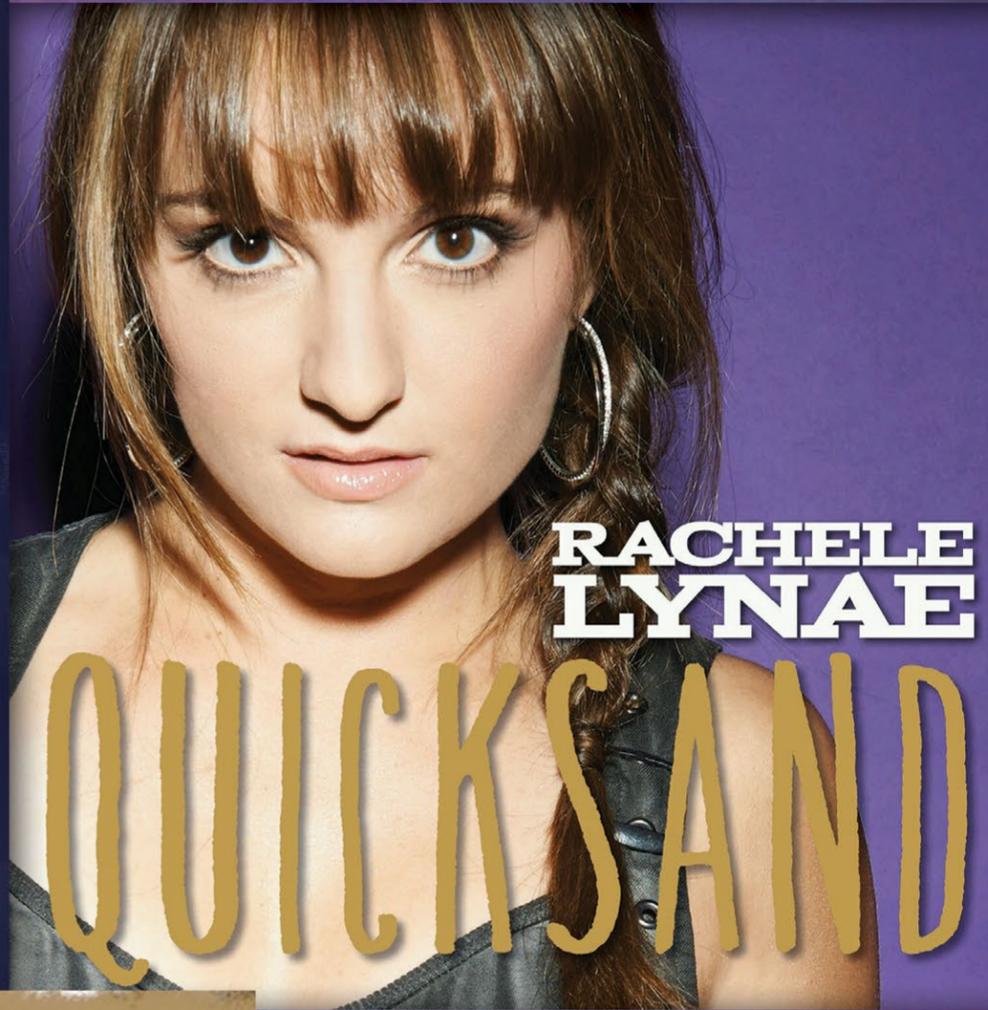


# IMPACTING NOW

IT'S ON YOU

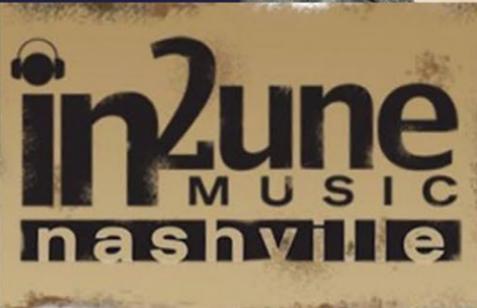


MATT GARY



RACHELE  
LYNAE

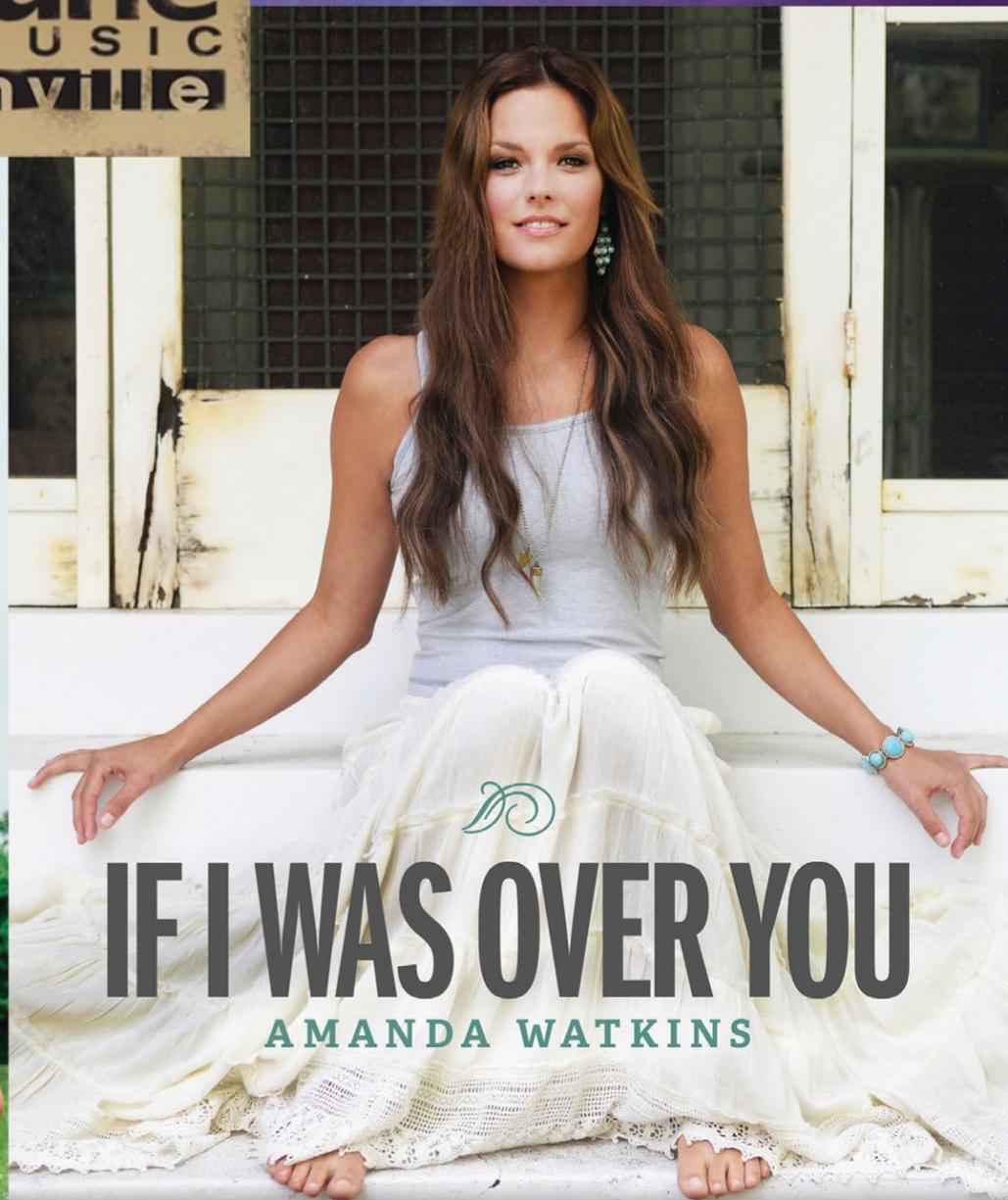
QUICKSAND



Abi Ann

TRUCK CANDY

ft. Walker Hayes



IF I WAS OVER YOU

AMANDA WATKINS

# REVIVER RECORDS



EP "I LOVE THIS LIFE" AVAILABLE 10/30  
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## NIGHT LIGHT

## BLACKJACK BILLY



"NIGHT LIGHT"  
WHAT EVERY MAN  
WANTS TO SAY AND  
EVERY WOMAN  
WANTS TO HEAR.



## LUCAS HOGE

### Power Of Garth

coming soon!

# Bobby Bones

## From The Outside In

**W**hen Clear Channel moved Austin-based syndicated Top 40 personality Bobby Bones to Nashville in February 2013, the Country newcomer instantly became the biggest personality in the biggest format for radio's biggest company. Reaction to the move was decidedly mixed,

### THE INTERVIEW

but Bones didn't shy away from it. More than two years later, he's weathered storms that included a \$1 million FCC fine for airing an EAS tone and now anchors *The Bobby Bones Show* on more than 90 stations. His acceptance in the format extends to even having a record deal. Though still driven by an outsider's mindset, he does admit, "I'm comfortable in my own skin now."

#### How long did that take?

At least a year and a half – because I'm never comfortable. But I actually started to feel like this is right. I never felt right at Top 40. I came from Top 40, but we didn't play any music. It was just a talk show. And I got in trouble because I had Dierks Bentley, Eli Young Band, Pat Greene and Willie Nelson play sets. You're not really supposed to do that on 30 Pop stations. Here, I feel comfortable. As a human, not so much. But when I'm doing this show for five hours, it does. It feels right for probably the first time in my entire career.

#### Comfortable in your Country skin, or comfortable in your own skin overall?

Being in this format has fixed other things outside of it, too. I made a lot of great friends that make my life, and my job, a lot easier. And I've calmed down a little bit, too, quite frankly. I was like a bull in a china shop when I first started because I didn't know what I was doing. But I wanted to do it. I just wanted to start by being on a couple Country stations and then slowly integrate in.

I built my own syndication company with my own money, which made it scary to leave. I was making \$45,000 a year and spending \$18,000 of it buying internet equipment to patch it to two stations, which went to six stations, which went to eight. I started from the incubator and built it up so when I left, it was a big jump. That was pretty rough for about eight to 10 months.

#### Most of us calm down with age, but were there other factors?

I have a natural chip on my shoulder from being the poor, dirty, picked-on kid. Part of starting to feel comfortable is I don't feel like the world is against me. I can grab some people and we can do this thing together. I've felt that change over the past two-and-a-half years. When I came in, I felt like the world was against me, I understood it and I embraced it. If you're going to hate my guts, I'm going right at it. That's just my competitive nature. I was just wild – doing things just to do them. That's where the calming and comfort has come in. The format, the audience and the artists all just feel right and it's reflective in everything we do.

Obviously, if we weren't getting ratings, we wouldn't be here. The show's never been better, but it's not even about that. Every day it's, "Are we having fun?" Early on we weren't. Now I love it. And I didn't always.

#### What would you change from those days?

Nothing. There's a big million dollar fine I'd like to not have. I made some monster mistakes, cut myself off from everyone, did and said a bunch of dumb things, but I've learned so much and can't think of anything I would change.

#### Early on you had "feuds" with a few country artists. Were they planned? If you had it to do over again, would you?

The feud thing was huge for ratings. Looking back, I don't like it at all. I wouldn't do it again, even if it meant ratings would go boom. If it was calculated, I'd be doing that all the time.

#### When you go back and listen to the first six months of shows ...

I never listen to shows.

#### Do you have a sense for how the show has grown or changed?

It's much more positive now. There was never a "let's change the image of the show" moment. We just started feeling better, so the show just started being better. I don't mean the quality of the show – some people still say it's awful. I can't fix that. But from the standpoint of enjoying where we are, the show is much more enjoyable and positive. It's a fine line to walk being positive without being *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, because we want to be as real as possible. That's the goal. We know there are kids in the car, but we still talk about things that

“  
It looks like I was anointed king of the world to a lot of people, but I spent years grinding and slowly figuring this thing out.  
”



the 18-49 year-olds want to hear. That has happened organically, which is great because if there's any B.S., listeners sniff it out quick.

**How did you become a St. Jude supporter?**

I wish I could say I came in and was all gung-ho St. Jude. I went there and that's where it flipped. I was driving back home to Arkansas and St. Jude is on the way. It was weird, in a good way, that such a sad environment was so happy. And I was confused by it. How do they make this work? Growing up with no money and no

**THE INTERVIEW**

insurance, if I had gotten that sick I would have been screwed. It would have taken a place like St. Jude to help me. As I say this, it's very selfish, because I think of myself. I would love to be some knight in shining armor, but I'm not. I think about me as a kid and think what can I do to help kids.

**There has never really been a national morning show in this format at this scale in these size markets. What have you learned about making it work for so many affiliates?**

The fact that I didn't know that coming in helped or I might have come at it differently. What worked well [at Top 40] is I was able to be on one station and learn as I went. Then we picked up two. I was never anointed. I worked hard to be an overnight success. I spent my own money, begged, hustled and called station managers for five years. I was selling, engineering and putting the show together. When you do all of that, you learn the little things. You get better. Then about 15 to 20 stations in, I felt like I had it. I can do a national show.

[In Country] I probably put in two hours a day cutting local stuff. We don't have rules or limitations on what I'll do or when I'll do it. You can be market 300 or D.C. and get the same attention. It gets tough because I'm on the road a lot, but that's why having Amy, Eddie and Lunchbox is great. We spend a lot of time working with our local sales staff, too – sending them extra content they can take to clients. If we work hard for them, it comes back around and both of us benefit.

**Does iHeart Media SVP/Programming Rod Phillips' promotion to Country format captain change how he interacts with the show?**

I wouldn't be sitting here without Rod. He was the first person in management outside of my building to ever say, "Hey, you're pretty good and we should use you other places." He was three spots lower than he is now, so to grow with him has been crazy. He's been my mentor and he's slapped me silly a couple times. I respect him for that. I believe what he says and I don't believe anyone ever. He risked his career to put me here.

He became manager of the show at a really bleak time. We were crushing it for a long time and then I got in a lot of trouble. We got fined a lot of money. Frankly, that crushed me. Even the company was like "Dude, move on." But emotionally, I couldn't. I felt dumb. I felt like I let everyone down.

**How did the EAS tone end up airing?**

It wasn't supposed to happen. How that tone gets put on – I didn't even go dig for it. Every story about that is wrong. However, I've been debriefed by Homeland Security. What I can say is that the company was super supportive because they knew what happened was completely an accident.

**How did it happen?**

I can't say. I'm afraid if I say "the" the wrong way, they'll [reopen the issue]. We suffered for a bit because I couldn't shake it for three months. I wasn't in a good place in my heart and my head. Amy's mom was sick at the time, too. It was a really bad time for me and for the show. Rod and [Premiere's] Jennifer Leimgruber were both on me, saying, "Okay, wake up. Let's go. You're still our guy."

I hate that it happened. I hated it so much. I felt so stupid. But I've learned a million dollars worth of knowledge and maybe more than that. That's a Harvard education right there. I went to Harvard.

**Do you do airchecks with all the top iHeart brass?**

Not once. We get research a couple times a year, which has been a great tool. But no airchecks – dance with the girl that brought you. They hired me to do it. They knew it wasn't going to be great to start and they let me work the kinks out.

**What does research show and how do you apply it?**

Radio has been told that interviews kill PPM. One thing we learned is our audience loves to hear artists. I'm pretty good at interviews because I like people and approach them differently. At first, artists were really scared to come in and I understood.

The reason Country artists are playing live on more shows is because they come play this show and it's huge. If you do it the right way, people love to hear artists' stories and performances. The great thing about Country is they can perform live.

A lot of artist interviews are a gush fest, but I prod, poke and sometimes go places that aren't comfortable for them. I try to keep it as human-to-human as possible and that showed up [as a positive] in research.

**Did you ever think The Raging Idiots would have a record deal?**

No! It was a total accident. I grew up doing comedy because I wanted a late night talk show. I bought a \$30 pawn shop guitar, a Walmart chord sheet and learned six chords because I wanted to do music with the comedy. I'd go onstage and play awful songs as part of my awful stand-up. I thought I should call myself something so it sounds like it's a bigger event than it is.

It's a stupid name. Bobby Bones is a stupid name! Eddie and I were going to do a couple shows and it's nuts now. We just did two sold-out nights at a 1,300-seat theater in Wichita. We're working really hard on an album because we're not that good. We've been writing with the best songwriters in town. The artists who want to be on the album is crazy – major artists.

The shows are so much fun because we get to meet listeners and I love doing stand-up. It puts me right back in my element. And we've had the best openers. That's how Kelsea [Ballerini] broke – we took her on tour with us. We've had all blonde female openers, it's weird. Laura Bell Bundy, Maggie Rose and now Lindsay Ell. Cam and Cassadee Pope are going out soon.

**We also understand you're writing a book.**

I wanted to write a kid's book. I was the dirty, poor kid – small with a humongous head. My mom had to cut slits into the necks of my shirts because my head wouldn't fit. So, the book is called *Big Head Bobby* and it's about how it's okay not to fit in. The idea is that eventually, everyone grows into their head.

I went to HarperCollins while in New York for an iHeart special. This was right after Amy Poehler's book came out. That whole staff – eight or nine people – are in the room and they don't want me to write a kid's book. They want a book about me – an adult book. I say I haven't done anything, but they



**“ When I came in, I felt like the world was against me. I came to this place and everyone hated my guts and I understood it. I wasn't confused by it. I knew it, so I embraced it. ”**

think people will relate to where I come from and what I'm doing. It's due December 1 and hopefully coming out next summer. It will be just like the radio show – goofy, loud-mouthed, sometimes I get into trouble, sometimes I give good hugs.

**You almost sound as if you haven't figured out you're already a huge part of the community. Where do you think you fit?**

It's not that I don't care, but I don't want to get too inside because then I can't be objective. That's why I don't have a lot of artist friends I'm having dinner with. If I don't like something, I want to be able to say it. That has made for unpleasant experiences. People have walked out of the show. If I don't keep it real in what I'm not feeling, [listeners] aren't going to care about what I am feeling. If I'm not making fun of Sam Hunt for talking through three straight songs, then I'm not being me. I really like the songs, but if I can't make fun of it, then I'm not being honest.

**How do you keep that outsider perspective considering how central you are to a big part of the format?**

It's born into me and I've had it for so long. I still overpay my bills by \$10 every month because I'm afraid I'm going to be poor again. I have this complex that this isn't going to last much longer. Nothing good ever lasts. I've been to a lot of therapy. I try to be better as a human. I try to work on these things, but I'm scared I could get fired any day. So I have to keep

what's most important and that's the audience, even when being honest is really uncomfortable.

**How were you viewed in Country at the outset?**

They all hated me.

**Was that a fair shake?**

No. But I don't deserve a fair shake.

**Why not?**

Because no one coming into this position deserves anything. I have to earn every bit of it. And I feel like I slowly am, but there's no such a thing as a fair shake. It looks like I was anointed king of the world to a lot of people, but I spent years grinding and slowly figuring this thing out. We started with 30 stations and we wouldn't be at 90 if we weren't doing the little things. I know what it looks like. I get the perception. I just try not to be an asshole [to make it] hard for them to resent me. But I can't control what other people feel or think about me. In the past year and a half, I've come to terms with that.

I'm going to say stupid things. And I'm going to apologize for saying stupid things if I feel like I should. That's one of the things I've gotten better at. It's a sign of weakness, but it's okay to be weak. That's been a part of the growing process, too. I don't expect to be accepted, because I never really have been. I just believe in treating people nice and, even more than that, being honest. People respect that longer.

**Are there misconceptions?**

Completely. I'm a complete dick. I'm an egomaniac.

**An ego-maniac that's self-deprecating?**

Oddly, yes. And I understand that, because I would probably think that about me, too. Here's a young guy who doesn't wear a cowboy hat or belt buckle. [Media] were setting me up with that, too, asking me those questions. Then that becomes your story. No one ever asks about that now because in the Country community, with the artists, I'm accepted. It took a long time because no one knew my intentions. I'm here for the long haul. I've turned down some really great television offers because this is my priority.

**Was some of that fueled by jealousy?**

If I say that, I'm a dick. So, I don't say that. There are a few guys who thought they were probably the next ones up. I get why they would be frustrated, [but] there's nothing I can do. I've reached out to people and sometimes it goes great, sometimes it doesn't.

**Trademarking Trump's "Make America Great Again" is a great bit. Have you heard from his people?**

Yeah, I've heard a lot from Donald Trump. And let me tell you, they're not happy with me. I'm such a nerd that I Wikipedia people all the time and look up trademarks. I'm also a history nerd and remembered Ronald Reagan used that slogan. So I wondered when Trump's organization trademarked it – or even if he could. Then I found out it was wide-open for clothing – no one had claimed it. Submitted, paid, boom. We had to sit on it for like a month before my attorney told me it was mine. At that point we made the offer to give it to Trump for an interview and a \$100,000 donation to St. Jude. It wasn't about the money, it was about the story and St. Jude plug. But it didn't go over well with Trump because I think his people got embarrassed they forgot to trademark it. I can't say too much, but it's been attorneys galore.

**What else are you working on?**

A lot. We'll see what sticks. I have a TV production company with something like eight shows in development. A few are with iHeart personalities, some with comedians, some with motivational speakers, reality – all kinds of stuff for different networks. That, the book, the Idiots, my clothing company and most importantly, the radio show.

**How big can the radio show get?**

I don't know. I'm so proud that when iHeart releases data showing the top shows for digital listening, we're No. 1. The first release actually said, "Oddly, the No. 1 most-listened-to is *The Bobby Bones Show*." That wasn't just about me, it was about the format, too. People couldn't believe that Country music listeners could use the Internet or phones. Maybe they thought it was an anomaly, but it keeps happening. There are a hundred places to get songs, but quality content wins.

And I love taking chances on new artists and songs. Everything from "Girl Crush" to Chris Janson, Kelsea and Cam – artists who maybe wouldn't have had a voice or would have had years of grinding. Listen to how good these people are! They deserve it *right now*. My audience respects that because they know I wouldn't do it if I didn't feel it. You hear, "Be familiar, be familiar." We've been able to break some of those molds. Artists can do 10-minute interviews and you can keep ratings. They can play live on the air and you can keep people listening. You can play new music occasionally and people will buy it.

If my endorsement wasn't worth it to them, they wouldn't care. My audience has to trust me or the show doesn't win.

CAC

IMPACTING COUNTRY RADIO 10/5

GRANGER SMITH  
**BACKROAD  
SONG**

**SINGLE  
STATS**

FIRST WEEK SALES

**32,000+**

TOTAL SALES TO DATE

**60,000+**

**SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
STATS**

FOLLOWERS

**4,000,000+**

YOUTUBE VIEWS

**34,000,000+**

SPOTIFY STREAMS

**20,000,000+**

**TOP TESTING SONG** WUBL  
ATLANTA

**WEEKLY COLLEGE FOOTBALL PICKS**

*with* ALTER EGO, EARL DIBBLES, JR / ON CBS SPORTS TELEVISION

**SOLD OUT** 84 CITY TOUR  
ATTENDANCE & MECHANDISE RECORDS

**GRANGER  
SMITH**



NEW MUSIC FROM THE KING...

GEORGE

**STRAIT**

"COLD BEER CONVERSATION"



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