

Steve Markland Joins Utopia Music As VP For Nashville Office



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THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES

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Matt Jenkins Inks With Warner Chappell Music, Madfun Entertainment

The Oriel Company Expands To Nashville

Creative Nation Announces Staff Addition, Promotion

DISCLAIMER Singles Reviews

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Music publishing veteran **Steve Markland** has joined Utopia Music, a Swiss Music fintech company. As Vice President for the company's Nashville presence, Markland will help Utopia Music expand into the United States.

Markland has nearly three decades of experience working with songwriters, most recently in his role as Executive Vice President, Creative in the Nashville office of Downtown Music Publishing.

In his new role, Markland will be responsible for setting up and rolling out Utopia's activities in Nashville. He will report directly to Utopia Music COO, **Roberto Neri**, who leads the company's operations and is responsible for expanding its international office footprint.

"I'm delighted to join Utopia on its mission towards 'Fair Pay for Every Play' and ultimately create new income streams for creators," shares Markland. "Utopia's vision is to focus on all sides of the music industry in a way that will immensely benefit writers and artists. As the number one growth partner worldwide, Utopia will leave a lasting positive impact on the wider music ecosystem."

Working alongside Markland is **Natalie Osborne**, who is also joining the Utopia Music team. Osborne was fundamental in helping sign and develop artists at Downtown Nashville such as Yola Carter, Madi Diaz, Fancy Hagood, Sarah Buxton, Lucie Silvas, the Brummies and more. She also was a key part of developing the successful international writer travel program, *Writer's Across Borders*. **MR**

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My Music Row Story: CRS' RJ Curtis



The "My Music Row Story" weekly column features notable members of the Nashville music industry selected by the MusicRow editorial team. These individuals serve in key roles that help advance and promote the success of our industry. This column spotlights the invaluable people that keep the wheels rolling and the music playing.

This edition of "My Music Row Story" is sponsored by



RJ Curtis is a 44-year radio veteran and music industry professional who started working in radio as a teenager, eventually logging 30 years in major market radio (Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Antonio) in program director, operations manager, music director, and on-air talent roles.

In 2007, Curtis segued to broadcast and music industry trade journalism, reporting on and providing analysis for all aspects of the radio and record label industries. His 13-year tenure in this sector included oversight of trade journal brands *Country Editor*, *Radio & Records Magazine*, and contributor to sister publication, *Billboard Magazine*. He also served as VP, Radio of *All Access Music Group* and VP, Radio of *Country Aircheck*.

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Curtis currently acts as Executive Director for Country Radio Broadcasters, Inc. (CRB), an industry service organization responsible for staging the annual Country Radio Seminar (CRS), a three-day educational event which gathers key business leaders in various radio and music industry fields, featuring presentations on best business practices, emerging technology, personal career development, and new music showcases. In February of 2021, CRS successfully pivoted to a virtual event due to the pandemic. CRS 2022 will return to a fully live, in-person event Feb. 23-25.

Curtis, a recent Country Radio Hall of Fame inductee, recently spoke to *MusicRow* about his journey and some of his favorite career moments.

MusicRow: Where did you grow up? How did you become interested in radio?

We moved a lot when I was a little kid, but we got to Southern California when I was 10. So that's my growing up experience. I grew up in the San Fernando Valley, which meant Los Angeles radio.

I was always a radio listener. I grew up listening to some legendary signals, like KHJ. As I got older, I segued to the FM part of the dial, like KMET, KLOS, KFI, KABC...all of these big signals in Los Angeles with great personalities. So I really loved radio, but when I got into seventh grade, I met a friend named **Rick Minyard**. His dad, **Ken**, did



COUNTRYBREAKOUT RADIO CHART

CHART ACTION

New On The Chart —Debuting This Week

song/artist/label—Chart Position

- Party Mode/Dustin Lynch/Broken Bow — 68
Everybody Talks To God/Aaron Lewis/Valory — 69
Crazy One More Time/Kip Moore/MCA Nashville — 72
Where I Learned To Live/Ward Davis/Ward Davis Music/Thirty Tigers — 74
County Roads/Elvie Shane/Wheelhouse Records — 76

Greatest Spin Increase

song/artist/label—Spin Increase

- Party Mode/Dustin Lynch/Broken Bow — 181
Everyone She Knows/Kenny Chesney/Blue Chair Records/Warner Music Nashville — 177
Circles Around This Town/Maren Morris/Columbia Nashville — 155
Doin' This/Luke Combs/River House Artists/Columbia Nashville — 150
Flower Shops/ERNEST feat. Morgan Wallen/Big Loud Records — 124

Most Added

song/artist/label—No. of Adds

- Party Mode/Dustin Lynch/Broken Bow — 19
Love Talking/Eli Young Band/Valory — 10
Baptist Parking Lot/Mary Heather Hickman/Moro Bay Music — 10
Everybody Talks To God/Aaron Lewis/Valory — 10

On Deck—Soon To Be Charting

song/artist/label—No. of Spins

- Lucky/Tori Martin/LuckySky Music — 144
I'm Still Here/South 62/Graphite Sound — 137
Bar Stool, Church Pew Town/Sam Riddle/SSM Entertainment — 136
Thank You For Breaking My Heart/Ryan Trotti/red 39 Entertainment — 135

NO. 1 SONG



Keith Urban secures the No. 1 position on the MusicRow CountryBreakout Chart this week with his latest single "Wild Hearts." Urban wrote the single alongside Brad Tursi, Jennifer Wayne, and Eric Paslay.

At The 55th Annual CMA Awards, The Country Music Association awarded Keith Urban with the CMA International Artist Achievement Award. The honor recognizes outstanding achievement by a United States-based artist who has demonstrated significant creative growth, development and promotion of the country music industry outside of the U.S. during the eligibility period.

Urban recently announced five new performance dates for his Las Vegas residency, "Keith Urban Live - Las Vegas." Hosted at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, the added shows will take place March 25, 26 and 30, and April 1 and 2. He will also hit the road in June for the "The Speed Of Now World Tour" with Ingrid Andress as support.



Each songwriter and artist earning No. 1 credit on the MusicRow Chart receives a MusicRow Challenge Coin. Click here to view a full list of recipients.

MusicRow CountryBreakout Chart Reporting Stations

Table with 5 columns of radio station call letters and locations, including WHMA Anniston, AL; WAAG Galesburg, IL; WVMD Cumberland, MD; WOLF Syracuse, NY; and WDKN Dickson, TN.

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FEBRUARY 18, 2022

COUNTRYBREAKOUT RADIO CHART

Weeks On Chart	Last Week	This Week	Song / Artist / Label	Spins / Reports	% Spin Power	Spins +/-
24	2	1	Wild Hearts / Keith Urban / Capitol	1757/63	3	54
19	3	2	'Til You Can't / Cody Johnson / CoJo Music/Warner Music Nashville	1737/53	4	71
26	4	3	Best Thing Since Backroads / Jake Owen / Big Loud Records	1703/64	4	64
16	5	4	If I Was A Cowboy / Miranda Lambert / Vanner Records/RCA Records	1574/59	1	19
10	9	5	Never Say Never / Cole Swindell & Lainey Wilson / Warner Music Nashville	1562/59	7	101
13	7	6	Slow Down Summer / Thomas Rhett / Valory	1511/60	3	47
9	11	7	Doin' This / Luke Combs / River House Artists/Columbia Nashville	1504/60	11	150
27	1	8	Beers On Me / Dierks Bentley feat. BRELAND & HARDY / Capitol	1501/52	-15	-257
18	10	9	Up / Luke Bryan / Capitol	1452/60	4	52
42	8	10	Half Of My Hometown / Kelsea Ballerini / Black River Entertainment	1412/41	-3	-51
28	12	11	7500 OBO / Tim McGraw / Big Machine	1315/59	8	98
6	16	12	Circles Around This Town / Maren Morris / Columbia Nashville	1205/58	15	155
35	13	13	Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home) / Elle King & Miranda Lambert / RCA Nashville	1198/41	4	50
15	14	14	Damn Strait / Scotty McCreery / Triple Tigers Records	1185/58	6	69
23	15	15	New Truck / Dylan Scott / Curb	1139/55	6	67
5	17	16	Trouble With A Heartbreak / Jason Aldean / Macon Music/Broken Bow	1131/56	10	101
56	18	17	Give Heaven Some Hell / HARDY / Big Loud Records	1048/42	3	27
32	19	18	Old School / Toby Keith / Show Dog Nashville	1009/45	1	8
8	24	19	AA / Walker Hayes / Monument	919/46	13	105
5	28	20	Flower Shops / ERNEST feat. Morgan Wallen / Big Loud Records	856/55	17	124
16	25	21	With A Woman You Love / Justin Moore / Valory	852/51	6	49
11	29	22	Soul / Lee Brice / Curb	829/48	17	121
37	22	23	Back Then, Right Now / Tenille Arts / 19th & Grand Records	820/47	-1	-9
41	26	24	I'm Not For Everyone / Brothers Osborne / EMI Records Nashville	819/43	3	27
49	21	25	Home Sweet / Russell Dickerson / Triple Tigers Records	798/33	-4	-35
23	23	26	Sunrise Tells The Story / Midland / Big Machine	794/45	-3	-21
24	27	27	Steal My Love / Dan + Shay / Warner Music Nashville	756/40	1	8
8	31	28	No Hard Feelings / Old Dominion / RCA Nashville	651/43	8	49
15	30	29	Let Me Know / Smith & Wesley / Dream Walkin/Audium Nashville	628/43	3	21
20	33	30	At the End Of A Bar / Chris Young feat. Mitchell Tenpenny / RCA Nashville	587/39	6	31
23	32	31	They Don't Make 'Em Like That No More / Travis Tritt / Big Noise	572/28	0	-2
11	34	32	You Didn't / Brett Young / BMLG	570/35	8	43
3	45	33	Everyone She Knows / Kenny Chesney / Blue Chair Records/Warner Music Nashville	544/34	48	177
21	36	34	Music Man / Shane Owens / AmeriMonte Records	543/32	12	57
20	38	35	Honky - Tonk / Josiah Siska / Black River Entertainment	536/32	18	80
13	35	36	Baby Don't / Paige King Johnson / PCG Records	527/39	6	29
12	37	37	Quicksand / American Blonde /	521/37	7	36
6	42	38	What A Song Can Do / Lady A / BMLG	469/33	14	56
6	44	39	Out In The Middle / Zac Brown Band / Warner Music Nashville	467/34	19	75
25	39	40	Record High / Randall King / Warner Music Nashville	452/25	0	-2

WINNERS
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MUSICROW

Weeks On Chart	Last Week	This Week	Song / Artist / Label	Spins / Reports	% Spin Power	Spins +/-
13	41	41	Hypocrite / Ruthie Collins / MCC/Curb	448/31	3	11
12	40	42	I Bet You Think About Me / Taylor Swift feat. Chris Stapleton / MCA	405/25	-11	-48
20	20	43	All It Cost Me Was Everything / Cody Jinks / Late August Records	381/24	-59	-557
6	52	44	Take My Name / Parmalee / Stoney Creek Records	358/26	17	51
13	46	45	If I Were Rock & Roll / Chase Rice / Dack Janiels/Broken Bow	349/23	-1	-4
8	47	46	When Love Comes Around / Wade Bowen / Bowen Sounds/Thirty Tigers	342/23	2	7
18	50	47	It's Gettin' There / Dave Wilbert / Wilbilly Records	335/24	8	24
23	53	48	Wildier Days / Morgan Wade / Ladylike Records	317/23	8	23
11	55	49	Somebody Else's / Chloe Collins / Collins House Music	315/22	15	42
17	51	50	Bye Mom / Chris Janson / Warner Music Nashville	310/23	1	2
11	57	51	Learn From It / Conner Smith / Valory	302/23	17	43
9	54	52	Dyin' For A Livin' / Muscadine Bloodline / Stancaster Music, LLC	295/21	4	11
2	67	53	Love Talking / Eli Young Band / Valory	293/27	49	97
8	59	54	Country'd Look Good On You / Frank Ray / Stoney Creek Records	278/19	13	33
13	56	55	Ain't Doing Something Right / After Midtown / The Core/10th St.	273/19	2	5
3	63	56	Good Day For Living / Joe Nichols / Quartz Hill Records	259/18	22	47
5	62	57	Small Town Spotlights / Jacob Johnson / AJG Music Group/Bow To Stern Records	251/22	14	30
12	60	58	Barely Breathing / Jeremy Studdard / Owen Entertainment Group	250/17	2	6
3	72	59	Whatever It Takes / High Valley / Cage Free	237/20	35	61
8	65	60	Hangin' / Donny Lee / Donny Lee Music	232/18	13	27
11	64	61	Son Of A / Dillon Carmichael / Riser House	225/16	9	19
6	66	62	Back Road Flyin' / Luke & Kaylee / Black Sheep Records	219/16	8	17
6	69	63	Drifting / Andrew Farriss / Broken Bow/BMG	197/13	6	11
5	71	64	About Love / Tiffany Woys / Tiffany Woys	194/13	10	17
7	70	65	Us / Hannah Ellis / Curb	192/15	4	8
7	68	66	That Old Wind / Danny Kensity / Rad Records	187/12	-1	-1
2	79	67	My Bar / Priscilla Block / Mercury Nashville	186/20	29	42
1	0	68	Party Mode / Dustin Lynch / Broken Bow	181/19	0	181
1	101	69	Everybody Talks To God / Aaron Lewis / Valory	179/19	121	98
3	76	70	Whisperin' / North To Nashville / Game Changer Records	179/13	17	26
4	74	71	Albuquerque / Will Reid / Jordash	174/11	9	15
1	91	72	Crazy One More Time / Kip Moore / MCA Nashville	172/15	51	58
2	77	73	Country Girls Are Crazy / Shelley Lynch / Lynch Records	164/11	10	15
1	85	74	Where I Learned To Live / Ward Davis / Ward Davis Music/Thirty Tigers	163/14	24	32
7	75	75	Gave Him A Girl / Brei Carter / Brei Carter	162/15	4	6
1	84	76	County Roads / Elvie Shane / Wheelhouse Records	160/13	22	29
3	80	77	American Crazy / Gavin Lee / GL Productions	160/10	11	16
9	73	78	Raining Hallelujah / Shannon LaBrie / Moraine Music Group	159/15	-1	-2
19	61	79	Shuffle / Laci Kaye Booth / BMLG	153/12	-36	-86
3	78	80	Slide Into My GM / Bryan Lanning / Metropolitan Groove Merchants	146/13	-2	-3

No. 1 Song
Greatest Spin Increase
Highest Debut

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mornings at KABC. I got to know Ken and I thought, 'That's a cool job.' So it really started in seventh grade.

I'm very fortunate because I knew early on that that's all I wanted to do. I didn't have any distractions about that. I was narrowly focused on radio.

How did you start your career in radio?

I started my radio career in Los Angeles. It was my first semester at Valley College, working at the campus radio station KVCR. For a project, I had to go visit radio stations, so I would leave my name and number [at the stations].



KBIG in Los Angeles is now an AC station, but at the time it was a beautiful music station—beautiful music was a big format in the '70s. A lot of people would call it elevator music because it's all instrumentals. I got a job there when I was 18 years old working what was called the music line. There was no back-selling and jocking as it were in radio, there were announcers. They didn't pre or back sell any music, so they hired college-aged kids to come sit by the phone and answer listeners who asked, 'Hey, what was that song?' That's when I learned all about the core artists for beautiful music.

So that was my first job, and I got to know all the announcers. I made some great connections there. Then after that, I got a job outside of Los Angeles in San Bernardino on the air.

What brought you to Nashville?

I was in radio from 1977 until 2006, so for 30 years. In 2006, I was programming KZLA in Los Angeles. It was owned by Emmis and they flipped the format to a rhythmic AC format called Movin'. It was supposed to overtake radio, but it didn't. [In the meantime], I had been thinking, 'Am I going to keep doing this? What's next?' I had a really great contract and I was compensated for the next six months, so I had time to really think about it.

Radio & Records [Magazine] had undergone a sale. *Billboard* bought them in the summer of 2006. **Lon Helton** left *R&R* after 25 years and they didn't have a country editor. So I was contacted by **Erica Farber**, who was running *R&R* then. We got together and within a few months I was working at *R&R* as a country editor. I did that for three years. What brought me to Nashville was when *R&R* shut down, **Skip Bishop** and **Butch Waugh** from Arista reached out. Butch said, 'Have you ever thought about record promotion?' They moved me out here in 2009. I did promotion for about 18 months and didn't like it. I kind of knew I wouldn't, but I'm glad I did it.

It seems like your time at R&R opened the door for you to become VP, Country at Country Aircheck and then the Nashville Editor for the All Access Music Group.

When I was at Arista, I didn't love record promotion and I didn't miss radio, but I missed writing about it. I had really taken to it. When I left to KZLA and then ended up at *R&R*, I didn't know what to expect from writing about it but not being in radio. But it was such a seamless, smooth, good transition. I enjoyed being exposed to [the whole industry]. When you're at a radio station, you're dialed in on that thing. You're looking at your own station, your own market, and your own team, and you can miss a lot of things that are happening out in the world.

I went to *Aircheck* in the early part of 2011 and did that until **Joel Denver** called and asked if I wanted to run the Nashville office for *All Access*. I had a great time working with Lon and **Chuck [Aly]**, but it was an opportunity to be the editor.



In 2018 it was announced that you would be succeeding Bill Mayne as the Executive Director of Country Radio Broadcasters/Country Radio Seminar. How did that come to be?

It's interesting because that journey really started when I first started going to CRS in 1985, although I didn't know it. I went there as a radio person in 1985. **Bill Mayne**, who was my program director at KZLA, took me. I went the next year too and started getting involved in helping out with sessions, doing room counts and all those kinds of things. I did that for a long time and then I got on the agenda committee for two years in the late '90s.

I was elected to the board in 1999. I was 20-year board member, so I became super involved in the format. I became a member of the executive committee, and when you're on the executive committee, you're privy to everything. Within three years of being on the board, I was elected president of CRB. So I was a three-year president, a vice president, and then I chaired the Hall of Fame committee. Unbeknownst to me, it prepared me for this role. So in 2018, when Bill Mayne decided to retire, I said 'I'm stepping up for this. I've taken all the steps necessary to be qualified for this.' The transition from a board member to the executive director has been very seamless.

Next week is the 2022 Country Radio Seminar. How would you describe the work that goes into planning that conference?

I don't know if it's the greatest analogy in the world, but I remember growing up in Southern California and watching the Tournament of Roses Parade. **Bob Eubanks** and **Stephanie Edwards** would host the parade and they'd say, 'Right after the parade ends, starting tomorrow, they start planning for next year.' I thought that was ridiculous, it was a year away! But [what we do is] similar to that in that CRS ends, the staff takes a few days off, we come back in the middle of the following week and [review]. We break down this seminar into certain segments such as registration, sessions, and other things like that. We spend a few weeks deconstructing each of those components and then we start working on how to improve it the next year. So it really is a year long process—except we don't have a parade at CRS—maybe we should?

When do you feel most fulfilled in your new role?

It's not the only day [I feel this way], but there is a moment when New Faces ends and I'm with my team. I make it a point to say, 'Hey everybody, after New Faces and after we do the pictures with the artists and all that stuff, we're meeting in the bar and I'm buying everyone a cocktail. We're gonna raise a glass.' It is very satisfying.

Also the following morning, we typically have a board meeting and we spend three hours deconstructing on the immediate takeaways of the seminar. That's always fun. Hearing feedback and talking about the event is very fulfilling because it's a lot of work to get to that point. When it's done and we know some things have gone exceptionally well, that is a great feeling.

Who have been some of your biggest mentors?

Bill Mayne is a huge influence on my life. I met him when I was in my 20s, he was my program director for a while at KZLA and he recognized something in me as a programmer and a leader.

He handed me off to **Larry Daniels** at KNIX. I left KZLA to go work for Larry in Phoenix. He was an amazing example and mentor, he was terrific. He referred to me for my six years at KNIX as ‘his project.’ He was great: an amazing programmer, a fantastic manager, and a great person. In the same organization, **Michael Owens** was our general manager. He was an amazing broadcaster and incredible business man.

What’s some of the best advice you’ve ever gotten?

It’s not so much advice as it is examples of how to handle or approach certain things. Bill Mayne gave me some great advice.

Larry and Michael taught me this overall style and approach to radio of being prepared, taking care of every detail, and more. And in terms of the artists, it was treating every artist that came through the radio station with respect. No matter if [they had a label deal or not], any artist that came into the radio station was treated with a lot of respect.

What has been one of your proudest moments in your career?

It was in October, being inducted into the Country Radio Hall of Fame. I’ve been involved with that event for a long time. I’ve been on the selection committee and I’ve produced the dinner since 2007. To then be on the other side of it as an inductee was really wild. It blew my mind to be nominated and then to be selected... I’m really proud of that because when you look at the criteria of it, it’s about making a significant contribution and furthering the country music industry. To be considered one of those people, it’s still hard to think about because of the people that I know in the Hall of Fame—it’s hard for me to put myself in that category. It was a very wonderful night and really a proud moment. **MR**



Westwood One Ups Nick Fox To VP, Country Formats



Cumulus Media’s Westwood One has elevated **Nick Fox** from Country Program Director to Vice President, Country Formats.

In his new role, Fox now oversees all aspects of the Westwood One country formats, including Mainstream Country, Hot Country, Classic Country, Real Country, and Nash Icon.

Fox joined Westwood One more than two years ago after serving as Program Director of Cumulus Pensacola (WXBM). Prior to that, he had stops in Clarksville with Saga Communications and Cumulus Mobile.

“Nick has done an outstanding job diving into the country formats over the last two plus years here at Westwood One,” shares **George King**, VP/GM Network Formats. “He’s grasped the intricacies and complexities of the technology and has been a coach and leader to the country staff.” **MR**

Warner Music Nashville Restructures Radio Team

Warner Music Nashville has reimagined its radio team to reflect the ever-changing landscape of country radio.

Sr. VP Radio **Kristen Williams** leads the restructuring effort that will create a dynamic and future-facing two-pronged structure within her radio department. The model will supplement the traditional geographic method to securing airplay with a freshly designed account-focused approach.



“Our new model is simultaneously conducive to curated relationships with individual radio stations and high-level, detailed collaboration with radio chains,” Williams says. “With an added emphasis on a national approach, the radio department will be able to super-serve radio on all levels while being focused, creative and nimble with the music and new artists we bring to the marketplace.”

Anna Cage, currently National Director for the WMN radio team, will be promoted to VP Radio. Cage will oversee the WEA, WAR and WMN teams, each of which will have three regional managers and designated coordinators. **Stephanie Hagerty** will be promoted from Regional Manager to National Director, Radio for the WEA team; and **Michael Chase** will continue to lead the WAR team as National Director. Williams and Cage are seeking qualified applicants for the role of National Director, Radio for the WMN team.

Tom Martens, currently VP Radio, will transition to the newly created VP, Radio Accounts role. He will manage three directors, each of whom will oversee relationships with radio chains. The accounts team will work on both securing airplay and curating marketing opportunities. **Lou Ramirez** will be promoted from Regional Manager to Director, Radio Accounts; **James Marsh** will transition from National Director to Director, Radio Accounts; and **Shari Roth** will transition from National Director to Director, Radio Accounts.

In addition to these moves, the department will add a radio-specific analyst to gather and interpret key data in order to provide even more rich and digestible data to support radio promotion efforts across the roster.

Exec. VP / GM, **Ben Kline**, says: “At Warner Music Nashville, we’re a collective group of music lovers who thrive on artistry but recognize the importance supporting our releases with research. Adding this critical resource to the radio department further emphasizes our commitment to radio by delivering them transparent and effective data.”

“It takes a bold move to impact change, and Warner Music Nashville has always been willing to do things differently,” adds WMN Chairman & CEO, **John Esposito**. “We pride ourselves on being early to identify where the industry is going and taking the steps to meet it there. When we saw that country music was expanding globally, for example, we created touring and international departments. We are now faced with an increasingly centralized radio landscape. Thanks to the expertise, leadership and passion of Kristen Williams, we have designed a targeted approach to meeting the needs of artists and partners at every level.” **MR**

Ronnie Dunn Launches Perfect Pitch Publishing, Releases New Single



Pictured (L-R, back row): Braden Carney, Ronnie Dunn, and Haley Dunn; (L-R, front row): Hayden Baker, Thomas Perkins, Ariel Boetel, and Dakota Striplin

Ronnie Dunn has formed his own publishing company, Perfect Pitch Publishing. **Braden Carney** serves as VP of General Operations of the new company, and **Haley Dunn** is VP of Writer and Artist Relations.

The Perfect Pitch roster already includes writers **Hayden Baker, Dakota Striplin, Ariel Boetel, and Thomas Perkins.**

“I wanted to immerse myself into the incredibly talented writing community in Nashville and see how I might be able to help all writers, both young and old,” the veteran country entertainer says of the new venture.

Dunn has also unveiled some new solo music with the release of his brand new single, “Broken Neon Hearts.” The track was co-written by Perkins, Dunn and **Matt Willis**, and is the first single from his upcoming fifth solo album, *100 Proof Neon*, due out this summer.

“This is a project that I’ve wanted to make for a long time,” adds Dunn. “I purposely reached for a late 80’s and 90’s country vibe... honkytonks, whiskey, neon lights, lost love, looking for love... twin fiddles, steel guitars, and string bending telecasters. 100% neon!”

MR

Bob Frank Entertainment Acquires Portion Of Charlie Daniels Masters



Bob Frank Entertainment (BFE) has bought into the late **Charlie Daniels’** catalog of masters, becoming equal partners with Blue Hat Records and the Daniels Estate.

BFE CEO **Bob Frank** now owns one third of the catalog. The remaining equal portions belonging to Blue Hat Records (**David Corlew**) and the Daniels Estate (**Hazel Daniels and Charlie Daniels, Jr.**).

“This transaction will be the first of many for BFE’s new privately funded investment arm, Red Shark Ventures, which is focused on catalog masters,” explains Frank. “What better way to launch this effort than with our longtime partner Blue Hat Records who we have been in business with for over 20 years. With such a deep and historic archive, we already have a strong release schedule through 2023.”

“We have been distribution partners with Bob Frank for over 20 years,” adds Corlew, Daniels’ longtime manager. “This purchase allows us to work even closer with Bob and his team to continue Charlie’s musical legacy in a much larger way. Bob has many years of experience with major labels and distribution, which will allow us to reach into a global market that we haven’t really touched, as well as provide a new domestic awareness to one of the oldest independent artist-owned labels. Hazel, Charlie Jr., and I are very excited about this new venture.” **MR**

DISclaimer Single Reviews: Ronnie Dunn Delivers Modern-Day Honky-Tonk Mastery



There's a lot of country tradition in this week's DISclaimer.

We have western swing, courtesy of Brennen Leigh & Asleep at the Wheel. We have the enduring artistry of living legend Willie Nelson. We have a stunning bluegrass performance by the always-great Darin & Brooke Aldridge. Here, too, is Country Music and Songwriters Hall of Fame member Don Schlitz. Also along for the ride are such neo-traditionalists as Chris Janson and Dustin Lynch.

Representing the honk-tonk side of town, I give you our Disc of the Day winner, Ronnie Dunn.

And bringing the outlaw tradition up to date is DIScovery Award winner Jackson Dean.

Yee Haw!

[Read Robert K. Oermann's weekly single reviews column here.](#)

MORE TOP STORIES

[Robert Earl Keen: 'The Goal Is To Have A Real Sweet Send-Off' \[Interview\]](#)

[Radio Music License Committee, Global Music Rights Reach Final Settlement Agreement](#)

[Lineup Announced For Willie Nelson's 2022 Luck Reunion](#)

[Luke Bryan To Headline ACM Lifting Lives Topgolf Tee-Off & Rock On](#)

[Amazon Music Names Breland As Next Breakthrough Artist](#)

[CRS Reveals Lineup For 'Team UMG At The Ryman' Showcase](#)

[CMA Returns To C2C With Songwriters Series, Introducing Nashville Shows](#)

[Jordan Reynolds, Nick Burnett Launch Hit Ranch](#)

[Reba Set To Release Collection Of Hymns, 'My Chains Are Gone'](#)

[Thomas Rhett Expands Dos Primos Tequila Brand With New Reposado](#)

[Tanya Tucker Slates Spring Ryman Show To Celebrate 50th Anniversary of 'Delta Dawn'](#)

[Studio2Bee Entertainment Promotes Two, Adds One \[Exclusive\]](#)

[Concord Announces Multiple Executive Promotions](#)

[CMHOF Names 2022 Troubadour Advisory Council & Leadership Team](#)

[Thomas Rhett, Maren Morris, Chris Stapleton, More To Perform On 2022 ACM Awards](#)

[Morris Higham Management Promotes Five Across Marketing Department](#)

Big Loud Records Forms In-House Publicity Department



Nashville-based independent label Big Loud Records has formed its own in-house publicity department.

The label is currently assembling a team and seeking applicants with experience at every level, including a Vice President of Media Relations. All interested candidates can send resumes here.

Since first launching in 2015, the company has amassed more than 14 billion global streams; 11 No. 1 U.S. airplay and 15 No. 1 Canadian airplay hits; and an array of Gold, Platinum, and multi-Platinum certifications.

The Big Loud Records roster includes **Morgan Wallen, Jake Owen, Chris Lane, Hardy, Hailey Whitters, Mason Ramsey, MacKenzie Porter, Ernest, Ben Burgess, Ashland Craft, Larry Fleet, Sean Stemaly, Shawn Austin, Blame My Youth, and Lily Rose**. The label also partnered with ACM award-winning songwriter **Nicolle Galyon** to create the female-driven label Songs & Daughters, which signed newcomer **Tiera Kennedy** to its publishing arm in partnership with Big Loud Publishing and Warner Chappell Music.

MR

Matt Jenkins Inks With Warner Chappell Music, Madfun Entertainment

Warner Chappell Music (WCM) and Madfun Entertainment have signed a global publishing deal with **Matt Jenkins**.

The accomplished songwriter has penned numerous No. 1 singles throughout his career, including the Blake Shelton and Gwen Stefani Platinum-certified track “Happy Anywhere,” as well as the Platinum smash hit “Buy Dirt” by Jordan Davis ft. Luke Bryan, which recently hit No. 1 on Billboard’s Country Airplay chart and is nominated for Song of the Year at the ACM Awards.

Ben Vaughn, President & CEO, WCM Nashville offers: “Matt is the type of songwriter who knows how to fish out in the deep water for the perfect line in a writing session. He has proven himself as one of Nashville’s best songwriters, and we’re excited to be a part of his continued growth.”

A native Texan, Jenkins received a CMA Triple Play Award in 2017 for penning three No. 1 songs within a 12-month period:

“Confession” by Florida Georgia Line, “Setting The World on Fire” by Kenny Chesney ft. P!nk, and “Song For Another Time” by Old Dominion. Other chart-topping hits he’s had a hand in writing include Billy Currington’s “Do I Make You Wanna,” Dustin Lynch’s “Where It’s At,” and Keith Urban’s “Cop Car.”

“Matt is one of my favorite songwriters and voices on the planet and has been for years. The way he can write and deliver a lyric, is what our town is built on,” **Alicia Pruitt**, founder, Madfun Entertainment adds. “I’m so very excited to get to work with this magical human every day. **MR**



Pictured (L-R): Alicia Pruitt (Madfun), Spencer Nohe (WCM), Ben Vaughn (WCM), Matt Jenkins

The Oriel Company Expands To Nashville, Taps Charlotte Burke Bass To Lead Office



Integrated communications firm The Oriel Company has announced the opening of a new office in Nashville.

Planting roots in Music City for the first time, the company has tapped **Charlotte Burke Bass** as Vice President of Operations Nashville. She will not only run the Nashville office, but will also oversee a staff and lead multi-faceted media campaigns for the roster that includes country clients such as **Kelsea Ballerini** and **Old Dominion**.

Founded in 2020 by **Carleen Donovan**, **Chloe Walsh** and **Jen Appel**, The Oriel Company has additional offices in New York and Los Angeles.

Burke Bass's 15-year career includes communications experience in music, television, film, sports and tech. She joins The Oriel Company from Beeline Agency, a public relations and strategic communications firm she founded in 2020. Prior to founding the Beeline Agency, Burke Bass spent over five years at Big Machine Label Group as the Director of Communications.

Additionally, The Oriel Company announced that they are now representing Stagecoach, California's world-renowned country music festival, presented by West Coast power promoters Goldenvoice. Stagecoach joins other AEG/Goldenvoice properties Firefly, Head In The Clouds and This Ain't No Picnic on The Oriel's roster of entertainment clients. **MR**

Creative Nation Announces Staff Addition, Promotion



Creative Nation has hired **Anna Blake Pearson** as Manager, Management and Records and promoted **Brandon Gill** to Senior Vice President, Management and Records.

Pearson graduated in 2018 from the University of Alabama with a degree in Public Relations. Following graduation she worked for the Country Music Association in Community Outreach until shifting gears to become a Production Assistant on the road for Old Dominion. As a Manager on the Management and Records team, Pearson will oversee day-to-day responsibilities for the Creative Nation artist clients.

Pearson will report to Gill, who will continue to lead the Management and Records division in overseeing the artists' careers and securing outside opportunities.

"Anna Blake brings a passion for artists and creatives that's infectious. Her collaborative spirit and past experience will be a vital asset to our Management and Records team as we continue to serve our artists. We are excited to welcome her to the Creative Nation team," Gill says.

"I have really enjoyed working alongside Brandon Gill these past five years and look forward to expanding our artist development, management and records partnership. His experience and leadership has made such a positive impact on our team and the service we provide our CN songwriters and artists," adds Co-Founder and CEO, **Beth Laird**. **MR**

TOP SONGWRITER CHART

This Week	Last Week	Songwriter's Name	Song(s)	Artist
1	1	Ashley Gorley	New Truck You Didn't You Should Probably Leave Sand In My Boots Beers On Me Give Heaven Some Hell Slow Down Summer Steal My Love Take My Name	Dylan Scott Brett Young Chris Stapleton Morgan Wallen Dierks Bentley feat. Breland, Hardy HARDY Thomas Rhett Dan + Shay Parmalee
2	2	Michael Hardy	New Truck Sand In My Boots Beers On Me Come Back As A Country Boy Give Heaven Some Hell	Dylan Scott Morgan Wallen Dierks Bentley feat. Breland, Hardy Blake Shelton HARDY
3	4	Shane McAnally	23 Half Of My Hometown AA Never Wanted To Be That Girl	Sam Hunt Kelsea Ballerini feat. Kenny Chesney Walker Hayes Carly Pearce & Ashley McBryde
4	3	Eric Church	Heart On Fire	Eric Church
5	5	Matt Rogers	'Til You Can't Freedom Was A Highway	Cody Johnson Jimmie Allen & Brad Paisley
6	6	Jesse Frasure	One Mississippi If I Was A Cowboy Slow Down Summer	Kane Brown Miranda Lambert Thomas Rhett
7	7	Rhett Akins	To Be Loved By You Slow Down Summer	Parker McCollum Thomas Rhett
8	9	Josh Osborne	Sand In My Boots 23	Morgan Wallen Sam Hunt
9	8	Hunter Phelps	New Truck Thinking 'Bout You Give Heaven Some Hell Best Thing Since Backroads	Dylan Scott Dustin Lynch feat. MacKenzie Porter HARDY Jake Owen
10	10	Ben Johnson	New Truck Beers On Me Give Heaven Some Hell Take My Name Best Thing Since Backroads	Dylan Scott Dierks Bentley feat. Breland, Hardy HARDY Parmalee Jake Owen
11	12	Ben Stennis	'Til You Can't	Cody Johnson
12	11	Parker McCollum	To Be Loved By You	Parker McCollum
13	14	Elle King	Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home)	Elle King and Miranda Lambert
14	15	Martin Johnson	Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home)	Elle King and Miranda Lambert
15	13	Ernest Keith Smith	One Mississippi Flower Shops	Kane Brown Ernest ft. Morgan Wallen
16	16	Walker Hayes	Fancy Like AA U Gurl	Walker Hayes Walker Hayes Walker Hayes
17	17	Josh Jenkins	Buy Dirt Fancy Like	Jordan Davis feat. Luke Bryan Walker Hayes
18	18	Chris Stapleton	You Should Probably Leave Cold	Chris Stapleton Chris Stapleton
19	19	John Morgan	If I Didn't Love You Trouble With A Heartbreak	Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood Jason Aldean
20	20	Kurt Allison	If I Didn't Love You Trouble With A Heartbreak	Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood Jason Aldean
21	21	Tully Kennedy	If I Didn't Love You Trouble With A Heartbreak	Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood Jason Aldean

This Week	Last Week	Songwriter's Name	Song(s)	Artist
22	22	Chris DuBois	You Should Probably Leave	Chris Stapleton
23	23	Andy Albert	Thinking 'Bout You Steal My Love	Dustin Lynch feat. MacKenzie Porter Dan + Shay
24	25	Taylor Swift	All Too Well I Bet You Think About Me	Taylor Swift Taylor Swift ft. Chris Stapleton
25	27	Jimmie Allen	Freedom Was A Highway	Jimmie Allen & Brad Paisley
26	28	Ash Bowers	Freedom Was A Highway	Jimmie Allen & Brad Paisley
27	26	Jimmy Robbins	You Didn't Half Of My Hometown Circles Around This Town	Brett Young Kelsea Ballerini feat. Kenny Chesney Maren Morris
28	29	Miranda Lambert	If I Was A Cowboy	Miranda Lambert
29	24	Ross Copperman	Half Of My Hometown Beers On Me Pick Me Up	Kelsea Ballerini feat. Kenny Chesney Dierks Bentley feat. Breland, Hardy Gabby Barrett
30	44	Jessi Alexander	Sunrise Tells The Story Never Say Never Steady Heart	Midland Cole Swindell & Lainey Wilson Kameron Marlowe
31	34	Chase McGill	With A Woman You Love Never Say Never	Justin Moore Cole Swindell & Lainey Wilson
32	33	Nicolle Galyon	Half Of My Hometown Beers On Me	Kelsea Ballerini feat. Kenny Chesney Dierks Bentley feat. Breland, Hardy
33	30	Jacob Davis	Buy Dirt	Jordan Davis feat. Luke Bryan
34	31	Jordan Davis	Buy Dirt	Jordan Davis feat. Luke Bryan
35	32	Matt Jenkins	Buy Dirt	Jordan Davis feat. Luke Bryan
36	38	Russell Dickerson	Home Sweet She Likes It	Russell Dickerson Russell Dickerson Feat. Jake Scott
37	35	Dustin Lynch	Thinking 'Bout You	Dustin Lynch feat. MacKenzie Porter
38	36	Will Weatherly	Thinking 'Bout You	Dustin Lynch feat. MacKenzie Porter
39	40	Charles Kelley	Home Sweet Growing Old With You	Russell Dickerson Restless Road
40	37	Lydia Vaughan	If I Didn't Love You	Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood
41	43	Cole Swindell	Never Say Never	Cole Swindell & Lainey Wilson
42	41	Kane Brown	One Mississippi	Kane Brown
43	42	Levon Gray	One Mississippi	Kane Brown
44	39	Casey Brown	Home Sweet	Russell Dickerson
45	45	Josh Thompson	Come Back As A Country Boy	Blake Shelton
46	46	Jordan M. Schmidt	Come Back As A Country Boy	Blake Shelton
47	47	Drew Parker	Doin' This	Luke Combs
48	50	Robert Williford	Doin' This	Luke Combs
49	51	Luke Combs	Doin' This	Luke Combs
50	48	Ashley McBryde	Never Wanted To Be That Girl	Carly Pearce & Ashley McBryde
51	49	Carly Pearce	Never Wanted To Be That Girl	Carly Pearce & Ashley McBryde
52	52	Luke Laird	AA	Walker Hayes
53	53	Chris LaCorte	23	Sam Hunt
54	54	Sam Hunt	23	Sam Hunt
55	56	Ryan Hurd	Old School Circles Around This Town	Toby Keith Maren Morris
56	57	Maren Morris	Old School Circles Around This Town	Toby Keith Maren Morris
57	62	Mark Holman	Flower Shops	Ernest ft. Morgan Wallen
58	63	Ben Burgess	Flower Shops	Ernest ft. Morgan Wallen
59	61	Kelsea Ballerini	Half Of My Hometown	Kelsea Ballerini feat. Kenny Chesney
60	64	Taylor Phillips	Country'd Look Good On You Up	Frank Ray Luke Bryan

CALENDAR

Single/Track Releases

February 18

Sean Williams/*Where You Left Me (Unplugged)*/Sincerely Music Group

Tommy Townsend/*Southern Man*/BFD Audium Nashville

Matt Jordan/*Heart of the Heartland*

February 22

Ryan Hurd/*Pass It On*/Arista Nashville

Jackson Dean/*Don't Come Lookin'*/Big Machine Records

Clay Walker/*Catching Up With An Ol' Memory*/Show Dog

Kelly Monrow/*You're the Reason I Drink*/Summit Arts

Chance Tomke/*Why Can't You*

Album/EP Releases

February 18

Del McCoury/*Almost Proud*/McCoury Music

Sean Stemaly/*Product of a Small Town*/Big Loud Records

George Birge/*George Birge EP*/Records Nashville

February 25

Waylon Hanel/*Waylon Hanel EP*

March 4

Dolly Parton/*Run, Rose, Run*/Butterfly Records/Ingrooves/UMG

John Berry/*Find My Joy*/Gaither Music Group

Jenny Tolman/*Married in a Honky Tonk*

Industry Events

February 23

MusicRow's 20th annual CountryBreakout Awards (virtual)

February 23 – 25

Country Radio Seminar

March 7

The 57th ACM Awards