**The Interview**

If it has Brad Paisley’s name on it – literally or figuratively – there’s a pretty good chance he’s had a strong hand in putting it together. As a songwriter, recording artist, headlining performer and, now, stem-to-stern video producer and animator, his creative aptitude is evident and growing. The CMA Awards co-host is creating new channels for flexing those comedic commentary muscles, but he’s only willing to go so far into other media. In a candid chat at his personal pub, Paisley discussed his career, his record label, the future and the power of the edit. He also displayed a firm grasp of everything going on in his world ... just don’t ask him to add it all up.

Country Aircheck: How involved are you in the business side of your career?

Brad Paisley: I’m definitely involved on the creative side. A really good example of how I operate is the new music video. I drew every bit of it. Someone asked how my team assembled it when I was done drawing it, and I said, “Nope. It never left my laptop.” I’ve always been able to picture what I want visually. That goes back to doodling a caricature or spaceship on the back of church bulletins. My math tests looked more like cartoons – there was always something going on in the margins. That shows up now in how hard it is for me to let go of something we’re sending out that doesn’t look right. Even when I feel like it’s great. They’ll show me an ad-mat for a tour poster and nine times out of 10 I’ll have a tweak. It can be something as simple as, “The last tour had a lot of blue, so let’s use a different color on this.” Obviously I’m hands-on with music, but also very much visually. On the business side, they’ll only hear from me when I don’t like something. I don’t crunch numbers at all.

Has that changed over the course of your career?

No. I’ve always been that way. I was lucky enough to be given a lot of rope with that in the beginning and I’ve kept that amount of rope. Decisions have ended up splitting equally, overall. Some of my decisions were really good and then there were some the label made that worked out well. “I’m Gonna Miss Her” was mine; the label was adamantly opposed to singling that. After two No. 1 ballads, I was in danger of having a show full of them. And then you risk giving people something they aren’t expecting. “I’m Gonna Miss Her” was mine; the label was adamantly opposed to singling that. It almost didn’t happen because it was so different. I thought it was a big risk, but I felt it was the right thing to do.

When something looks subpar, nobody says, ‘Ha, look at [Fitzgerald-Hartley’s] Bill Simmons. He looks like an idiot!’ Although, maybe somebody does on Music Row. But in that sense, but it’s a very difficult thing. When something looks subpar, nobody says, ‘Ha, look at [Fitzgerald-Hartley’s] Bill Simmons. He looks like an idiot!’ Although, maybe somebody does on Music Row. But in general that’s completely and totally my problem. So I have to learn to trust and delegate a little bit more and I’m reminded of that from time to time. I feel like I’m completely objective creatively, but I don’t think I’m as objective when things aren’t going right or when I feel hampered. I’ll get dark in a way you only do if your name is on it. I make my living looking at people who come to hear these songs that I wrote and have a good time on a weekend. If you sense you’re doing something that’s not delivering on their expectations or is being met with a reaction other than what was intended, which is something every artist goes through ... the manager gets to go home to their family on a Friday. They’re probably worried about it, but it’s, “I’m going to have to get back to work on that Monday. But hey, what are we going to do this weekend?”

Strengths?

Performing. At this point, we know how to put an entertaining show together. I’ll sound like a broken record because media school tells you to always say it’s your best show. But you gotta see this show! It’s the best one! I say that knowing very few fans will read this – it’s programmers and whoever else reads the gossip rag.

We came up with some things I can’t believe nobody ever did. One of them is a bar on the stage, which is just the greatest thing ever. My manager was very skeptical. “So, you’re going to stick a bunch of people you don’t know behind you onstage every night? No audition, they’re not sort of scoped out!” Just radio winners and Justin and his band and Mickey and her band, road crew and whoever? My manager was like, “This is possibly the best idea ever and more likely the worst idea ever.” The first night he came backstage and said it’s the best idea ever. Against the video wall, they’re just silhouettes and never more interesting than me, the band or the video. If your eye...
wander over to them, it’s people drinking... which is kind of a nice monitor for us at a country show.

Another fun, creative moment is the instrumental. For years I’ve done a cartoon. But I made the mu-

sicians look like they care. They want to hear it. It makes me want to make good records for them. I like Adam Sandler that way and will always be able to grab that crutch. I don’t necessarily need it; it’s

But I felt so powerless acting. When I left the Line in “Little Moments” “I’m Gonna Miss Her” isn’t far from a stand-up sketch. It’s such an ego boost – you feel like

You need a year on a show like that to work out the

love you! You’re amazing! And what do you think of what I’m doing?" It’s such an ego boost – you feel like

that’s something that women need to hear. I’ve taken a break from a screenplay I was writing, but

I’ll never forget playing the line in “Little Moments” about burning the food for my wife. She was howling

and there was no way to grab that crutch. I don’t

other than a man. You

That blown up in a weird

art has kept up, which is weird because you would think

Some actors do not sit around just talking about men.

You have a lot of endeavors outside of performing. Is that about looking forward to a time when you’re

You do have a lot of endeavors outside of performing, that is about looking forward to a time when you’re

You started Sea Gayle right out of college with some friends. How involved are you and how has that

The timing is fine because I’m on the third single go-

about burning the food for my wife. She was howling

friends. How involved are you and how has that changed

over the years?

Sea Gayle was way more successful than any of us could

You've ever run a label?

You hosted a comedy show in Nashville recently and added comedians to your Hollywood Bowl show. Where are you going with that?

Everyone work with still there, so it’s good. I be-

But you do run for action who he’s with. He’s still

where you’re going and then I’ll let wherever comes in be a part of that. They’ll more likely have

Juxtaposition is something I’ve really been
coupled together that way before the first show. In retrospect, we should have had a couple of weeks of bonding because by the third show, you could see us starting to pick on each other.

The most rewarding part was working with aspiring artists. First of all, they’re all cute at that age. Really

doesn’t have the biggest hit of your career. I don’t like to look

Where are you going with that?

And with all that went into it, as good a way as any
to buy a couple backgrounds and that ocean footage

and also

You have a lot of endeavors outside of performing. Is that about looking forward to a time when you’re

The timing is fine because I’m on the third single go-

about burning the food for my wife. She was howling

friends. How involved are you and how has that changed

over the years?

Sea Gayle was way more successful than any of us could

You've ever run a label?

You hosted a comedy show in Nashville recently and added comedians to your Hollywood Bowl show. Where are you going with that?

Everyone work with still there, so it’s good. I be-

But you do run for action who he’s with. He’s still

where you’re going and then I’ll let wherever comes in be a part of that. They’ll more likely have

Juxtaposition is something I’ve really been
coupled together that way before the first show. In retrospect, we should have had a couple of weeks of bonding because by the third show, you could see us starting to pick on each other.

The most rewarding part was working with aspiring artists. First of all, they’re all cute at that age. Really

doesn’t have the biggest hit of your career. I don’t like to look

Where are you going with that?

And with all that went into it, as good a way as any
to buy a couple backgrounds and that ocean footage

and also

You have a lot of endeavors outside of performing. Is that about looking forward to a time when you’re

The timing is fine because I’m on the third single go-

about burning the food for my wife. She was howling

friends. How involved are you and how has that changed

over the years?

Sea Gayle was way more successful than any of us could

You've ever run a label?

You hosted a comedy show in Nashville recently and added comedians to your Hollywood Bowl show. Where are you going with that?

Everyone work with still there, so it’s good. I be-

But you do run for action who he’s with. He’s still

where you’re going and then I’ll let wherever comes in be a part of that. They’ll more likely have

Juxtaposition is something I’ve really been
coupled together that way before the first show. In retrospect, we should have had a couple of weeks of bonding because by the third show, you could see us starting to pick on each other.

The most rewarding part was working with aspiring artists. First of all, they’re all cute at that age. Really

AUSTIN WEBB
COUNTRY ON YOU

KRISTIAN BUSH
LIGHT ME UP IMPACTING NOW!

DAKOTA BRADLEY
NEW MUSIC COMING SOON!
WARNER MUSIC
NASHVILLE

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT IS THE KEY