to get meetings?

Mabe: I'm lucky that EMI is a big corporation and people come to me looking for stuff. I still call producers and A&R people, but I don't have to work really hard to procure meetings. Pluggers starting out with smaller companies or lesser known writers have a hard time getting meetings and have to drop stuff off. The biggest thing is don't waste people's time. They have very little of it.

Are these things ever on time?

Mabe: No.

At 2:40 p.m. Bell calls us into her corner office. Her desk and a nearby table are piled high with songs whose fate await her verdict. By the end of the day, which includes four separate meetings comprised of Mabe, Famous Music's Pat Finch, Sony/ATV Tree's Terry Wakefield and Warner/Chappell's Dale Bobo, I start to notice the subtleties of a song pitch meeting. They go like this: There are the pleasantries. ("Hi. How are you?" "Fine, thanks." Yadda, yadda, yadda.) Then the plugger unveils the songs, often preceded by a short phrase like "I love this song for Sara" or "I'm convinced this



Renee Bell, VP of A&R,
RCA Label Group

is Song of the Year" or "This song just came off hold for Faith Hill after 14 months" or "This was a hit in the early '80s."

Each pitch is relatively low key as they let the song speak for itself. Once Bell pops the CD in, she offers a poker face. Generally she stares straight down at her desk reading the lyrics with a noticeable concentration on the song at hand. Most songs don't make it to the end. The pluggers, seated directly across from her, look like students awaiting a principal's judgment. There's a palpable feeling of apprehension mixed with a look of "Well, what do you think?" After all, this is their livelihood and Bell's response could mean great financial rewards for publishers and songwriters alike.

When she hits the stop button on the CD player, Bell throws out her own phrases like "Um, no" or "You know who this *might* be good for" or "I like this, get me a copy." The latter always elicits a smile. While Bell listens, the

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pluggers offer up strikingly similar reactions. They all bob their heads and tap their feet, while Finch likes to twist a rubber band and Bobo breaks out his Palm Pilot.

Overall they each obtain varying degrees of success. It's near the end of Bobo's time that he turns and explains, "You always want to do your research because you don't want to walk out of a meeting where nobody's taken anything for anybody. That never happens to me," he laughs. "By the way, you're not keeping count today are you?"

Between each meeting Bell, who oversees all A&R aspects for the three-label RLG roster (Arista, BNA, RCA), reveals what it's like to be on her side of the desk.

What's the mix of pluggers and songwriters you meet with?

Bell: About the same.

Is it harder to meet with the song's creator?

Bell: With a writer, you probably listen longer, whereas a publisher isn't as attached to it. Just out of respect for the writer. I love songwriters. But they all come in and say, "If you don't like it you can cut it off." But as soon as you do they say, "Wait! You've got to hear the bridge!" (Laughs) Finally I learned to just listen to the whole thing.

How important is the demo's production?

Bell: I prefer guitar and vocals. They do full-blown productions, but I don't go there, although a lot of people like it. If it's a great song it doesn't need anything else. But sometimes if it's a good song, they need a great production to make it sound like a hit. There are reasons to do it. But for ballads, just give me a guitar and vocal. Also, I'll listen to a lot of boombox demos.

Do most pluggers tell you who the song would be good for?

Bell: Yes. But a lot of them don't want you to give the song to certain people. Like today, when I asked one of them if we could have it for so-and-so, then he says, "Let Sara hear it first." When they get a song in, they want to take it to certain places first. For us it's frustrating because we don't get certain songs for our brand new acts. If we don't get a certain caliber of song, we can't break that new act. And I

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Bell with Warner/Chappell's Dale Bobo



Bell with EMI's Jon Mabe



Bell with Famous Music's Pat Finch



Bell with Sony/ATV Tree's Terry Wakefield

understand their side, which is they want to take it to the big acts first because it's their livelihood. It's a Catch-22. We can't break the act without those songs, but they can't make a living if they give it to you for a new act and don't sell any records.

How many songs do you prefer per meeting?

Bell: Five max, but I'd rather them do their homework and bring one incredible song. The most frustrating thing is when they're just pitching songs and not into it. To me, if you worked your butt off to get those five songs, you're dying to get feedback. When I first started doing A&R everybody was really focused. One

reason is that they didn't have access to CDs or DATs. They had to make cassettes, something made up just for the meeting. Now a lot of times they'll bring their catalog and sit here and say, "What do you want?" A lot of them need to think about the artist—what they sing and don't sing. Sara's on her third album, you should be able to listen to that last album and know what we want for the next one.

How many chances will you give a new plugger?

Bell: I'd give them several. But it's overwhelming how many people want meetings with us. That's just the pluggers and writers, that's not the artists and managers coming in

to pitch an artist. Most days we have three or four artist meetings. Then you have 100 phone calls and 50 meetings. I'd rather them drop off and I'll listen to it. It may not be immediately, but I take stuff home on the weekends, listen in my car because you can get through it quicker. Any meeting is going to take 15 minutes longer. So at this point, I love drop-offs because we are so busy.

Where do the songs you liked go from here?

Bell: We'll make a compilation tape and they'll go straight to the artist.

How many songs generally go on hold for each album?

Bell: It's different for each artist. Martina hardly ever has more than six on hold at one time. If she's got it, she loves it. Kenny Chesney is the same. He's cut nearly everything he's held. Then there are other acts that have more, but we'll never have more than 20 at one time. We're in constant contact with our artists and producers and continuous song meetings to narrow it down, otherwise it gets overwhelming.

What are some of the biggest changes you've seen over the years?

Bell: We have to fight for songs. It's amazing the battles we're in with writers and the publishing community trying to get songs for our artists. It's to the point now where we really support our artist's writing. We have a new artist named Tebey Ottoh, who writes for Warner/Chappell, and we're hooking him up with some incredible writers because it's so hard to find great songs for new artists. So if we sign somebody who's a writer we want to enhance that. That's our way of finding great songs for a new act. Of course, we would never pass on an artist because they don't write.

How much does getting it on radio influence your song selection?

Bell: It totally affects it because radio drives our format. There are songs that I love that don't sound like a hit, but I think an album has a place for everything. We have to cover our singles. We have to go, "This is a smash hit," but then you have to look at what's going to make the album

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great. A lot of times you cut those songs and the public reacts to them and they end up being a single.

If I'm a plugger, who's the best person to get a song to—A&R, producer or artist?

Bell: Anybody you can get to. We're very involved in what gets cut on our artists. For 90 percent of the artists, we're in song meetings and we sit down together and decide what's going to be on the records.

How do you not get numb to all the songs?

Bell: You get to a point where you're burnt out. But that's any job. You just have to take a break. There are days when I come in and know I'm not in a good frame of mind to listen and I'll cancel meetings. You really have to be in it.

What do you look for in a song?

Bell: It's an emotional thing. Does it make me laugh, cry, smile. I remember "She Thinks My Tractor's Sexy," I knew immediately when Paul Overstreet played it for me it was a hit because I was laughing and it made me feel good. You shouldn't overanalyze the music. It's emotional and you should go with it. Part of my job is knowing what the artists want. The first album

is always the hardest because you're trying to get into the artist's head. When I hear a song I'm hearing that artist sing it.

Do you use the Internet much to look for songs?

Bell: No. Up until the past year I could hardly turn my computer on. I use it mostly for e-mail.

All but one person brought lyrics for each song. Is that necessary?

Bell: It doesn't matter. As long as you can hear.

If the vocal's buried in the song, then you definitely need them. If it's the end of the day it's a good idea to bring them because you can be tired and it helps.

Any other wisdom you can share?

Bell: My job is to find songs for the artists that millions of people are going to love. In this town a lot of people get caught up in what they think. It's most important for the artist to relate to the song because they are the interpreters. **MR**



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The Adventures of Co-Writing

by Carolyn Dawn Johnson

Songwriting, ahhhh...sigh...what can I say about songwriting? First of all, how lucky are those of us who truly use it as some form of release? I've heard people say it's a lot cheaper than a psychiatrist. I'm sure we must all be able to say that about some of the songs we have written. Why else would you start doing it? I feel blessed that this has become such an integral part of my life and that I can do it for a living.

I thought I would touch, and I mean touch, on the art and beauty of co-writing. Did I ever think I would co-write the amount that I do today? Not at all. Moving to town with a bag full of songs penned all by my lonesome, I could have never imagined it. When the general public asks me, did you write it by yourself or with someone else, why do I sometimes get offended? Are they assuming I can't do it by myself, that I'm incapable? Maybe, maybe not. It's a simple question. I've learned to defend the co-writing situation with all my might. Sure, I probably could have written that song myself, although it wouldn't be the same. It might have taken me an extra three years to find the time to sit down and finish it. I probably wouldn't have my favorite line in the song, cause I wouldn't have bounced a thought back and forth with somebody four, five, six, maybe 10 times until something totally different popped out. It may have sat on the shelf

as a mediocre idea that never found its spark and then a flame until I threw it out to someone who had a vision and flipped out over the thought of getting the chance to write it with me. I can't tell you the amount of times that has happened. Or... maybe it wasn't my idea at all!

There are so many great things about co-writing. When I first moved to town, the few people that heard my music early on said if you start writing with people don't lose what you got. What did that mean? I didn't know what I had. Does co-writing make you lose what you have, whatever it is? Sure, you can lose some of that, but you don't have to. When you find magical co-writers, they won't want you to change and will encourage whatever it is about you that is unique. Bring something new to the table. There are so many unwritten rules about songwriting that can't be taught in a book or in a class. You have to just do it—over and over and over. You can learn these things by writing with other people. You just naturally pick them up. And if you've listened to music all your life, like most songwriters have, you probably subconsciously have the knack for the sound of a commercial sounding song. And yes, commercial is a good thing. I'm so happy that a co-writer makes me show up to an appointment that I would have cancelled on myself nine times out of 10. I'm

super happy to have a co-writer who praises me when I do something spectacular, and of course it's always good when they listen to my stories (at no charge). And why is it that when I am totally stuck, they always seem to find the word or phrase that my brain can't? What a beautiful thing.

I do believe, however, you can spread yourself too thin, which causes you to not focus on the co-writers that bring out the best in you. You can write the same song five times a week with different people, because you've overbooked yourself and there is no input available. And yes, the tragedy of pouring out your heart to someone who just doesn't care, that's definitely a low. And one of the worst, settling for a line you don't think is cool just cause you don't want to hurt someone's feelings. Ughh, so how many times did you listen to the song after that? Once, maybe twice? What a waste! Maybe we overdo it, maybe we all get lazy, and stop being honest with ourselves. Is it really that good, or is it just a finished song? Who knows, all I know is I am thankful for my co-writers and I'm sure it beats celebrating all by myself (although I wouldn't complain about you know what—"\$\$\$\$," tee hee). Co-writing is good for some people and it may not be for others. Enjoy it, celebrate the victories, curse the failures (behind closed doors, of course) and use it at your own discretion. You have been advised. **MIR**

"I Love Being Wrong" - Collin Raye • "Why We Said Goodbye" - Tim McGraw • "Of Course I'm Alright" - Alabama

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Question: What do these songs have in common?

"Holes In The Floor Of Heaven" - Steve Wariner

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"Why We Said Goodbye" - Tim McGraw

Answer: Songwriter **Billy Kirsch**



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PUBLISHER SURVEY: An Insider's Look at Nashville's Publishing Community

by John Hood

Tumultuous times not only in the world at large, but for the music industry as well. As we go to press, tentative agreements between publishing companies, record labels and Internet firms are being announced. Legitimate online distribution of music may soon be a reality. The times they are a changing and who better to articulate the issues and challenges facing the publishing community than the publishers themselves? *Music Row* surveyed Nashville publishers seeking insight into the state of their industry. Here's what they had to say.

THE BIG PICTURE

"In the big picture, company consolidation and the funnel of people to get songs to is shrinking," says **Janenne Remondino** of J-Bird Music. "In the small picture, nothing new: song holds, what's appropriate and what's not, both for labels and publishers. How long is too long? What's ethical?"

"Traditional problems—controlled composition provisions, free goods, lack of a truly creative environment, etc.—continue to be issues," echoes **Jerry Crutchfield**, President of Crutchfield Music Group. "Those are now accompanied by new problems over uncertainties as they relate to the Internet world."

Daniel Hill, President of Cal IV Entertainment sees "increasing difficulty obtaining 'outside' cuts, a shrinking base of top-selling artists and shrinking playlists at radio" as areas of concern.

For **Pat Finch**, VP of Famous Music, the big issues are "requests by writers and lawyers for copyright reversions, Internet payments and controlled compositions."

"As evidenced by the closing, consolidation and reorganization of some of our most prominent companies times are tight in Nashville," says **Larry Sheridan**, President of Best Built Songs. "There's a conservative, calculating energy which does not support a breeding ground for creativity. It's very difficult to create opportunities right now."

"We can't lose sight that great songs brought us here and can also bring us back," says **Wayne Perry**, President of Chirho Music. "This is a rebuilding stage. Don't forget it's music we're making not money."

"Continual decline in the quality of our product is an issue," says **Mike Porter**, VP Creative/Writer Development of Brumely Music, "as well as Internet delivery, satellite delivery and all new technologies."

Roger Murrah, President of Murrah Music Corporation believes "copyright protection, decreasing revenue and increasing costs" are important issues.

"With sales being down we have to look at structuring writer deals where we can stay with a writer for the long term while allowing the writer to focus on being creative," says **Mike Sebastian** of Blacktop Music Group. "We have to look longer down the road and find other avenues to exploit our copyrights."

Erik Johnson, President of Zen Western Music, thinks producers with publishing ties are having a negative impact. "Perhaps if the incestuous relationship producers have with in-house writing staffs were curtailed the American public would hear better songs and respond with support. Great producers shouldn't be picking songs for their artists based on their financial participation in the copyright, neither should the labels or artists."

Marie Golden, President of August Golden Music, also notes, "Producers are producers. Songwriters are songwriters. Producers who didn't write any of the songs should not be considered writers."

"Fewer artists are making records than there were five years ago," says **Janie West**, VP Creative at RBI Entertainment. "Publishers have to be more creative in finding outlets for their music, be it film, TV, commercials or independent labels."

INNOVATION OR STAGNATION?

Country music's decline in market share should open the floodgates to new and innovate ideas and musical styles. Right? According to the survey responses, it's still a mixed bag.

"The market is always open to new, fresh and innovative music," says Crutchfield. "Unfortunately, the creative community in many cases is dealing too often with a preconceived comfort level of many individuals with limited creative ability."

"It's more open than it was, but we're still searching for our musical identity," offers **Perry**. "The rules have changed and no one knows where the parameters are anymore. What is country music?"

"Desperate times call for desperate measures," says **Phil Dillon**, President of Nickel City Publishing. "It only takes one visionary to start a chain reaction."

"Some of the indies are having success at radio with more daring artists and songs," says **Sheridan**. "Major labels will wait and see if record sales actually follow before they jump in." Sheridan also asks, "Why would you expect innovation from the same people who helped get us into this decline? I would think you'd need some new, forward thinking people in position making those innovative decisions."

"It seems to be more open than ever since labels are seeking something fresh and innovative," enthuses **Buzz Cason** of Southern Writers Group.

"More open than it's been in years," concurs **Murrah**.

Sebastian also thinks, "the market is very open right now to new styles and ideas. The labels and publishers are getting back to what they love as opposed to what they think might work. Put out great music and the money will come."

Jana Talbot, GM of Talbot Music Group, also points to recent indie successes as a promising sign. "The success of a record like 'Mrs. Steven Rudy' demonstrates that the market is open to innovative records, but that acceptance is limited. Some different things work, others seem to hit a wall at the radio level."

"The market is very open to innovative songs and ideas because the majority of people who purchase CDs are listening for something fresh, different and original," says **West**.

Finch is more cautious. "As a whole, I'd say limited. There are small signs of change from some scattered sources."

Ben Vaughn, GM for Big Tractor, believes it's "hit or miss" right now. He continues, "The forward-thinking people in the industry realize that we aren't going to grow our fanbase to its previous heights and beyond by retreading the same music over and over and over."

Golden is less optimistic. "Check the airwaves. The majority of songs are produced with a formula, even down to the guitar licks."

"The market is open," says Hill. "Many gatekeepers are not."

Johnson agrees. "The market is screaming for new ideas/songs but there are few risk takers left in the business. True innovation is just scary."

CHART CHANGES & REVENUE

Singles take longer to climb the charts these days. That means fewer singles are being released and there is a longer time between album releases. How is that affecting revenue for publishers? Most believe it's tougher to get a cut, but hit songs are paying more than ever.

"With songs lasting as long as they are and fewer singles being released by a given artist things have slowed down," says Sebastian. "You may have fewer singles but they are tending to pay more."

"For hits, the revenue is the best it's been," agrees Murrah.

Bright boils it down to the simplest terms. "We find that if we have a hit we make money. If we have songs on big selling CD's we make money. If we don't have those two things, we'll go out of business."

"Producers who have publishing companies and writer/artists seems to be the trend," says Sheridan. "Those who have more fingers in the pie eat better. Having songs hang longer on the charts and cutting half as many records is great for those who have songs on those records."

"The last time our company had a No. 1 record, multiple weeks at No. 1 were pretty rare," says Talbot. "Our song 'Austin' was No. 1 for five weeks and I expect to see a dramatic difference in our income."

Vaughn sums, "The horribly slow chart system has decreased the number of available slots where revenue may be produced, and increased the likelihood that many charting singles will not achieve a high enough position to generate significant earnings."

UNCLE SAM & COPYRIGHTS

As publishers and labels take their first halting steps toward download delivery of music, the idea of government mandated compulsory licensing to Internet companies has been brought up. The continued popularity of file sharing (Napster, et al) means copyright protection is still a hot-button issue. Nashville publishers offer diverse opinions as to the role

the government should play in regards to online music.

"Unfortunately," says Perry, "it will take government intervention to make sure we get our money for performed works in this digital age of Internet downloads."

"The government is the gate keeper in this issue, but they have to be educated in our business before they can act responsibly," offers Finch. "Given all the facts, I believe they can act and should act with our best interests in mind."

Bright implores, "Uncle Sam, please don't give our intellectual property rights away to the Internet."

Cason believes these issues "should be controlled by the industry itself with copyrights changing and complying according to all the Internet growth."

"Nobody outside our industry seems to understand, much less respect, intellectual property rights," says Talbot "I am opposed to too much government in our lives, but we sure need some help here."

TRENDS IN MUSIC

Is country music headed toward a more traditional sound or toward a more pop sound?

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Many publishers responded by saying forget about styles and focus on making great music.

"We are not interested in pop or traditional anything," says Bright. "We focus on great songs. We want George Jones and Faith Hill to record our songs."

Sebastian says, "A great song is a great song regardless of the style or production wrapped around it."

"Remember, pop is not short for something sickeningly sweet and syrupy that you drink from a disposable can," says Dillon. "It's short for popular. And isn't that what we're all going for?"

"It appears the music trend is shifting to a more rock, rootsy country. I still feel there is a place for everything," offers Remondino.

"There's not really a need for trends," believes Sheridan. "Label heads should find

artists who have some universal purpose for being who they are from birth. Radio would be blessed to find itself with the problem of deciding which artists fit their play list criteria if all the music was great."

"It has never been an issue of traditional versus pop," says Crutchfield. "The stream of country music will almost certainly reflect a 10 percent edge of traditional while the other side will reflect a strong pop influence. We're missing the focus however, which is the 80 percent in the middle. Faith Hill truly deserves to be a pop star and Brad Paisley capably carries the banner of new traditional country."


Several respondents believe the events of Sept. 11 will lead to less fluff in the country genre.

"In light of recent events which have forever changed our world, it's time for us to

look within and write more songs with heart and soul and passion," stresses Dillon. "I don't mean morbid depressing songs, but songs of reality that touch people. There's not enough of that going on now."

"Whether traditional or pop, the trend is toward more honest and real, heartfelt songs," says Hill.

"All is not 'sweetness and light' anymore," says Talbot. "While I don't necessarily think the songs will all be patriotic, depressing or morbid, I do think we'll see more depth in lyrics, maybe more reality."

Johnson thinks he has the answer to all of country's problems. "The trend will be toward more traditional pop and a further loss in market share. Then more navel gazing. Then Ralph Stanley will join the Dixie Chicks and we'll all be saved." 




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Songwriter Rights (and wrongs)

by Stephen Allen Davis

When I create a piece of music, even though it may be owned jointly by a publisher, I still call the song mine. It is mine. I birthed it. Naturally, I am sensitive to what others think about my song and their judgments. When I hear writers say they don't take it personally they are either lying or could just as easily be a plumber. There is nothing wrong with being a plumber, but I will always contend that we are doing some "higher work." So when someone interferes with my song, I can get pissed and my feelings hurt. Without those feelings I wouldn't be able to write the songs I do. It's part of the deal.

The question is, to what degree should the songwriter have control over the song with respect to any changes or interpretations

desired by an artist, producer or label? Recently, I had a song recorded by a well-known artist and successful producer. The song was put on hold, soon cut and we received a rough of the track and vocal.

The feel had been changed to up-tempo which was enough to ruin the song (there were a lot of words to get in), but then they also had the nerve to substitute the last line of the song with a line from the chorus which totally took away from the meaning and structure of the song.

Nobody called to ask me if that was o.k. I was furious. Did they not put the song on hold based on the way the demo was made? Of course songs can be changed for a certain arrangement, mood or a different way to start

or end the song. I can handle that, but when a song is changed this dramatically, it steps over the line and takes something away from the writer and the song. Shouldn't the writer be consulted before the artist/producer change a piece of music possibly forever?

Songwriters always seem to get the back door. Oh, they say how much they respect us and how important it is for us to be satisfied, but in my 34 years of getting songs recorded, (around 400), you could count on one hand the ones that turned out really great. I have made a great living from guys taking my songs and sometimes messing them up. Yeah, I've become used to that and to a point desensitized, but it still hurts to hear something that I worked on for so long presented in a way I don't agree with. What do other writers have to say about this? Deciding not to accept changes can create problems for a writer and publishers don't always want to take an active role. (Not wanting to rock the boat because of other songs that, of course, they want to get recorded by that producer.)

Where is the power for the songwriters? Take the hold issue. Yes, we love the song. We want to put it on hold—for 18 months! And then, "I'm sorry the artist just doesn't hear it anymore." Yes, we want the record, we want the cut, we want the success and yes, we want the money. So how do we find a balance?

The songwriter's words and melody are the most important part of the puzzle. Of course the labels, producer and artist have a part in this and so they throw in their two cents. (Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.) Songwriters are the only part of the process that continually force the music to get better. We can help change lives and the world's direction. Please tell me the last time that a snare drum made a song any better. Not a record, a song.

We writers are like the little birds on the rhino. He helps us to continue to live and grow. Although sometimes I would like to take a bat to the rhino. But what would that do, except maybe take away my home? So this is a hard place for the creative person to be, but it's always been that way and I always find myself trying to find that delicate balance between commerce and art. What do you think? **NSA**

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Key Staff: Billy Livsey, Dir.;
Tara Huber, Asst.

Blacktop Music Group

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615-320-9161 Fax: 321-2773
msebastion@blacktopmusic-
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Nashville, TN 37212
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Key Staff: Karen Conrad, Senior
VP; Ron Stuve, Chris Oglesby,
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Brainchild Music

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www.brainchildmusic.com
Key Staff: Larry Wayne Clark,
Maggie Ross

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Creative/Writer Development

Bug Music

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e@burnsongs.com
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cal4@cal4.com • www.cal4.com
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Key Staff: Charlie Daniels, Jr.,
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Channel/Cordial Music Co.

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Writer; Lynn Gillespie Chater,
Owner/Writer

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Debbie Matthews, Max
Hutchinson, Creative Directors

Corlew Music Group, LLC

50 Music Sq. W. #300
Nashville, TN 37203
615-321-5767 Fax: 321-5519
corlewmusic@aol.com
Key Staff: David Corlew,
President; Juli Newton, Creative
Dir.; Daneen Kelly, Catalog
Manager; Ashley Cardwell,
Receptionist

Cornelius Companies, The

1719 West End Ave. #805-E
Nashville, TN 37203
615-321-5333 Fax: 321-5653
www.corneliuscompanies.com
Key Staff: Ron Cornelius,
President/Owner

Courtyard Music

POB 120152
Nashville, TN 37212
615-837-2511 Fax: 837-1207
courtyardmusic@aol.com
Key Staff: Wayne Jackson, VP;
Josh King, VP/Creative Dir.

Cowboy Up Tunes

118 16th Ave. S. #216
Nashville, TN 37203
615-726-4441 Fax: 726-0997
cowboyuptunes@hotmail.com
Key Staff: Bobby Pinson, Ramona
DeSalvo

Creative Artists Agency Publishing

3310 West End Ave. Fl. 5
Nashville, TN 37203
615-383-8787 Fax: 383-4937
cmeyers@caa.com
Key Staff: Clay Myers, Pub.
Agent; Risha Rodgers, Pub. Asst.

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1014 18th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-329-1111 Fax: 329-4121
keatonmusic@mindspring.com
Key Staff: Chris Keaton, GM

Crossfield Music

3003 Blakemore Ave.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-269-8661 Fax: 269-8661
crossfield@crossfield.com
www.crossfield.com
Key Staff: Suzanne Elmer,
President; Myrna Elme,
Administrator; Jim Elmer, Catalog
Manager

Crosswind Corporation

POB 120816, Nashville, TN 37212
615-329-3407
Key Staff: Terry D. Choate, Owner

Crowe Entertainment

1010 16th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-255-7900 Fax: 255-7900
jcrowe7349@aol.com
www.croweentertainment.com
Key Staff: Jo Crowe, Owner; Dick
O'Bitts, Associate; Tony Crowe,
Associate

WRITERS



Adam
Wheeler



Claire
Davidson



Jared
Tyler



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P.O. Box 158675 • Nashville, TN 37215
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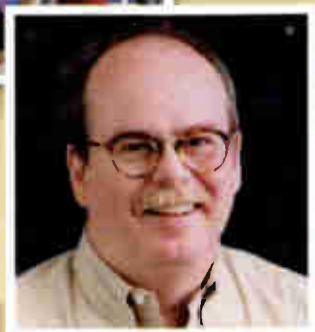
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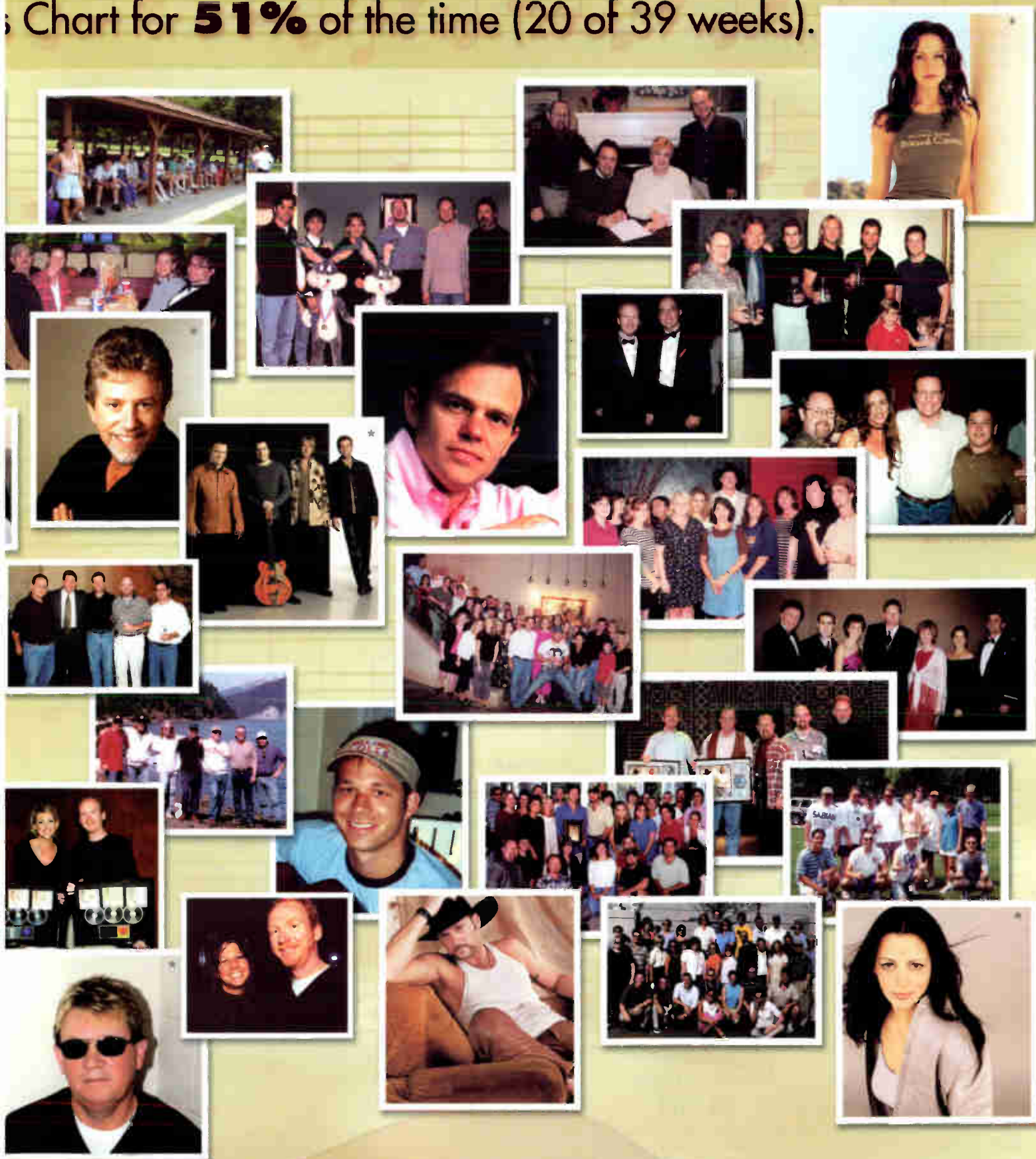
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615-321-5558 Fax: 321-5598
crutchfieldmusic@aol.com

Key Staff: Jerry Crutchfield,
President; Christy C. Fields, VP
Administration; Martin Crutchfield,
VP A&R; Scott Haugen, Creative
Dir.; Angel Curry, Director of
Administration/Office Manager

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POB 121904
Nashville, TN 37212
615-731-0100 Fax: 731-3005
cupit@cupitmusic.com
www.cupitmusic.com

Key Staff: Jerry Cupit, President;
Denise Roberts, VP

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Publishing**

1604 17th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-383-3600 Fax: 383-0020

Key Staff: Tommy Williams,
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Administration/Office Manager;
Amanda Moore, Tape Copy;
Merideth Stewart-Devoursney, Sr.
Creative Consultant

Curb Music Publishing

47 Music Sq. E.
Nashville, TN 37215
615-321-5080 Fax: 321-9532
bkennard@curb.com

Key Staff: Jeff Tweel, Sr. Creative
Dir.; Drew Alexander, Creative Dir.;
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Tanner, Administration/Creative Staff

Deston Songs

1602 17th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-279-5655 Fax: 279-0848

destonsongs@home.com
Key Staff: Kerri Edwards, Creative
Dir.; Beka Callaway, Creative Asst.;
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19 Music Sq. W. Suite V
Nashville, TN 37203
615-256-0580 Fax: 781-9176
donkingmusic@home.com

Key Staff: Don King

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123 Walton Ferry Rd.
Hendersonville, TN 37075
615-824-1947 Fax: 264-0462
dotwool@bellsouth.net

Key Staff: Linda S. Dotson,
Principal/COO, US office; Shauna
Dotson, COO, London, UK office

Drake Music Group

1300 Division St.
Nashville, TN 37203
615-297-4345 Fax: 297-1584
drakemusic@aol.com

Key Staff: Rose Drake, President;
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458 Millwood Dr.
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615-366-6734 Fax: 367-1576
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Key Staff: Butch Paulson, President

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615-463-4600 Fax: 463-4601
Key Staff: Abbe Nameche;
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615-244-1099 Fax: 244-1478
jefffunk@dynastyrecords.com

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POB 148443, Nashville, TN 37214
615-361-9189 Fax: 366-8037
sunnystephens@aol.com
www.egkight.com

Key Staff: E.G. Kight and Sunny
Stephens, Co-Executives

**Electric Mule Music
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1019 17th Ave. S.
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Key Staff: Jeff Moseley, President

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101 Winners Circle
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615-371-4400 Fax: 371-6897
Key Staff: Steve Rice, Senior VP
EMI-CMP; Rick Cua, VP Creative;
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Promotions

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35 Music Sq. E.
Nashville, TN 37203
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121 17th Ave. S.

Nashville, TN 37203
615-256-1207 Fax: 256-5266
encoresong@aol.com
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Partner/CEO; Keith Follesé,
President; Brad Allen, VP Creative
Affairs

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40 Music Sq. W.
Nashville, TN 37203
615-259-5320 Fax: 259-5319
extremewritersgroup@msn.com
Key Staff: Jason Houser, Michael
Martin, Co-Presidents

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Nashville, TN 37212
615-320-5417 Fax: 322-9168
famemusic@aol.com
www.fame2.com
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istration; Crystal Hooper, Admin.
Asst.; Brian Kolb, Catalog Manager

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POB 121572, Nashville, TN 37212
fanetta@aol.com
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Farm, The

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Key Staff: Jackie Solomon-
Chancey, Owner; Jeannie Winn,
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Fax: 610-792-2618
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www.jimfemino.com
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1201 Derby Trace
Nashville, TN 37211
615-833-4598 Fax: 833-4598
vrickles@prodigy.net
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1018 17th Ave. S. #11
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615-329-9093 Fax: 329-9094
fishmuse@aol.com
Key Staff: Robert Fish, President;
Mick Lloyd, VP/GM

Froelig Palmer Music

1311 16th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-292-1503 Fax: 292-1505
fpmusic@aol.com
Key Staff: Robin Palmer, Celia
Froelig

Full Circle Music Group

1216 17th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-327-3178 Fax: 321-3346
derrick@radiorecords.net
Key Staff: J. Gary Smith, CEO;
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gnsongs@aol.com,
Key Staff: Gary Nicholson, Owner;
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Gate To Gate Music
1019 17th Ave. S. #102
Nashville, TN 37212
615-320-5757 Fax: 320-5781
gtgmusic@bellsouth.net
Key Staff: Dwight D. Heckelman,
Creative Dir.; David McQuade
Leibowitz, President

Gemini Music Group
2817 West End Ave. #126-404
Nashville, TN 37127
615-329-9466
gemini.music@att.net
Key Staff: Bob Townsend,
President; Will Campbell,
Creative Dir.

**Genesis Entertainment/
Genesis Music Group**
1219A 16th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-327-1001 Fax: 327-1012
sharn@genesistentertainment.com
Key Staff: Shar'n Clark, VP,
Publishing & Administration;
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Geo Music, Inc
23 Music Sq. E.
Nashville, TN 37203
615-242-9999 Fax: 242-9999
george@georgejohnson.com
www.georgejohnson.com
Key Staff: George Johnson, Owner

Golden Harp Music
POB 210982
Nashville, TN 37221
615-356-9691 Fax: 356-7274
harp@wildoatsrecords.com
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**Goodland Music Group/
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POB 24454
Nashville, TN 37202
615-269-7071 Fax: 269-0131
jwalker@aristormedia.com
Key Staff: Jeff Walker, President;
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Gramily Music
11 Music Circle S. #100
Nashville, TN 37203
615-244-4272 Fax: 244-4399
myers_shannon@msn.com
Key Staff: T.W. Hale, Owner;
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Great American Songs
1010 17th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-320-3009 Fax: 321-3090
gat@gatalent.com
www.gasongs.com
Key Staff: Eddy Raven, President;
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Hamstein Music Group
914 18th Ave. S.
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615-320-9971 Fax: 322-9288
Key Staff: Jeff Carlton, VP/GM;
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2817 West End Ave. #126
Nashville, TN 37203
615-327-0777, 877-427-9762
Fax: 615-327-0777, 877-427-9762
happyrock@kcnet.com
www.happyrockmusic.com
Key Staff: Harry Phillips, Owner/
Songplugger

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615-321-9098
Fax: 327-1748
www.harlanhoward.com
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Howard, GM/Partner/Songplugger;
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Songplugger; Jeff Sharlow,
Catalog Manager

Harry Max Music
1217 16th Ave. S.
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615-376-5000
Fax: 376-9708
harrymax12@aol.com
Key Staff: Cynthia French,
President

**Hayes Music Group/
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615-591-1251
Fax: 591-1252
stevehayes1@home.com
Key Staff: Steve Hayes, President

Hi-Value Music
604 Lemont Dr.
Nashville, TN 37216
615-650-8755 Fax: 650-8760
hivaluemusic@home.com
Key Staff: Jeff Batson

**High Seas Music/
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Nashville, TN 37212
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Fax: 322-9582
Key Staff: Tracy Gershon,
President; Dallas Gregory,
Professional Manager; BJ Hill,
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HoriPro Entertainment Group
1819 Broadway
Nashville, TN 37203
615-329-0890
Fax: 329-1874
carol@horipro.com
Key Staff: Bob Beckham,
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Noel Nutt, Jason Morris, Butch
Baker, Creative Directors; Carol
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"Yeah? what's his name?"

"MARK T. JORDAN."

"Who's he worked with?"

"Oh, Wynonna, Bonnie Raitt, Van Morrison,
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and Lee Roy, too."

"Wow. Where's he been?"

"On the road with Wy, Lyle and Boz...
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Lifestyle:

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Key Staff: Steve Engel,
President; Kenny Warlick,
VP Creative

Island Bound Music
1204 17th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-320-5440
Fax: 320-0849
iboundmusic@aol.com
Key Staff: Julie Daniel, Co-
Owner/Songplugger; Brad
Daniel, Co-Owner; Sandra
Bertolino, Studio & Office
Manager; Angelia Van
Vranken, Finance & Special
Projects; Jamie Paulin,
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1508 16th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-385-0022
Fax: 386-9988
mail@lullabyes.com
Key Staff: J. Aaron Brown,
Matthew Brown, David
Lehman, Hal Newman

J-Bird Music
POB 120911
Nashville, TN 37212
615-320-0890
Fax: 327-0750
jbirdmusicgroup@cs.com
Key Staff: Janenne
Remondino, Songplugger/
Publisher

Jelinda Music
1317 16th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-292-8441
Fax: 292-4840
mdpcoast@bellsouth.net
Key Staff: Barry DeVorzon;
Maryanna Phipps, Creative Dir.

Jody Williams Music
1025 17th Ave. S. #A
Nashville, TN 37212
615-329-3500
Fax: 329-3543
www.jodywilliamsmusic.com
Key Staff: Jody Williams,
President; Katherine
Blesingame, Creative
Manager

**Johnny Bond
Publications**
POB 158029
Nashville, TN 37215
615-297-7320
Fax: 297-7320
www.johnnybond.com
Key Staff: Sherry Bond,
President/Owner

**Jump Back Jack
Publishing**
POB 7
Kingston Springs, TN 37082
615-952-3714
Fax: 952-5927
mvsilver@bellsouth.net
Key Staff: Mike Siler,
President/CEO; Vicki Siler,
VP; Jenni Leigh, Creative Dir.;
Becki Ann, Creative Design

Just Great Songs
1105 Spring Creek Dr.
Nashville, TN 37209
615-356-2738
Fax: 353-1725
edunkley@bellsouth.net
Key Staff: Sandy Dunkley

Kathy Walker Songs
POB 331132
Nashville, TN 37203
615-243-4300
Fax: 446-0143
kathywalkersongs@aol.com
Key Staff: Kathy Walker,
Owner

Keaton Music Group
1014 18th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-329-1111
Fax: 329-4121
keatonmusic@mind-
spring.com
www.keatonmusic.com
Key Staff: Chris Keaton,
President; Stacey Bizzack,
Asst.

**Kentucky Forest
Publishing/Rain Forest/
Blue Green Forest**
1002 Perry Rd.
Kingston Springs, TN 37082
615-952-4950
kyforest2@aol.com
Key Staff: Forest Borders II,
Owner

Kidbilly Music
6109 Bresslyn Rd.
Nashville, TN 37205
615-353-8733
Fax: 353-9328
kidbillymusic@aol.com
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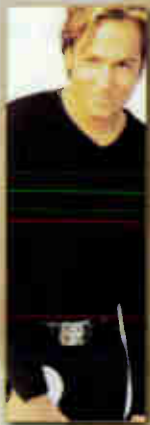
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1507 Tremont Ave.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-259-8921
Key Staff: Kim Williams,
President/Writer

Kit Music Group, Inc.
800 18th Ave. S., #E
Nashville, TN 37203
615-256-7520
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2001 ACM Nominations
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Four weeks at #1 with "The Little Girl"

Congratulations Angela!

upcoming cut - Susan Ashton
upcoming cut - Rebecca Lynn Howard
"Dream Too Small" - Dawson's Creek, 2001

Thanks to all the artists and producers who cut Ten Ten songs this past year including:

"The Little Girl" **John Michael Montgomery** - #1 for four weeks

"But For The Grace of God" **keith urban** - #1

"The Man He Was" **George Jones** - Latest Single

"I Breathe In, I Breathe Out" **Chris Cagle** - Current Single

"Meat and Potato Man" "I Still Love You" and "Life or Love " **Alan Jackson** - Current Album

"Mood Swing" **Bill Wyman & The Rhythm Kings** - Current Album

"The Devil's Candy" **Gary Allan** - Current Album

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janice.jackson@cal4.com
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Janice Jackson, GM

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615-327-2780 Fax: 327-2788
lifemusicgrp@earthlink.net
Key Staff: Johnny Rutenschroer,
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615-646-2563 Fax: 673-0323
wadeconklin@aol.com
Key Staff: Wade Conklin,
President; Peggy Bradley,
Administrator; Dan Hodges,
Songplugger

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615-366-6734 Fax: 367-1576
langelmusic@aol.com
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615-321-9029 Fax: 321-3640

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803 18th Ave. S.
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615-321-0164 Fax: 329-4128
bobdipiero@aol.com
www.bobdipiero.com
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Monkey; Rachael Adkins, Creative
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7051 Hwy. 70 S., #188
Nashville, TN 37221
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6754 Pennywell Dr.
Nashville, TN 37205
615-356-7735 Fax: 356-7735
luvuluvusongs@aol.com
www.mp3.com/luvuluvumusic
Key Staff: Joyce V. Harrison

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118 16th Ave. S. #204
Nashville, TN 37203
615-467-3860 Fax: 467-3859
TDCOATE@aol.com
Key Staff: Terri Choate, Partner;
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615-329-4150 Fax: 329-1021
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www.majorbob.com
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makin@mindspring.com
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1100 18th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-321-0033 Fax: 321-2244
zamalama8@aol.com
Key Staff: Kacey Jones,
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Administrator

Mamanem Music
1616 16th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-292-1616 Fax: 297-2880
lpen@home.com
Key Staff: Laron Pendergrass,
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Marathon Key Music
713 18th Ave. S. #B
Nashville, TN 37203
615-329-4244 Fax: 329-4881
colewright@hotmail.com
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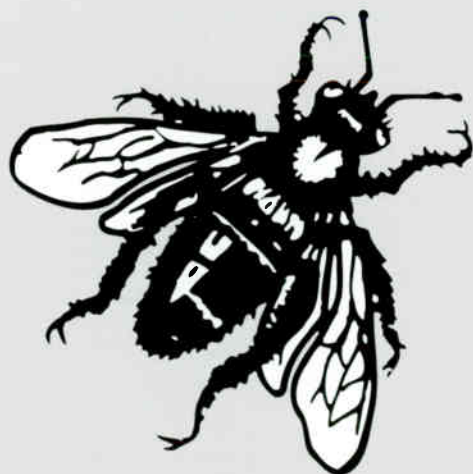
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Key Staff: Kevin Pearce, President;
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mattlindseymusic@yahoo.com
Key Staff: Matt Lindsey, Owner

McWhorter Music
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Old Hickory, TN 37138
615-754-6041
mcwhortermusic@aol.com
Key Staff: Craig & Kimberly
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1019 17th Ave. S. #201
Nashville, TN 37212
615-320-5355 Fax: 320-7229
isomighty@aol.com
Key Staff: Whitney Daane, Owner;
Lelsie Roberts, Creative Dir.

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POB 150768, Nashville, TN 37215
615-292-6811 Fax: 292-7266
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909 18th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-327-2750 Fax: 327-0750
pepemorechips@home.com
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909 18th Ave. S.
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615-341-0005 Fax: 341-0007
info@musicworks.org
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Nashville, TN 37203
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POB 121854, Nashville, TN 37212
johnmvanmeter@msn.com
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President

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615-771-9746 Fax: 771-9546
new.west@home.com
Key Staff: Bob Bullock, President;
Steve Hayes, Songplugger

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Hermitage, TN 37076
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Connie Wieder, Office Manager;
Kathy Walker, Creative

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POB 158675, Nashville, TN 37215
615-373-2423 Fax: 373-0089
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Key Staff: Hal Oven, President

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1019 17th Ave. S. #201
Nashville, TN 37212
615-320-7222 Fax: 320-7229
isomightly@aol.com
Key Staff: Jayne Young, VP
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Consultant; Leslie Roberts,
Creative Manager

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118 16th Ave. S. #250E
Nashville, TN 37203
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csbrooks@bellsouth.net
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615-333-2872 Fax: 834-3660
tommy@ofmusic.com
www.ofmusic.com
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Songplugger

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Key Staff: Merle Kilgore,
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615-885-5998 Fax: 885-8297
parrotpick@aol.com
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615-269-3670 Fax: 269-3669
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www.thepressoffice.net
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Paul Craft Music/ Pinspotter Music

401 Bowling #62
Nashville, TN 37205
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Key Staff: Paul Craft

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1207 16th Ave. S.
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klamb@peermusic.com
www.peermusic.com
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Nashville; Karin Giesbrecht,
Professional Dir.; Rod Parkin,
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Playground Writer's Group

2814 Azalea Pl.
Nashville, TN 37204
615-783-0011 Fax: 783-0095
sam@playgroundrecording.com
www.playgroundrecording.com
Key Staff: Sam Lowe, Dir. of
Publishing; Jimmy Jernigan,
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2000 Mallory Lane
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615-300-3750

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1900 Wedgewood Ave.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-341-0088 Fax: 341-0079
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Key Staff: Jim Casey, Manager
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Randy Scruggs Music

2821 Bransford Ave.
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2105 Elliston Pl.
Nashville, TN 37203
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Creative; Dan Raines, Managing
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POB 609
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615-746-0844 Fax: 746-2771
rsdr@bellsouth.net
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www.waltzingbearrecords.com
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9412 Atherton Ct.
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rjmg@robertjasonmusic.com
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615-726-4441 Fax: 726-0997
ryanranchmusic@hotmail.com
Key Staff: Ramona De Salvo,
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Key Staff: Sherrill Blackman

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Key Staff: Chris DuBois, Frank Rogers, Liz O'Sullivan, Steve Williams

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Fax: 327-1012
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Song-Agent; Missy Bryant, Creative
Services

Shalin Music

123 Walton Ferry Rd.
Hendersonville, TN 37075
615-824-1947 Fax: 264-0462

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garth@roadierecords.com
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615-376-8000 Fax: 309-0321
smithhaven4@home.com
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25 Music Sq. E.
Nashville, TN 37203
615-244-8952 Fax: 244-4711
song-garden@mindspring.com
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Tiffany Swinea, Co-Creative
Manager

Song Planet

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Nashville, TN 37203
615-726-8300 Fax: 244-6387
donna_hilley@sonymusic.com
www.sonyatv.com

Key Staff: Donna Hilley, Woody
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1052 Blue Mountain Ln.
Nashville, TN 37013
615-260-3450
Fax: 707-938-0354
southernangelbmi@aol.com
Key Staff: Mike Lounibos,
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Nashville, TN 37203
615-242-2461 Fax: 242-2479
Key Staff: Jack Key, President;
Daphene Smith, Copyright
Administrator; Tom Stewart,
Songplugger

Southern Writers Group USA

2804 Azalea Pl.
Nashville, TN 37204
615-383-8682 Fax: 383-8696
bcason@musicnashville.com
www.musicnashville.com
Key Staff: Wanda Pojar, Copyright
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Josh Turner
Doug Powell
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 Not Pictured:
Kris Tyler

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305 Estate Dr.
Mt. Juliet, TN 37122
615-754-4211 Fax: 754-4269
steelheartsongs@yahoo.com
Key Staff: Melinda Lloyd

Steve Wariner Music

POB 1647, Franklin, TN 37065
615-591-8930 Fax: 591-8932
cwariner@stevevariner.com
Key Staff: Caryn Wariner, Dir. of Publishing; Judy Ridings, Asst.

Still Working Music Group

1625 Broadway #200
Nashville, TN 37203
615-242-0567 Fax: 242-4202
stillworking@orbison.com
Key Staff: Barbara Orbison, President; Suzanne Prokasy, Sr. VP; Lisa Hensley, Creative Dir.; Paula Eden, Publishing Coordinator

Street Singer Music

1303 16th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-327-4425 Fax: 327-1077
streetsing@aol.com
Key Staff: Mark Meckel, Owner

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1105 16th Ave. S.
POB 128323
Nashville, TN 37212
615-321-0504 Fax: 321-0502
Key Staff: Bud McGuire, President; Mike McGuire, VP; Lee Bach, Creative Dir.

Sunset Ranch Music

204 Heady Dr.
Nashville, TN 37205
615-352-5353 Fax: 308-5353
norman@sunsetranchmusic.com
Key Staff: Norman DeVasure, Owner

Talbot Music Group

2 Music Circle S. #202
Nashville, TN 37203
615-244-6200 Fax: 254-8860
talbotmusi@aol.com
Key Staff: Jana Talbot, VP; Tonia Bach, Office Manager

Tanasi Music Group

1710 Roy Acuff Pl.
Nashville, TN 37203
615-846-6060 Fax: 846-6061
tanasi@tanasimusic.com
Key Staff: Ed Arnold, Owner

Ten Ten Music Group, Inc.

33 Music Sq. W. #110
Nashville, TN 37203
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www.tentenmusic.com
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20 Music Sq. W. #100
Nashville, TN 37221
615-662-8558 Fax: 662-8558
bmikid2@hotmail.com
Key Staff: Jeff DeBusk, CEO

Tony George Music

823 Colfax Dr.
Nashville, TN 37214
615-268-1952
tony@tonygeorgemusic.com
www.tonygeoregemusic.com
Key Staff: Tony George, President/Creative Dir.; Gary Vandergrift, Dir. of Marketing; Teena George, Public Relations Dir.

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1026 15th Ave. S.
Nashville, TN 37212
615-248-2284 Fax: 254-0519
info@trio productions.com
trio productions.com
Key Staff: Robyn Taylor Drake, Songplugger

Tyler Music Group

2817 West End Ave.
Nashville, TN 37203
615-297-6550 Fax: 297-6753
tylermusicgroup@prodigy.net
www.tylermusicgroup.com
Key Staff: Michelle Robertson, VP

Universal Music Publishing Group

12 Music Circle S.
Nashville, TN 37203
615-248-4800 Fax: 248-9300
www.umusic.com
Key Staff: Pat Higdon, Sr. VP/GM; Kent Earls, Sr. Creative Dir.; Whitney Williams, Creative Dir.; Katie Dalton, Creative Dir.; Tammy Helm, Admin. Manager; Molly Reynolds, Mark Brown, Creative Dir.

Vine Creek Music

POB 171143
Nashville, TN 37217
615-366-1326 Fax: 367-1073
jingle1113@aol.com
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Key Staff: Victoria Shaw, President

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Key Staff: Jill Block, Billy Block, Toni Catlin

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smarkland@windsweptpacific.com
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Working Oog Music

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Key Staff: Erik Johnson, President

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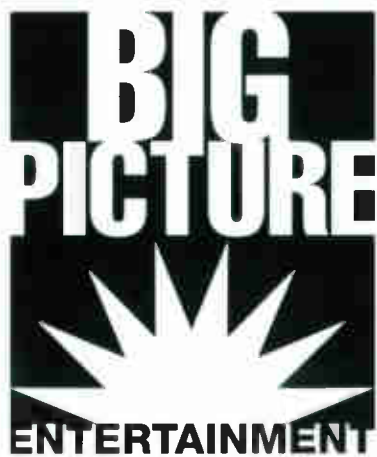


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Financial: The Continuing Erosion of Mechanical Royalties

The minimum royalty rates for a "compulsory" mechanical royalty license were established by the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976. But these rates only provide a starting point. They can be, and routinely are, superseded by separately negotiated mechanical licenses in which record companies are granted much more favorable terms than those outlined in the Copyright Act.

A publisher, for whom good relations with the labels are obviously essential, is unlikely to jeopardize a potentially lucrative recording by arguing too strenuously over the terms of the mechanical license, and will generally accept the terms offered by the label. But it makes sense to understand the negative effect that these provisions can have on future earnings, even when the publisher's bargaining position is not strong enough to change them.

The most severe reductions in mechanical royalty revenues stem from the "controlled composition" provisions contained in many artist contracts. A controlled composition is generally defined as a song composed and/or published by the artist. In some instances, the entire song can be deemed "controlled" even if the artist only wrote a portion of the copyright.

In the following paragraphs we'll discuss the most commonplace exceptions to the Copyright Act, arising from controlled composition provisions contained in the recording contract of an artist/songwriter, and illustrate their combined financial effect in a sample royalty calculation.

1. Reduced Mechanical Rates—As set by the Library of Congress, the compulsory mechanical royalty rate increases every two years. The next adjustment is scheduled for January 1, 2002 at which time the unit rate will increase from \$.0755 to \$.0800. Many basic artist deals reduce

the mechanical royalties paid on controlled compositions to a rate of 75% of the full statutory rate, or 6¢ rather than the statutory 8¢ in 2002.

2. Fixed Mechanical Rates—The Copyright Act states that publishers are to be paid based on the rate in effect when units are "made and distributed." However, most artist agreements do not allow for such increases in the mechanical rates for controlled compositions, but rather freeze the rate as of the delivery date of the album.

3. Reduced Royalty Bearing Units—Royalties are to be calculated based on all units distributed, according to the compulsory provisions of U.S. copyright law. Instead, many artist agreements reduce the number of mechanical royalty bearing units for controlled compositions. In some cases, all of the so-called "standard free goods" distributed by the record label are excluded from mechanical royalties; more commonly, half of these free goods are excluded.

4. Limits to Royalty Bearing Compositions per LP—Most artist agreements limit the number of songs per album for which the record company is required to pay mechanical royalties. In a typical scenario, the label agrees to pay royalties for 10 songs per LP, and if an additional song is included, the "excess" royalty is deducted from amounts paid for use of controlled compositions, or in some instances, from artist royalties. The compulsory provisions of the copyright law do not contain such stipulations.

With the above in mind, here is a typical example involving a publisher that administers five "controlled" songs on a platinum selling album:

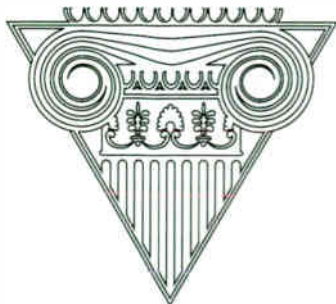
ADMINISTERING 5 SONGS ON A PLATINUM LP

Units Distributed	1,000,000
Standard Free Goods	15%
Songs on LP	11
Controlled Compositions	5
Non-Controlled Compositions	6

	Statutory Provisions	Controlled Comp.
UNIT CALCULATION		
Units Distributed	1,000,000	1,000,000
Less Standard Free Goods	N/A	(75,000)
Royalty Bearing Unites	1,000,000	925,000
MECHANICAL ROYALTY RATE PER LP		
Controlled Compositions	5	5
"Excess" Songs Not Allowed	N/A	(1)
Number of Allowed Songs	5	4
Rate Reduction	N/A	75%
Statutory Rate	\$0.0755	\$0.0755
Total Rate Per LP	\$0.3775	\$0.2265
TOTAL PAYABLE TO PUBLISHER	\$377,500.00	\$209,512.50

In our example, the revenue paid to the publisher has been reduced by 45% as a result of the mechanical provisions contained in this artist's contract. Unfortunately for publishers, until the record companies willingly abandon the controlled composition concept (which, to say the least, is not imminent) or artist/writers with the clout to do so negotiate the provision out of their contracts (as sometimes happens), mechanical earnings will continue to be substantially eroded by this practice. MR

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Glenda Cones
Intern Director
The Mike Curb School of Music Business
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Email: conesg@mail.belmont.edu

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The trend du jour is patriotic records. In addition to the explosive Aaron Tippin hit, we've got the all-star version of "America the Beautiful," Faith Hill's national anthem, the revivals of Charlie Daniels' "In America" (complete with Bush sound bytes) and Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A.," LeAnn Rimes singing "God Bless America," Clint Black's new song "America" (in concert only) and renewed popularity for "Only in America," plus three new indie entries reviewed below.

Be that as it may, my Disc of the Day awardees aren't singing the praises of Old Glory. They are, however, universally glorious. My male winner is the legendary Leon Russell. It seems to me that we don't celebrate this man's presence in Nashville nearly enough. Our female fave this month is Babbie Mason. For the winning group disc, I direct you to the charming Woodys.

The **Discovery Award** goes to an unchallenged Chris Thile. Of course, we already know him in Nickel Creek. But this is still his first solo voyage.

The **Label of the Day** is **Word Records**, which boasts the powerful lineup of Ben Glover, Point of Grace, 4Him, Downhere and Anointed, all of whom have dandy discs.

COUNTRY

PAUL OVERSTREET/*The Toughest Battles*

Writer: Paul Overstreet/Eddie Joe Reddick; Producer: Paul Overstreet; Publisher: Scarlet Moon/Tennessee Tunesmith, BMI; Scarlet Moon (CDX) (615-952-39999)

This had me from the first note. His tenor remains one of the most immensely soulful instruments in our community. The production is a sonic wonder. And the song soars straight from the heart. This deserves to be a radio sensation.

WILEY FOX/*Advice From an Old Man*

Writer: Jesse Embry/Tim Phelps; Producer: Jesse Embry/Wiley Fox; Publisher: Woeman, ASCAP; Acclaim (CDX) (www.acclaimrecords.com)

The old guy gives the boy advice when he's five. The old guy gives the young groom advice at his wedding. The old guy dies. And your point is?

THE BELLAMY BROTHERS /*Desperadoes in Love*

Writer: David Bellamy; Producer: George Terry/The Bellamy Brothers; Publisher: Bellamy Brothers, ASCAP; Bellamy Brothers/Delta Disc (CDX) (www.bellamybrothers.com)

An easy ridin,' steel-laced little pleasure. Their brother harmonies have seldom sounded tighter.

PAULA HERNANDEZ/*I've Got an Attitude*

Writer: Tammy Vice; Producer: John Rees; Publisher: Window, BMI; 615 (CDX) (800-584-5524)

She's country, all right. But that doesn't excuse the fact that she's flat, flat, flat.

RONNIE LEE TWIST/*Debbie Don't Do Dallas*

Writer: D. Maphis/R. Porter; Producer: Joe Johnson; Publisher: PMS, ASCAP; Remuda (CDX) (616-471-7607)

The intent is a dancehall shuffle in a Ray Price groove. But his pipes are just not in that league.

DONA NELSON/*Last Seen*

Writer: Man; Producer: Matt Anderson; Publisher: Man's Atomic Jukebox, BMI; Atomic Jukebox (CDX) (845-868-7219)

Uncomfortable on the verses. Positively painful on the choruses.

JACK BARLOW/*Spirit of America*

Writer: Rich Rhuems; Producer: Gene Strasser; Publisher: Country Party, BMI; Antique (620-231-6443)

A patriotic recitation that walks us through history of America with the narrator's character being "The Spirit of America." It reminded me of every boring church sermon I'd ever daydreamed through as a child.



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Mark Schultz, Myrrh/Word Records
WhisperLoud, Reunion Records
Jaci Velasquez, Word Records
Hagfish, London Records
Joey Kibble – Take 6, Warner/Reprise Records
Signature, Columbia Records

Beyoncé Knowles, *Destiny's Child*
"Kim knows exactly what you need to get the results you need. She has helped me tremendously."

Kelly Rowland, *Destiny's Child*
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Michelle Williams, *Destiny's Child*
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Piske Joins East Iris; Nickel Creek At Seventeen Grand

Jason Piske has joined East Iris Studios as the new house engineer. In addition, the studio has upgraded their ProTools system—56 I/Os with Apogee AD-8000SE (4), Apogee AD-8000 (1), and 888/24 (2) on a G4/733 mhz...Mandy West has joined Whistler's Entertainment Group as Administrative and Client Relations Manager. West was formerly with Spectacolor Communications in New York...Nickel Creek has been camped out in Seventeen Grand's Neve room, tracking for their upcoming sophomore album. Alison Krauss is back as Producer with Engineer Gary Paczosa and Assistant Engineer Thomas Johnson. Gary Paczosa was also in the Neve room with Nashville session guitarist Brent Rowan, who was working on a self-produced solo album. Johnson served as Assistant Engineer. Alt-country artist Jill King was in the Euphonix room working on her upcoming album with Producer Jeff Teague and Engineer George Tutko. Seventeen Grand owner Dave Cline put on his engineering cap to work with Larry Gatlin on a self-produced album. Sean Neff served as Assistant Engineer...Neal McCoy has been in Castle Recording Studios working on overdubs with Producer Eric Silver and Engineer Mills Logan. Castle also reports they are updating their ProTools system with new hardware and backup systems.



Underground Sound Pro Audio & Rentals recently hosted a ProTools seminar and forum to begin dialogue with major labels about establishing a universal archiving format. The event was held at Sound Stage's Drive Thru ProTools room and was moderated by (pictured center) Giles Reaves, engineer and authority on hard disk recording. Represented were Island Bound Publishing & Studio, RCA Label Group, Sparrow, Sony and Word. In the fall, Underground Sound will host another archiving forum open to the music industry including a panel of engineers and producers.

Artist	Producer	Engineer	Label	Project
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Artist	Producer	Engineer	Label	Project
615 MUSIC				
Gary Burr	Randy Wachtler	Aaron Gant	National	"When Dust..."
—	Teren/Wachtler	"	"	"Strength of America"
—	Steve Rossi	Drew Rydberg	A&E	"Biography: Tracy Gold"
—	Williams/Wachtler	Aaron Gant	Animal Planet	"Croctober"
—	Randy Wachtler	"	KNBC-TV	"Mornings On NBC4"
—	Kimbro/Wachtler	"	KPNX-TV	"More For Your..."

AUDIO PRODUCTIONS

Joe Diffie	George Achaves	Travis Turk	Epic	CCUSA
Perfect Stranger	Tim Riley	Scott Goudeau	Curb	"
Trick Pony	George Achaves	Travis Turk	Warner Bros.	"
Blake Shelton	"	Scott Goudeau	Giant	"
Chely Wright	"	"	MCA	"
Jo Dee Messina	Tim Riley	Travis Turk	Curb	Messina Show
Cyndi Thomson	"	"	Capitol	"
Rascal Flatts	"	"	Lyric Street	"
Chely Wright	Barry Freeman	Scott Goudeau	MCA	radio tour
Billy Bob Thornton	"	"	Lost Highway	"
Gary Allan	George Achaves	Travis Turk	MCA	CCUSA
George Jones	Terry Stevens	Scott Goudeau	Bandit	radio interviews
Leland Gregory	Barry Freeman	"	—	radio tour

BENNETT HOUSE

Charlotte Church	Keith Thomas	Bill Whittington	Columbia	od's/mix
Amy Grant	"	"	A&M	mix
Watermark	Nathan Nockels	Jim Dineen	Rocketown	trax
Gary Sadler	Steven V. Taylor	Mike Psanos	Taylor Productions	"
Marla Johnson	Sal Oliveri	Patrick Kelly	—	"

BRUSH HILL

Doug Schaub	Arvel Bird	Arvel Bird	—	demos
Dave Simon	"	"	—	album
Louise Blount	"	"	—	demos
Kristin Garner	"	"	Tom Trabucco	"
Ray Barnette	"	"	Rob Miller	"

CASTLE RECORDING

Jeff Bates	Rusty Gaston	Barrow/Short	Warner/Chappell	mix
Frank Solesbee	Bart Butler	Mike Janas	—	trax/od's/mix
Neal McCoy	Eric Silver	Mills Logan	Warner Bros.	od's
Larry Hubbell	Randy Boudreaux	Mike Janas	—	"

Artist	Producer	Engineer	Label	Project
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New Power Trio	NPT, E. Shaw	Eli Shaw	—	trax
Demos	Gordon O'Brien	Tim Waters	Warner/Chappell	mix

CREATIVE RECORDING

Ronnie Milsap	Milsap/Galbraith	Eric Paul	—	—
Kelsey Dimarco	Eric Paul	"	—	—
Jimmy Melton	Melton/Paul	"	Harlan Howard	—
Tim Wilson	Melton/Wilson	Steve Melton	Capitol	—
Rowloff Prods.	Brooks/Crockrall	Kent Madison	Rowloff	—
Global Ministries	McGurdy/Kimbro	Eric Paul	Global Ministries	—

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—	"	"	—	Spectra Site Comm.
—	"	"	—	Community Health...
—	"	"	—	Ford
—	"	"	—	KFC
—	"	"	—	Pigeon Forge

EAST IRIS

Brian Youmans	Leonard/Owsley	Leonard/Piske	RCA	mix
Michelle Parmelee	Kevin Wayne	Spatta/Park	DreamWorks	trax/od's/mix
Dean Miller	Brown/ Maher	Maher/Logan/Park	MCA	trax/od's
Brandon Stone	Harry Hinde	Bogdan/Park	Lime Light	od's/mix

EMERALD

Mile 8	Mile 8	Jeff Sochor	—	trax/mix
Jewel	Dann Huff	Balding/Hackett	Atlantic	mix
Stefanie Rose	James Stroud	Cobble/Kidd/Bickel	DreamWorks	"
Susan Hayes	Bright/Huff	Scott Kidd	Bright/Huff	od's
SHEDAISY	Dann Huff	Balding/Hagen	Lyric Street	"
Kenny Chesney	Cannon/Wilson	Sherrill/Beamish	RLG	comps/mix
Kellie Coffey	Dann Huff	Balding/Hagen	RLG	od's/edit/mix
Alison Krauss	Gary Paczosa	Paczosa/Bickel	Rounder	edits
Brett James	Dann Huff	Balding/Rowe	RLG	od's/edits/mix
Deric Ruttan	Steve Bogard	Williams/Kidd	Lyric Street	mastering
Dave Wilson	Dan Serafini	Albini/Bickel	"	mix
Dean Hall	Dean Hall	Hall/Kidd	Dean Hall Ent.	od's/mix
The Easters	Michael Sykes	Greene/Beckett	Spring Hill	trax
Jeff Tuttle	Jeff Tuttle	Bullock/Greene	—	trax/od's/mix
Daniel Gallagher	Clyde Brooks	"	Clyde Brooks Prod.	trax
Demos	John Hobbs	Fowler/Konshak	Windswept Pacific	trax/od's/mix

STUDIO REPORT

Artist	Producer	Engineer	Label	Project
Mullins	Mark Bright	Fowler/Bickel	RLG	trax
Matt Hendricks	Matt Hendricks	Mark Hagen	Acuff-Rose	mix
David M. Spear	Spear/Bullock	Bullock/Greene	RJ Levin & Assoc.	trax/od's/mix
Wilkinsons	Williams/Bright	Williams/Kidd/Bickel	RLG	od's
Kenny Lamb	Kenny Lamb	Chris Rowe	Warner/Chappell	od's/edits
Kenny Rogers	Kenny Rogers	Guess/Murphy	Dreamcatcher	mix
Woody Wright	Woody Wright	Greene/Beckett	—	trax

ISLAND BOUND

Jamie Kyle	Jaime Kyle	Geoff Koval	—	pop album
The Maries	Max T. Barnes	"	MCA	"
DUV "Dove"	Darren Noble	"	Titanium	rap album
Sherri Smith	Max T. Barnes	"	—	country album

LOUD

Michael Peterson	Chancey/Lehning	Kyle Lehning	Sony	mix
Susan Ashton	James/Worley	Mike Poole	Capitol	voc's
Chalee Tennison	James Stroud	Rich Hanson	Warner Bros.	mix/od's

MONEY PIT

Joanna Janet	Paul Worley	Schleicher/Hellerman	DreamWorks	od's/mix
The Players	The Players	Hellerman/Hachler	Developmental	trax/od's
Chely Wright	Paul Worley	Schleicher/Hellerman	MCA	mix
Little Big Town	Worley/Chancey	"	Sony	od's
Susan Ashton	Worley/James	"	Capitol	"
Martina McBride	Paul Worley	Hellerman/Hachler	RCA	"

QUAD

Brian Youmans	Leonard/Owsley	David Leonard	RCA	—
Fighting Gravity	Jim Ebert	Jim Ebert	Q	—

SEVENTEEN GRAND

Nickel Creek	Alison Krauss	Paczosa/Johnson	Sugar Hill	trax
Jill King	Jeff Teague	George Tutko	—	mix
Shoji Tabuchi	Shoji Tabuchi	Jake Niceley	SEI	5.1 mix
Brent Rowan	—	Paczosa	—	trax
Larry Gattlin	Larry Gattlin	Cline/Neff	—	"

SOUND EMPORIUM

James Otto	Scott Parker	—	Mercury	trax
Marc Beeson	Marc Beeson	Steve Lowery	Sony/ATV Tree	demos
Nashville America	Paul Lovelace	Dave Sinko	Nashville America	trax
Jill Johnson	Scott Baggett	Baggett/Jaskowiak	Bluewater Music	demos
Donny Lowrey	Donny Lowrey	Hall/Muncy	Extreme Writers	"
Matt Hendrix	Matt Hendrix	Hagen/Jaskowiak	Acuff-Rose	"
Cyndi Thomson	Tommy L. James	Dave Sinko	Still Working	trax
Randy Travis	Kyle Lehning	Lehning/Wood	Elizabeth Travis	"
Mark McGuinn	McGuinn/Reynolds	Matt Andrews	Warner/Chappell	demos
Buryl Redd Project	Buddy Skipper	Rudin/Bauer	Gotam Enterprises	trax
Doyle Dykes	Doyle Dykes	Dave Sinko	Doyle Dykes	"
Voices From Afar	Scott Paschall	Tassin/Muncy	Afar	"

STARSTRUCK STUDIOS

Martina McBride	BBC	Kevin Beamish	BBC-2	BBC-2 Radio
Oslin/Malo	"	"	"	"
Tritt/Paisley	"	"	"	"
Patty Loveless	"	"	"	"
Steven Lee Davis	Eric Prestidge	Eric Prestidge	Led Ler	trax/od's

WHISTLER'S ENTERTAINMENT

Tracy Broyles	A. Von Dollen	Dan Rudin	—	demos
Journey...Human Heart	Mowbray/Parker	Mowbray/Whetston	—	radio program
Dexter Green	Dexter Green	Dexter Green	i.v	demos
NBC-22/Fox-45	Hall/Parker	Larry Hall	—	TV New theme
HealthSouth TV	Parker/Keller	Chris Parker	—	USA Kid's Show
Gordon's Jewelers	"	John Jacscz	—	national ad
Ford	Chris Parker	Chris Parker	—	"

Writer's Notes

Neil Thrasher



Publisher: Sweet Summer Music/
Major Bob Music

Birthplace: Birmingham, Ala.

Hits/Cuts: "That's What I Get For Loving You," "Sweet Summer," Diamond Rio; "What Do You Say," Reba McEntire; "I Lost It," Kenny Chesney; "How Cool Is That," Andy Griggs; "Real Life," Jeff Carson

Favorite Song You Wrote: "Lower Alabama"

Favorite Song You Didn't Write: "She Misses Him On Sunday"

On What Instrument Do You Write: Guitar

Influences: My family

Advice To Writers: I like to pay attention to the "not so obvious" world and keep notes. I've found the more I listen and observe, the more interesting writing has become.

Little Known Biographical Fact: I moved to middle Tennessee in 1983 from Alabama to place-kick for MTSU.

For Neil Thrasher music is a family affair. His father, Joe, and uncle were part of a touring gospel group, The Thrasher Brothers. "My mother's father also sang gospel music for a living, so I was raised on Southern Gospel," says Thrasher, who, for a short time, sang tenor with his family.

Hoping to get closer to Nashville, he attended Middle Tennessee State University in 1983 and place-kicked for the school's football team. "I got a letter from them to try out," he says. "And they had a good recording industry management program."

He later found himself working construction around town, biding his time in search of a record deal. He credits his wife, Lana, with sparking his songwriting career. "I moved here to be an artist, but Lana set me up with some guys who really got me interested," he recalls. "The first three guys I wrote with were Kim Williams, Kent Blazy and Ronny Scaife. I learned a lot from them and learned that I had what it takes."

In 1994 he landed his first cut, "Angel Loved The Devil Out of Me," which appeared on Kenny Chesney's first album. He says his songs are a gift from God. "It doesn't come out of my head," he admits. "It comes from up above and down through me. I'm too stupid to come up with some of that stuff. So it's a gift."

Thrasher's own singing career came to the forefront in 1996 as one half of Asylum duo Thrasher Shiver, with singer/songwriter Kelly Shiver. However, their lone self-titled album met with difficulty at radio. "When I got my Reba cut, 'What Do You Say,' it was peaking out in the top five and I was out on the road in some Podunk hotel doing a radio tour and free radio shows. I'm thinking, 'What in the world am I doing?' We put everything into our album and it's not getting played. I had reached a dead end as far as my artist career goes. I was miserable."

The duo disbanded shortly thereafter and Thrasher has since settled into writing full-time. He now enjoys every opportunity to be with his family, which includes two daughters, ages one and six. He adds that he's happy with his career right where it's at. "I'm not at that point in my life anymore where I want to be an artist," he says. "When I think of being gone, I get sick." **What do you think new writers would be surprised to know?** Just how hard it is to get a cut. So many artists are encouraged to write their own albums. It's a scary thought. **If you could have anyone cut your songs, who would it be?** Vern Gosdin. That would be cool. **What do you do in your free time?** I hunt. In the spring time I'm turkey hunting, in the fall I'm deer hunting. I write in between all of it.

—Richard McVey II

Bobby Karl...

With Country Music Week moving to November, we had a month to practice at dress rehearsals.

Foremost among these was the ultra-gala, black-tie Country Music Hall of Fame induction ceremony in the building's glass-roofed Conservatory (10/4). Staged impeccably by **Rusty Wilcoxson** for the CMA, the evening began with cocktails on the plaza on a perfect, balmy evening while the inductees did their press conference in the Ford Theater with moderator **Lon Helton**.

To commemorate the new building, 12 are being added to the Hall instead of the usual two or three. Hence, the special event. Upstairs in the rotunda, living inductees **Sam Phillips**, **Phil Everly**, **Charlie Louvin**, **Gordon Stoker**, **Ray Walker**, **Bill Anderson** and **Ken Nelson** posed with their plaques and chatted with one another (**Don Everly**, **Waylon Jennings** and **Don Gibson** did not attend).

Downstairs on stage, **Marty Stuart** presided with just the right mix of humor and reverence. **Raul Malo** sang numbers associated with each inductee. Then video tributes appeared for all 12. Friends and relatives of the departed **Delmore Brothers**, **Homer & Jethro**, **Webb Pierce** and **Don Law** accepted in their stead.

Basking in the good vibes were **Thom**

Schuyler, **Merle Kilgore**, **Buddy Killen**, **Del Bryant**, **Jerry Crutchfield**, **Jerry Bradley**, **Katherine Bradley**, **Patsy Bradley**, **Vince Gill & Amy Grant**, **Ron Baird**, **Eddie Stubbs**, **Sharon Vaughn**, **Duane Eddy**, **Donna Hilley**, **Shari Warnke**, **Lisa Harless**, **Tim Wipperman**, **Carrie Moore-Reed**, **Betty Hofer**, **Phyllis Stark**, **Walter Miller**, **Ed Benson**, **Peggy Whittaker** and **Hall of Famers Brenda Lee**, **Frances Preston**, **Jo Walker-Meador** and **Jimmy Dickens**. Music Row's labels were represented by **Mike Dungan**, **Bruce Hinton**, **Luke Lewis**, **Tony Brown**, **Tim DuBois**, **Fletcher Foster**, **Larry Willoughby** and the like.

At the gala, **Kathy Louvin** said she's planning a **Louvin Brothers** tribute disc with an all-star cast. **Gail Davies** has already been working on her **Webb** tribute CD, also with an all-star lineup.

The speeches were a varied lot. **Bill Anderson** was touchingly weepy. The **Jordanaires** reminded everyone that they're still at it. And **Sam Phillips** was practically a pentecostal altar call with his impassioned, fabulously eccentric plea for artistic creativity. It was a moment not to be missed.

The only glitch in the night was that the stuffed, hickory smoked beef tenderloin, pecan crusted chicken breast, steamed sugar snap peas and smoked cheddar mashed potato entrees were served barely warm. The baby spinach,

Works The Room

roasted beet and walnut salad with pear vinaigrette dressing, however, was divine.

The fabulons of the live performance biz gathered at the downtown Sheraton for their 31st convention. Their organization has gone through several name changes and is now **IEBA**, the **International Entertainment Buyers Association**. After the first day of panel discussion, the group gathered in the Sheraton's ballroom for its awards banquet (10/8).

Schmoozing at the gig were **Rod Essig**, **Ben Farrell**, **Tony Conway**, **Paul Moore**, **Ken & Shelia Shipley Bidy**, **Traci Peel**, **Bonnie Bucy**, **Janet E. Williams**, **Kirt Webster**, **Ronnie Shacklett**, **Reggie Churchwell** and more.

IEBA President **Steve Tolman** hosted. We dined while the **Pat Patrick Orchestra** swung splendidly as accompaniment. Among the award presenters were **Leroy Van Dyke**, **Lori Renfro**, **Sonny Anderson**, **Jeff Hill**, **Judy Ade**, **John Juliano** and **George Moffatt**. Comedian **Steve Brunner** attempted one-liners between them.

Joan Saltel of **Buddy Lee Attractions** was stunned and amusingly flustered when she was given the **Founders Award**. It turned out to be a good night for the agency, since **Jeremy Palmer** was named **New Agent of the Year**. **Bobby Baker** picked up **Event Producer** and **Gil Cunningham (TBA)** won **Talent Buyer**. **Talent**

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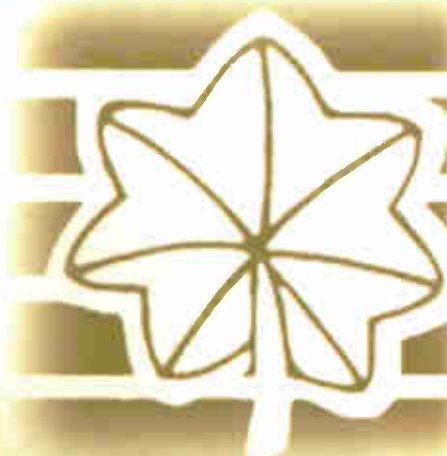
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THE GOOD LIFE

Agent of the Year went to **Barry Jeffrey** of the William Morris Agency (other winners Clarence Spalding, T.K. Kimbrell, Louis Messina and Brooks & Dunn were no-shows).

Barbara Mandrell and sister **Irlene Mandrell** were there to present the Pioneer Award to their father, **Irby Mandrell**. Third sibling **Louise** sent her contribution via video, since she was abiding by the family's enduring rule, "The Show Must Go On" at her theater in Pigeon Forge.

"My advice is, if you don't have the proper talent, get married, have three girls and put them on the stage," quipped Irby in accepting.

The President's Award went to **Joe Guercio**, who conducted the band that night. **Jo Walker-Meador** and **Jackie Monaghan** helped present the Lifetime Achievement Award to **Brenda Lee**.

"You don't have to be the conductor, you just have to be on the train," said Brenda. "You people here tonight have let me be on the train for a long time—it's been a great ride. Thanks to you for giving me a stage, for giving me an audience, and thank you for letting me sing."

The very fact that we were all there together was a healing balm. It's hard to feel fabulous when you're walking around with a lump in your chest where your heart used to be. But after three weeks of grieving following Sept. 11, I felt I had to tear myself away from the news and make myself mingle again.

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The "comeback" for many of us was the **Diamond Rio** party celebrating the band's 10th anniversary, three CMA award nominations and the Gold certification of *One More Day*. Held at the BMG chapel (10/2) amid meatball, spinach rolls, dips and other appetizers, plus adult beverages, this was a veritable love fest.

Stephanie Bentley, George Flanigen, Jim Mazza, Beth Gwinn, Jerry Damon, Ree Guyer Buchanan, Julie Daniels, Glen Middleworth, Skip Ewing, Harry Warner, Bob Burwell, Mark Alan Springer, Gary Overton, Claire Cook, Terry Bumgarner, Thomas Cain, Rick Shipp, and Mike Clute were buzzing around the room. **Leslie Paulin**, formerly a civilian publicist, was making her BMG and BKWTR debut.

"We have several reasons to be excited," observed **Joe Galante** accurately. "I still get off on saying, 'Gold.'"

"'One More Day' is one of the songs that has helped us through this tragedy. And we're glad to be a part of that healing process."

"Thank you would be the first thing we need to say," said Rio lead singer **Marty Roe**. "Our dream was to do this and ONLY this. We want to RETIRE as Diamond Rio."

The group's **Brian Prout, Dan Truman, Dana Williams, Jimmy Olander** and **Gene Johnson** were there with families and coworkers. And for the first time in a long time, the world felt warm.

So onward we plunged. **Toby Keith** was in town to celebrate the No. 1 success of "I'm Just Talkin' About Tonight" at BMI (10/3). Breakfast was being served—it sounded like a good gig to grab. **Michael Gray, Shawn Camp, Alison Jones, Kerry O'Neil, John Scott Sherrill, Bob DiPiero, T.K. Kimbrell, Woody Bomar, Jeff Green, Alan Mayor, Buddy Cannon, Bobby Braddock, Scott Borchetta** and **Mac McAnally** thought so, too.

The sweet thing about it was that this is songwriter **Scott Emerick's** first chart-topper. His firefighter brother came up from Florida to see him in the spotlight and drew an appreciative round of applause.

Toby is a songwriter, artist, publisher and producer. But he downplayed the last. "This little

cup here says 'Producer,'" he told the crowd. "I didn't do shit. Thank **James Stroud**."

Another "feel good" event occurred that night (10/3), when Music Row gathered for a quickly organized "The Row for the Red Cross" show starring **Jo Dee Messina, Ray Stevens, The Wilkinsons, Shenandoah, Jeff Carson** and more. Some \$7,000 was raised.

As often seems to be the case, the evening was a harmonic convergence of simultaneous events. **Bobby Roberts** was showcasing the talented **Jeff Carter** at 12th & Porter (10/3). **Warners** presented **Jolie & The Wanted** at 3rd & Lindsley (10/3) and **Sony** booked the BMI roof for **Jeffrey Steele** (10/3).

I've had my ears on Mr. Steele since long before he had hits in **Boy Howdy**. He didn't disappoint. His new stuff is very cool and very refreshingly "different." I realize that word is poison to radio, but there was absolutely no denying him that night. Just ask **Jon Randall, Danny Tate, Ron Huntsman, Barry Freeman, Donna Hughes, Fred Vail, Scott Siman, Jessie Schmidt, Jeff Walker, Shannon McCombs, Ed Morris, Bob Paxman, David Ross** or (of course) **Allen Butler, Cliff Audretch** and **Blake Chancey**. Did I mention that the fabulous **Bekka Bramlett** sang backup? Are you aware that I adore her?

At the show, former Little Texas star **Del Gray** talked about his new life as a producer. Former Sony-ite **Jack Lameier** (he exited 9/13) trumpeted the new location of his famed Friday salon/saloon **Jack's Place**. It's at 17th and Edgehill, the site of his new consulting biz.

After that schmooze, **Miss Mary** and I decided to try the newish **Park Cafe** for dinner (10/3). That's where we had our rendezvous with one of our oldest and dearest friends, **Kathy Mattea**, and her equally talented hubby **Jon Vezner**.

For real solace, you can't beat the comfort of the Grand Ole Opry. The show's 76th birthday celebration (10/13) booked **George Jones, Jeannie Seely, Brad Paisley, Vince Gill, Steve Wariner, Hal Ketchum, Ralph Stanley, Ricky Skaggs, Porter Wagoner, Hank Locklin** and the proverbial **Minnie Uthers**. That was one of the best "feel good" events of all. **NIS**

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ALBUM REVIEWS



JEFF CARSON/Real Life

(Curb) Producers: Max T. Barnes, Justin Niebank

Prime Cuts: "Real Life," "Divine Intervention," "My One And Only Love," "Until We Fall In Love Again"

Critique: This year's comeback special might very well be Jeff Carson. Having been to the top before, Carson has shown the potential to be a viable commodity. With his latest effort, *Real Life*, Carson delivers an album heavy on formula, but surprisingly light on predictability. Dodging present tradition, the arrangements

are light and aren't choked with a caterwauling fiddle and steel. As a result, the songs seem to breathe while giving us something we don't hear much of in country anymore: silence. Never is this more evident than on the jewel of the album, "Real Life." With his Garthian tenor, Carson absolutely nails what is basically a predictable, but good song. Both "My One And Only Love" and "Until We Fall In Love Again" benefit heavily from the treatment given by the producers. "Divine Intervention" is a fun song that harkens back to the tongue-in-cheek ditties of the mid-'90s, and with all of the seriousness on the radio it could be a welcomed addition. With all the promise of the album, there are a few misses included. "Shine On" has more clichés than a monkey's uncle. (Pardon the cliché.) "Scars And All" is a pretty song written with veteran Jim Weatherly, but is mauled by some sort of DX-7 clone keyboard that reminds me of musical filler on *Doogie Houser, MD*. Other than those two personal annoyances, Carson has delivered an interesting album that distinguishes itself by its attention to detail. With an updated approach to handling proven songwriting, *Real Life* is the real deal. **Grade: B+**

—John Kennedy

life like he means it. Working with producer Huff for the first time, Adkins ventures into the worlds of drum loops and power ballads. The clever "Chrome" is harmless fun, "Love Me Like There's No Tomorrow" soars heroically and "I'm Tryin'" gives Adkins one of his best vocal showpieces yet. "And There Was You" has a cool minor key groove not unlike Adkins' earlier hit "Thinkin' Thing." The quirky "I'm Goin' Back," while bordering on a novelty song with its Mark McGuinn-ish blend of programmed percussion, accordion and jews-harp, effectively conveys the story of a country boy who's been in L.A. too long. Maybe *Chrome* won't be the CD that lifts Trace Adkins to his next career plateau, but his day is coming. Country music will need his brand of larger-than-life grit in the somber days ahead. **Grade: B**

—Larry Wayne Clark



TRACE ADKINS Chrome

(Capitol) Producers:

Trey Bruce, Dann Huff

Prime cuts: "Chrome,"

"Once Upon A Fool

Ago," "I'm Tryin',"

"And There Was You,"

"I'm Goin' Back," "Give Me You," "Love Me Like There's No Tomorrow"

Critique: Why isn't Trace Adkins a superstar? Sure, the lanky Louisianan has had his share of radio hits but one gets the feeling that his career lurks somehow in a state of hibernation, waiting

to break loose and soar to multi-platinum heights. Adkins seems to have it all—the physical stature of a young Gary Cooper and of course that voice, a huge, tough-but-tender instrument that cuts through radio's frilly tenors and lightweight baritones like an axe through custard (only Toby Keith can boast a similar chesty resonance). And, perhaps most importantly, the man has a *history*. In a field of sanitized striplings whose every utterance seems scripted by image doctors, Adkins looms manly and real, a survivor whose road has been pitted with hard work, divorce and personal injury. Clearly this is a guy who can sing about



JOE DIFFIE/In Another World

(Monument)

Producers: Don Cook,

Lonnie Wilson

Prime Cuts: "In

Another World,"

"My Give A Damn's

Broken," "If I Lost Her"

Critique: *In Another World* is the first album for Joe Diffie since 1999's *A Night To Remember*, and his first for Monument. It's another mostly solid effort from arguably the best male vocalist in the business (sheesh, Joe could sing the Funk & Wagnall's and make it sound smooth and country). Teaming up again with producers Don Cook and Lonnie Wilson, Diffie mostly eschews the novelty songs that earned him the most airplay in the late 1990's but eroded his

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earlier critical acclaim. "My Give A Damn's Broken" (the lone Diffie co-write) is the closest thing to a novelty tune, and it's a dandy. Like Toby Keith's "How Do You Like Me Now?!" the song is fast, funny and packed with attitude. The title track is about the remembrance of lost love and how the past sometimes collides with the present when one least expects it. "If I Lost Her" is an anti-cheatin' song on which the singer unleashes his soaring, sonorous tenor. But after that the album's mid-section goes soft like a underdone cake. "Stoned On Her Love," while sporting a jaunty banjo-propelled melody, is little more than dressed-up fluff. And while the sadly evocative "Hollow Deep As Mine" stands up well, the next two, "This Pretender" and "Like A River Dreams Of Rain," don't. The former because musically it borrows too freely from Jackson Browne's "The Pretender;" the latter because while poetic, rivers don't dream. That leaves "What A Way To Go," a decent belly rubbing dance song soulfully sung by Diffie, and the epic closer, "The Grandpa That I Knew." The song, written by ace tunesmiths Tim Mensy and Shawn Camp with pens dipped in love and memories, depicts a funeral scene over a simple country dirge. Wonderfully sung and brought to life by Diffie the storyteller, this is what real country music is all about. **Grade: B**

—Ron Young



GENE WATSON
From The Heart

(RMG Records)

Producers: Ray Pennington, Gene Watson

Prime Cuts: "When You're Not Looking

Back," "The Man An' Me And You," "No Trash In My Trailer"

Critique: When Gene Watson sings, even goose bumps must get goose bumps. And I honestly don't believe Watson has ever been in better voice than he is on *From The Heart*. Add some truly outstanding production and top-notch songs, and it all amounts to one rock-solid album. Watson's unmistakable voice is the centerpiece, of course, and he is a virtuoso at emoting—he goes from pain to grit in an instant in "Next To Nothing." He has the guts to tackle two major country music classics in "Take Me As I Am Or Let Me Go" (even hitting some notes reminiscent of "Farewell Party") and "I Never Go Around Mirrors," and he makes them his own. You'll be completely exhausted just listening to the master at work when he nails the Leslie Satcher/Max T. Barnes gem "When You're Not Looking Back." There's even a humorous (yet tasteful) trailer park anthem "No Trash In My Trailer." But if anything comes close to

shining as brightly as Watson's voice, it's the fresh-sounding production. Each song is vibrant and interesting, with a superb mix of tempos. The material sounds very contemporary and would...*should* find a place on any country radio station. Yet there's an infusion of hard-core traditional country instruments, making one remarkable blend. *From The Heart* has definitely captured mine. **Grade: A**

—Lisa Berg



SHAWN CAMP
Lucky Silver Dollar

(Skeeterbilt Records)

Producers: Allen Reynolds and Mark Miller

Prime cuts: "Baby's

Gone Home To Mama," "Tune Of The Twenty Dollar Bill," "Lost At Sea," "Can't Have One Without The Other," "Fallen Star Saloon"

Critique: Shawn Camp has little to complain about. Proficient on several instruments, a gifted singer and a proven hit songwriter, he was obviously standing near the front of the line when talent was being handed out. Still, while artists like Brooks & Dunn and Garth Brooks have ushered his songs to the top of the

charts, Camp the recording artist never has, despite a short-lived Warner/Reprise stint that yielded a pair of Top 40 singles. *Lucky Silver Dollar*, Camp's current indie release, reveals a voice that's compact but compelling, filled with sly humor and gentle persuasion. The album's production tone—thanks to the too-little heard Allen Reynolds and long-time associate Mark Miller—seems more intent on befriending the listener's sensibilities than on causing speaker meltdown. The sound is unassuming and analog warm with nary a trace of bombast, and the songs are delightful. A twangy sweetness of soul prevails through story ballads like "Tune Of The Twenty Dollar Bill" and "Fallen Star Saloon." "Can't Have One Without The Other" lays down an irresistible Jesse Winchester-like groove, and a goofy-but-charming silliness invades light-hearted fare like "That Ol' Love Thing" and "I Feel More Like I Do Right Now." Camp's own version of the Brooks & Dunn hit "How Long Gone" emerges as a gentle ballad reminiscent of Buddy Holly. *Lucky Silver Dollar* probably won't make Camp a radio star, and that's a shame. Others may be scoring the hits but he's obviously saving the best stuff for himself. **Grade: B+**

—Larry Wayne Clark

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FLASHPOINT: Birth of a Booking Agency

Brian Wagner moved to Nashville several years ago to pursue a career in artist management, but got sidetracked along the way. He spent a year-and-a-half as an Account Executive for Tuned In Broadcasting (100.1 WRLT, 93.7 WYYB). However, his latest career move, the formation of Flashpoint Entertainment, has Wagner inching closer to his original goal of artist management. In business only a few months, the new booking agency has been able to assemble an impressive array of talent in short order. Flashpoint's current roster includes Nashville club favorite **Highwater**, Beyond Records' Mike Younger, Shanachie Records' Phil Lee and the New York-based **Demolition String Band**. The company recently expanded to include management services when it took over management duties for Highwater. Additionally, Flashpoint will be representing local rockers **Will Kimbrough** and **Matthew Ryan** to the college market through the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA).

"There's a real demand for booking in Nashville right now," Wagner explains. "The

caliber of talent in this town is phenomenal. All these acts may not be signed to major labels, but they are making great music. There's always a market for great music."

Wagner's decision to leave the confines of corporate life for the notoriously difficult world of booking happened over a game of pool with Younger. Younger expressed frustration at not being out on the road. Wagner, who booked shows for Ball State while going to school there, said he could probably book the singer some gigs. "I never thought Beyond Records would let me book Mike," says Wagner. "But Mike was determined to make it happen. Things just kind of steamrolled from there. Having someone of his caliber as my first client made things a lot easier and opened a lot of doors for me."

He goes on to say that his biggest challenge has been time management. "There's been a big learning curve," he says. "Finding out which venues in which markets are right for which acts takes a lot of time. I'm a one man operation right now and there never seems to be enough time in the day to get everything done."

Wagner wants to keep the company at a manageable level, but does expect to expand in the future. "Right now I'm where I want to be as far as number of clients. I want to streamline the operation and get it running smoothly before taking on additional clients. If things continue to go as well as they have, I'd like to add another person and possibly an intern sometime in the next year."

Starting any music related business is a challenge, especially in tough economic times, but according to Wagner, the rewards are worth it. "Not only am I doing something I love, but there's such a sense of pride at pulling together a great show. There's nothing like going out to a packed venue, watching an act you represent do a great job and seeing people having a great time. You know it wouldn't be happening without your help."

You can reach Flashpoint by mail at 1700 18th Ave. S., No. 15, Nashville, TN 37212. Phone is 615-297-7090 and e-mail is papawags@bellsouth.net.

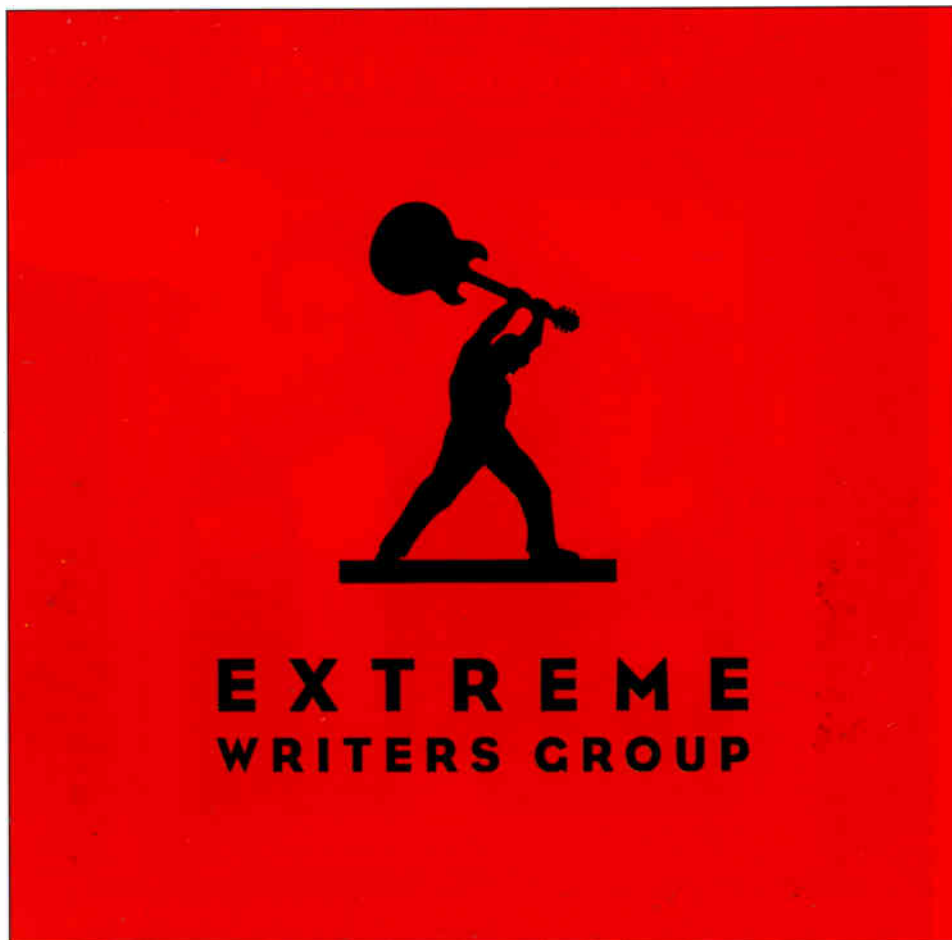
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**RYAN
ADAMS**
Gold

(Lost Highway)

The first seven and last four tracks on Ryan Adams' latest might just be the best album released this year. But at 16 songs plus a bonus five-song EP, *Gold* suffers from grandiosity. The songs in the middle of the album and on the EP aren't bad they just lack the resonance, cohesiveness and emotional impact of the other songs. The album launches with "New York, New York," an ode and lament all at once, both to the city and a lost love. After the events of Sept. 11 the song takes on added meaning, as does the mournful "Rescue Blues." Stones and Dylan influences are evident throughout, but the real surprise is the strong R&B and soul influences. He uses falsetto to great effect on the gorgeous ballad "When The Stars Go Blue" and "Touch, Feel & Lose" echoes *Purple Rain* era Prince. While uneven, *Gold* borders on greatness. Adams takes the alt.country tag he's so long been labeled with and crushes it under his boot heel. Pencil in a new tag: rock star. **MH**





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November

- 2 Americana Music Conference, Hilton Suites Hotel, Downtown Nashville (Nov. 2-3)
- 3 ASCAP Country Awards, Opryland Hotel
- 4 32nd Annual Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame Dinner & Induction Ceremony, Loews Vanderbilt Plaza, 6:30 p.m. (black-tie optional)
- 5 T. J. Martell Sprint Golf Tournament, Governor's Club, Brentwood, Tenn., 256-2002
- 5 T. J. Martell Bowling Bash, Hermitage Lanes, 7 p.m.
- 6 BMI Awards Dinner, 401-2000
- 7 35th CMA Awards, CBS, 7 p.m.
- 8 ASCAP Live at Opry Mills w/Jaci Velasquez, 7 p.m.
- 8 Golden R.O.P.E. Awards Dinner & Show, Gibson Bluegrass Café, 5:30 p.m.
- 8 SESAC Country Music Awards Dinner
- 10 Jim Beam Country Band Search Finals, Wildhorse Saloon, 8 p.m.
- 13 BMI Songwriters Workshop with Jason Blume, BMI, 1-5 p.m., 401-2000
- 14 ASCAP Presents Straight Talk, 10 a.m., 742-5000
- 24 Downtown Christmas Tree Lighting Celebration, Ryman Auditorium, 5-7 p.m.
- 28 ASCAP Presents Straight Talk, 10 a.m., 742-5000

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