Church Service

“I wanna soak this in for a second – Luke Bryan just opened for me,” joked Darius Rucker after Bryan kicked off the eighth Team UMG at the Ryman, UMG/Nashville’s showcase with 14 acts each performing one song in the Mother Church of country music. Bryan sang “Fast,” followed by Rucker’s “If I Told You.” Jon Pardi was next with “Heartache On The Dance Floor.” Dierks Bentley admitted he was going for the “sympathy standing ovation” by singing “Can’t Be Replaced,” which mentions his beloved dog Jake, who died last year. The plan worked.

“I’m now going to read off the names of those of you who have not added his single,” threatened SVP/Promo Royce Risser during his intro for Kip Moore. After Moore sang “More Girls Like You,” Lauren Alaina got the afternoon’s second standing ovation for her emotional rendition of “Three,” with co-writer and Sony artist Seth Ennis accompanying her on piano. Easton Corbin’s “A Girl Like You” and Josh Turner’s “Hometown Girl” were followed by Lady Antebellum’s “You Look Good.” BillyCurrington (“Do I Make You Wanna”) and Sam Hunt (“Body Like A Back Road”) each sang their latest singles, while Chris Stapleton sang “Broken Halos,” written for a friend who’d recently passed.

Vince Gill noted the first time he heard himself on the radio was 43 years ago. “Even 43 years later, you never grow tired of wanting somebody to respond to what you’re doing,” he said.

Before singing a song he penned as a birthday gift for wife Amy Grant called “When My Amy Prays,” Gill cracked, “I’m not going
for adds."  Keith Urban shared the story of getting fired from a radio station intern job at 15, then closed with a medley of songs by recently passed artists. He encored with “Blue Ain't Your Color,” which ended in guitar solo heaven with Stapleton and Gill joining him onstage for the extended outro.  —Wendy Newcomer

**Power Source**

Women Empowering Women assembled three pairs of female powerhouses to discuss their longtime relationships as mentors and mentees. “Mentors act as a sounding board,” said Radio Advertising Bureau’s Erica Farber. “They provide perspective, wisdom and honesty.”

The importance of openness and honesty was a running theme throughout the discussion. Farber’s mentee, RAB’s Brooke Williams, added that being open about your personal life helps build the relationship. Scripps’ Beverlee Brannigan and her mentee, KFDI/Wichita’s Carol Hughes, agreed that while they enjoy spending time together, they keep their roles defined, because Brannigan is ultimately her boss.

Brannigan said mentor relationships often develop organically, but they should also be intentional. “It starts the minute you put the other person’s success first,” she continued, “and you derive satisfaction from someone else’s growth.”

Indeed, Farber helped Williams land her first job in the business. “I love when someone has drive and it’s so easy to spot,” said Farber.

That type of drive helped Linda Wei secure her job at Nashville Public Radio, because her mentor, NPR’s Beth Curley, was impressed when Wei traveled to Nashville from Baton Rouge for an interview with 24 hours notice. Curley, who has focused on mentoring since early in her career, said, “It’s my job to mentor all younger people, not just the women.”  —Sarah Skates

**CRS Research**

Edison Research’s Tom Webster and Megan Lazovick delivered the CRS Research Presentation this morning (2/23) with help from mobile expert and The Mobile Commerce Revolution author Tim Hayden. Armed with on-camera interviews with country listeners and data on how people use their devices, the trio argued for a mobile strategy that takes advantage of more of the platforms and apps already being utilized over creating a standalone presence through station-produced apps and other initiatives.

The most-used social platform by far continues to be Facebook as 80% of Country smartphone users use it daily, followed by Instagram (42%) and Snapchat (34%). Hayden suggested that radio define and use custom audiences built around email databases that can be uploaded to Facebook for targeted messaging. Facebook Live presents an opportunity for participatory contesting, Hayden explained, not to mention event and client-related tie-ins. Messaging, gaming, productivity and fitness apps followed social on the list of most-used mobile offerings at 1%, 52%, 50% and 36%, respectively.

The presentation acknowledged that the proliferation of smartphones poses steep challenges for broadcast radio, but there was better news. Almost 70% of smartphone users also listen to AM/FM radio, a number that rises to 78% among country-specific smartphone users. See the entire presentation here.  —Russ Penuell

**Look, Car. No Hands**

An eye-opening eight-minute demo video for Volvo driverless vehicle technology opened Speeding Toward Tomorrow: Radio In A Driverless World Thursday afternoon. Pratt & Miller Engineering’s Chris Andrews told of riding in driverless cars, working with a company that develops the technology and explained the accelerating timeline for their adoption. “It really is exponential how good the systems have become in the last six months or a year,” he said.

No Hat Trick: Black River’s Kelsea Ballerini (center, front), label staff and radio friends take in a Nashville Predators game during CRS week.
“Because you have your hands free you can open up how you interact in the car,” said iHeartMedia SVP/Product Innovation Steven Radley. “It’s not just turning on the station and leaving it on while you drive.”

Sun Broadcast Group CEO Jason Bailey says his company’s Shazam For Radio is already there with interactive content, “We just have to worry about distracted [driving].” As autonomous vehicles become more common, “We may do more video content or offer more interactive touch points.”

Moderator Bob Richards (Emmis/Indianapolis) summed how radio can prepare for this hands-free, eyes-free future. “The importance of that unduplicatable content they can’t get anywhere else is what I’ve heard over and over again.” – Chuck Aly

Core Muscles
Paul Weyland Communication Strategies’ Paul Weyland and The Center for Sales Strategy’s John Henley helmed the panel How Are You Protecting Your Core Revenues? When it comes to securing advertising, Weyland said, “You have to show them that your plan for their success is better than their plan. And the client has to believe you are working in their best interest.”

A key piece of this strategy is presenting a return on investment plan (ROI), because it shows them the cost isn’t a gamble, it is a good, calculated risk. It also gives the client realistic expectations of response to the commercial and puts everyone on the same page. Additionally, ROIs often justify a larger ad buy.

Weyland said most clients aren’t qualified to create their own commercials. A successful ad should incorporate the selling points that clients use with customers while conducting business every day.

Henley advised to dig deep and figure out a very specific assignment from the client. For example, a desire to sell cars isn’t enough information. The plan should include model, target buyers and quantity per month. He reiterated that having a plan and being persistent is key to landing and keeping accounts. – Sarah Skates

In Focus
“We need the millennials,” said NuVoodoo’s Carolyn Gilbert at the beginning of Capturing the Millennial Ear: Rethinking Our Traditional Medium for the Next Generation. “It’s not too late – but
we have to listen. ... It’s important that we get to these young people and be relevant and good for them.”

“They love music, they’re just agnostic about where they get it,” added NuVoodoo’s Leigh Jacobs, who presented a study of 4300 participants in PPM markets and gave a rundown of the generation’s music preferences. For example, sources of discovery and listening included Facebook, TV and YouTube, with FM radio coming in fourth.

Following the slide show, Gilbert and Jacobs took the study to real-time, bringing in seven female Country P1s for a live focus group, with attendees asking questions. Takeaways: the group preferred listening on smart phones and most used streaming services including Spotify and Pandora; they wished terrestrial radio had less ads and less talking; and they were interested in hearing weather and traffic reports. They also expressed interest in hearing “more oldies,” which for millennials means ‘90s country. None of the seven women had a radio in their home. “At my mom’s house, yes,” said one.

Face Value

The importance of a plan B, staying transparent and keeping robust contacts and relationships became the common theme during the You Are More Valuable Than You Think panel featuring Big Loud’s Clay Hunnicutt, Broadcast Sales and Management vet Carole Bowen, KKG/Los Angeles morning show co-host Graham Bunn and TV/radio spokesperson Jeff Roper.

While focusing on her transition outside of radio and into the non-profit sector, Bowen explained the importance of skillset translation and how the terms and language are different, yet the skills and contacts she made in radio helped cast a wide net and helped current partnerships at The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts.

“It starts by stopping long enough to figure out, ‘What is it that I want and where am I looking to go with this ... what is the purpose,’” stressed Roper, adding that turning connections into income is paramount. Using a story his father told him years ago about the difference between a gazelle versus a lion, Graham Bunn relayed to the audience the importance of “… always running like a lion. The gazelle only runs when it sees the lion. Choose something where you don’t need anyone else to get you up in the morning.” Unrelated note: ask Roper about French-kissing a monkey. –Wendy Newcomer

Victory Dance

Moderator Gregg Lindahl began Victory in the Hallways: Creating a Positive Work Culture by asking panelist Cumulus/Atlanta Market Manager Sean Shannon for an update on his morning man Cadillac Jack. Caddy’s wife told Shannon he was at home resting comfortably after his heart attack. “He had blockage in one aorta that couldn’t be detected six months ago [at his annual check up],” said Shannon.

Veteran GM Rick Jackson kicked things off asking for a show of hands of those who were currently or aspired to be managers. “It’s biblical. Treat people like you want to be treated,” said Jackson.

Arista VP/Promotion Josh Easler added it’s not the things you say or do, but how you make your staff feel that is most important.

Max Media/Norfolk Market Manager Dave Paulus runs his operation with four macro and micro tenets: trust, respect, tons of communication and fun. “Heart first,” he advised. “Head second.” Visiting a number of stations every year, Easler said, “You can walk into a station and feel the energy.” Some have it. Some don’t.

“I used to spend the first hour of every day saying hello to the entire staff,” recalled Jackson. He shared a story about consoling a sales person who broke down and cried one morning after her dog died. “It changed our relationship,” said Jackson.

Transparency is another philosophy Shannon believes in. “We’re having our quarterly financial update for the entire staff tomorrow.” He added some folks have told him he has been too transparent in the past. But he stands by it.

When recruiting, the managers discussed involving their staff in the process. Paulus told a story about a recent hire where he gave the two finalists references on him. He invited the prospects to call the list of current and former employees to make sure they were all on the same page.

When asked about challenges, Easler admits he needs to work on communication. In moving from RCA to Arista and a new staff, he is trying to respond slower. “I wait to respond to an email [before shooting back an answer],” he explained.

When training, in addition to programs like Creative Resources and Leadership Music, Paulus said he takes inspiration from the TV show The West Wing. Everyone agreed that looking outside your industry is a good idea. Shannon shared that he worked for a company with no training, so he went back and earned an MBA. –Paul Williams

All About Bob

“It all starts with Bob” declared Blair Garner, kicking off the 7th annual Bob Kingsley Acoustic Alley. The writers round began with Laura Veltz, JT Harding, Josh Osborne and Shane McAnally. McAnally told of writing “Vice” with Miranda Lambert and Osborne the day her divorce hit the news. Chris Young took Veltz’s song “Lonely Eyes” to No. 2. Her friends assured her it was okay; she would make the same money and didn’t have to attend a No. 1 party.

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Set two featured Brett James, Ashley Gorley and Luke Laird. James told the story of writing with Kenny Chesney in the islands. When Chesney slid open the door and said “Brett, we went out last night,” they started strumming and wrote a No. 1 song. After that they drank copious amounts of rum, then wrote their second chart topper, “Reality.”

The final set was Rhett Akins, Busbee, Heather Morgan and Cole Taylor. Akins had been trying to reach a friend for some time and when he did, his pal said, “Missing is my favorite place to be.” Rhett told him he’d call him back after he texted himself the song title.

James put the exclamation on the celebration by saying, “These folks are all hall of fame writers, but they’re even better people.”

–Paul Williams

**Issues. We’ve Got Issues**

The data and visual-heavy Moving The Listeners And The Numbers That Count looked at music sales, ratings declines, programming math, overnight airplay’s impact on the chart and push week slotting.

“We are a major company that doesn’t have a spin program,” said Entercom VP/Country Mike Moore. “We’ve watched the other companies and, frankly, curious about the benefit they get out of that ... with audience, building stars, monetary benefits, ratings benefits, improved label relations. I don’t know because I don’t work for those companies.”

Red Light’s Tom Lord responded, “From the management perspective, for a brand new artist to plug into one of those spin programs, it is a huge shot in the arm. If you can somehow cut through, you benefit.”

WMN number cruncher Torie Nugent showed that 52% of early airplay is in overnights. “It makes it really difficult to evaluate the reactivity of a single when more than half of the airplay is coming at a time of day when nobody’s hearing it,” she said.

Moore discussed overnight song parking as a response to label pressure for airplay. “PPM has made people more risk-averse,” he said. “At the same time, record labels will tout MScores being great on songs that are only played in overnights. Of course they’re great! The radio is across the room, the guy is working in a factory and he’s not going to turn it off.”

At its core, the problem exists in the deep relationships that exist in country music. “We live in a world where we’re very close to these people, we care about each other and we want to help each other out as much as possible,” Moore said. “That’s just the reality.”

Integr8 Research’s Matt Bailey pointed out, “In CHR, listeners are there because they want to hear songs of the moment. They want to be in tune with the here and now ... [then] they’re ready to move on. In Country ... they want them not just for six months but for six years. They connect with those songs and the stories they tell on such a powerful level.”

–Chuck Aly

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A Look Ahead

Friday, 2/24

7:30am
Women Mentoring Breakfast
Sponsored by NuVoodoo Media Services
Carolyn Gilbert, Jinny Laderer, Beverlee Brannigan, Lisa Smoot, Sunny Leigh, Lisa Ballance, Melissa Kent, Whitney Allen, Shelly Easton, Katie Bright, Sarah Frazier, Charlie Dean, Katie Dean, Lisa Wall, Erica Farber, Alison Bonaguro, Becky Brenner, Ginny Rogers
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 5-6

8am
Digital & Tech Breakfast
Malika Quemerais, Michael Shoup, Gloria Stitt
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 3-4

9am
Daily Featured Speaker: Ryan Redington/Amazon
Sponsored by Momentum Label Group
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

10am
Dicing the Data
Bob Richards (moderator), John Zarling, Jeff Green, Tim Richards
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

10am
Cultivating the Farm Team: Sources of New Talent
Becky Brenner (moderator), Liz Rozengard, Tony Banks, Ben Downs, Dan Vallie
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 5-6

8am
Digital & Tech Breakfast
Malika Quemerais, Michael Shoup, Gloria Stitt
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 3-4

10am
CMA Breakout Session #2: And the CMA Broadcast Award Goes to...
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 3-4

11am
Promotions Start to Finish: Part You
Sponsored by vCreative
Tom Baldrica (moderator), Fritz Moser, Sunny Leigh, B Dub, John Trapane
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom A-C

11am
Lace Up Your Boots & Get in the Trenches with Social Media Platforms
Becky Brenner (moderator), Malika Quemerais, Granger Smith, Gloria Stitt
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 1-6

11am
Lace Up Your Boots & Get in the Trenches with Social Media Platforms
Becky Brenner (moderator), Malika Quemerais, Granger Smith, Gloria Stitt
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 1-6

11:45am
Acoustic Stage Performance Featuring Kaylee Rutland
Omni, Level 2, Broadway Ballroom Lobby

12pm
Lunch & Performance
Sponsored by BMI
A Thousand Horses, Trent Harmon, Delta Rae, Midland, Carly Pearce, Maddie & Tae
Omni, Level 2, Broadway Ballroom

2pm
Cashing in on Live Events: Live!
Tom Baldrica (moderator), Dave Anthony, Paige Nienaber, Michael Jordan, Dhruv Prasad
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom A-C

2pm
Coaching the Coaches: Top Talent Tell How to Motivate Them Best
Kirk Herbstreil, Robin Meade, Ace & TJ
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

2pm
Eric Church’s Virtual Reality Tour Experience
OMG Library Lounge

3pm
Artist Interview with Toby Keith: My Way
Sponsored by BMI
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

5:15pm
New Faces Cocktail Reception
Sponsored by Big Spark Music Group
Omni, Level 2, Grandview Terrace

6:30pm
New Faces of Country Music Dinner and Performance
Sponsored by ACM and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital
CRS/Country Aircheck Awards Presentations
William Michael Morgan, Maren Morris, Jon Pardi, Granger Smith, Drake White
Omni, Level 2, Broadway Ballroom

Feb 24 • New Faces Reception
Broadway Ballroom Area • 5:30–6:00pm