What Makes You Country?
There are a lot of good answers to that question, as Mr. Bryan sings, but at least one of them is this right here: Country Radio Seminar. No other radio format, no other segment of the music business puts as much energy into education, networking, communication and community. And, yes, a healthy dose of fun will be administered along with all that music. So this week is a great time to be proud of what makes you country. And that’s some hometown truth. Welcome to Nashville.

Something For Everyone
One of the best aspects of Country Radio Seminar – now in its 49th year – is its varied mix of content offerings. CRS 2018 is the accumulation of decades of experience and a year of committed agenda wrangling, resulting in a tightly focused two-and-a-half day event. Opening this afternoon (see The Day Ahead, page 4), attendees will see the heart of the format on display in humanitarian presentations to an artist and radio vet Dan Halyburton. Then Dierks Bentley takes the stage as the day’s featured speaker.

Looking beyond Monday, there’s a deep well of information for all the data-heads out there. The nerd-out begins with Edison’s CRS Research Presentation Tuesday morning and its focus on radio and smart speakers. CMA’s country streaming study is set for Wednesday morning, and the Matrix of the Metrics panel follows with an incredibly organized look at factors that influence airplay (see story page 4).

Creativity is embraced not just in Monday’s session with Bentley, but with a talent mentoring happy hour (Tuesday), talent coach Randy Lane as a featured speaker (Wednesday) and an in-depth interview with Brad Paisley Wednesday afternoon. There are full meals of ideas for small markets, promotions, social media and, of course, the highly rated mentoring sessions at various times throughout CRS. Hot topics include a workshop on sexual harassment with Shelley Greenwald, intentional living with expert Miles Adcox and the can’t-miss conversation with Cumulus CEO Mary Berner on Tuesday.
ZAC BROWN’S
SIR ROSEVELT
SOMETHING ‘BOUT YOU

GOING FOR ADDS NEXT MONDAY!

‘THIS SONG IS A HIT! I first heard this song at the end of last year, and I could not stop listening. We decided to take a chance and give this some real, daytime airplay—and turns out that our research says that our listeners love it too! The early research on this song says that it is a hit. Zac’s vocals are unmistakable, and sound as clean and pure as he ever has. This is a song worth playing!!’

— Lance Houston, WBWL PD

@SIRROSEVELT
And if anyone comes away from **CRS 2018** without having been deeply immersed in the best music on the planet, they’re doing it wrong.

**Nashville’s Country Stations**

What visiting Country radio pro hasn’t scanned the dial to see what their favorite format sounds like in Music City? That’s especially true during CRS – and **Country Aircheck** is pleased to offer some context. With roughly 2,000 industry specialists descending on Nashville this week, here is a data-driven look at the market’s Country stations, their recent ratings histories and the musical presentations they use to distinguish themselves.

**Market & Ratings:** Nashville, Nielsen market 43 with a 12+ metro population of 1,465,700, touts three full-signal Country subscribers as of the Holiday 2017 survey, each a 100kW Class C. They are Cumulus’ WSM-FM (Nash Icon at 95.5) and WKDF (Nash FM at 103.3), and iHeartMedia’s WSIX (The Big 98 at 97.9).

iHeartMedia also offers Classic Country via HD/translator combo WSIX-HD2 & W252CM (98.3), as does Ryman Hospitality, which operates storied 50kW Class C WSM-AM (650 AM). Not counting WSM-AM, which wasn’t listed as a subscriber in the most recent survey, the stations accounted for 13.0 shares of listening. That number hovers closer to 15.5 during non-Holiday surveys and those that have included WSM-AM, however.

The ratings story has changed some since last year. As detailed in **Country Aircheck** last February (**CRS 2017 Daily Buzz**), WSM-FM was dominant for most of 2016 Persons 12 when the station won all but one survey. WSIX was the dominant Country radio station in 2017, however, winning nine of its 13 surveys. Averaged, WSIX, WSM-FM and WKDF were at 5.3, 4.8 and 3.8 on the year, respectively. (See a month-to-month picture below)

**Music & Programming:** Musically, WSM-FM appears to have changed more from 2016 than WSIX. A recent seven-day Mediabase analysis shows a shift in WSM-FM’s playlist from 8% current, 25% recurrent and 67% at this point last year to 14-14-73% gold today. WSIX, by comparison, is at 45-36-18%, just a few percentage points from where it was last year. WKDF’s playlist percentages are also relatively close to last year’s. The station
today is at 44-42-15% compared with 51-35-14% last year.

There are only slight differences year over year with regard to song quantity and unique titles on the stations. WSM-FM is still the leader when it comes to most songs played in a week (2,420), followed again by WSIX (2,161) and WKDF (2,083). WSM-FM plays the most unique titles of the three stations with 510, followed by WSIX at 299 and WKDF at 278. As for vintage, WSIX’s average is 2014, WSM-FM’s is 2003 and WKDF’s is 2015.

Last year those numbers were 2015, 2006 and 2015, respectively. The playlist of WSIX-HD2 & W252CM, which generally delivers a 1.0 share, is 100% gold with 2,600 songs played weekly. Roughly 420 of them are unique to the station.

On-Air & Online: Change may have defined many of the market’s Country morning shows in recent years, but 2017 offered stability. Premiere’s The Bobby Bones Show is still heard on WSIX, it’s home base; as are Cumulus/Westwood One’s Marty McFly and Ty, Kelly & Chuck on WSM-FM and WKDF, respectively. Country Radio Hall Of Famer Gerry House and former partner Mike Bohan deliver a mixture of archived content from the House Foundation’s time on WSIX, as well as new, original content that’s been described as “on-air Twitter.” “He thinks it, he says it and we all laugh,” SVPP Gator Harrison told Country Aircheck last year (CAT 5/22).

iHeartMedia’s Bob Delmont plays host to the effort, handling song talk-overs and content setups. Mornings on WSM-AM continue to be helmed by Country Radio Hall of Famer Bill Cody, who’s been in place since 1994.

The only thing left do now, of course, is listen. Check out WSIX here, WSM-FM here, WKDF here, WSIX-HD2 & W252CM here and WSM-AM here. Be sure to say hello to Nashville’s programmers at CRS, too. They are Gator Harrison (WSIX and WSIX-HD2 & W252CM), Charlie Cook (WSM-FM), John Shomby (WKDF) and Jonathan Shaffer (WSM-AM).

On CRS

Dierks Bentley will be speaking Monday afternoon, but before he gets there, here are his thoughts on his favorite CRS memory:

“It’s such a big deal for country singers, having all these people who hold the key to the gate, come to your city,” Bentley says. “I remember really well playing New Faces over at the old convention center, which has since been demolished. You’d hear stories about how Tim McGraw got up there and played ‘Don’t Take The Girl,’ which launched his career. So you know how important it is. But my favorite memory is when my ‘90s country band Hot Country Knights played at The Stage during CRS. The place was packed full of people I’ve known a long time – lots of PDs and other friends from radio. It wasn’t just cover songs, we had a whole bit. It might be generous to call it a Broadway production, but it was definitely theater. There was some acting involved, bottles were broken and blood was spilled onstage that night. I was hearing from programmers for the next several years, hoping we’d do it again.”

One change this year will be no attendees from CBS Radio. That’s because they’re all now employees of Entercom. Here’s the newly merged company’s country format captain Mike Moore:

“There are tremendous programmers at these stations, many I’ve known and even worked with over the years,” Moore says. “Country radio and country music are close-knit families and I’m fortunate to know a lot of great folks. Hopefully that helps the process, and beyond that it’s a matter of getting to know each other, adopting best practices and getting everyone marching in the same direction so we can do the best for our local markets and our companies will hold.

Finally, a peek inside the aforementioned Matrix of the Metrics panel with Stone Door Media Lab’s Jeff Green: “The big story is that programmers are increasingly focusing on sales and streaming consumption, as well as the artist’s recent airplay history and current chart data,” Green says. “For instance, sales ranked first (fourth overall), but moved up from 74% to 82% year-to-year as having a ‘very likely’ or ‘somewhat likely’ influence on add decisions. Proof of performance also gained in significance, as the artists’ success or failure with their prior single jumped from 71% to 80% importance.”

All of the above are excerpted from Country Aircheck’s CRS print issue, available on site at CRS 2018.

The Day Ahead

8:30am-5pm
Music Row Rooms
SSM Nashville
In2une Music Nashville
Parenting Today’s Teens
Omni, Level 2, Legends Pre-Function

8:30am-3pm
St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital Internet Cafe
Coffee, beverages and free wifi
Omni, Level 2, Music Row 4

Contact Larry Pareigis, President
larry@ninernorthmail.com or 615-332-5511
8:30am-5pm
Shakti Mediation Room
Omni, Level 3, Mockingbird 1

8:30am-4pm
ABC Radio: On The Record With The Stars
Omni, Level 3, Mockingbird 4

8:30am-5pm
The Row
Riser House, Westwood One, Jamtraxx
Media, Yellowtec, vCreative
Omni, Level 2, 5th Ave. Pre-Function

8:30am-11am
St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital
Juice Bar
Omni, Level 2, 5th Ave. Pre-Function

9am-3pm
Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals
Omni, Level 3, Mockingbird 1

9am-3pm
Visit the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum
Free admission for registered CRS attendees

9:30am
MV2 Entertainment
Terry McBride, David Fanning, Nora Collins, Eric Dodd
Omni, Level 2, Grandview Terrace

10am-4pm
Hocatt USA
Email Megan Zarling at megan@hocattusa.com to schedule your appointment for the Hocatt steam sauna.
Omni, Level 3, Mockingbird 2

10am-5pm
CRS Media Center
Sponsored by Parenting Today’s Teens
Omni, Level 2, Broadway Hallway

11am-2am
Rebel Engine Lobby Bar
Omni Lobby

11am-12pm
Yoga Class by Shakti Power Yoga
Omni, Level 3, Mockingbird 1

12:15pm
CRS 2018 Kickoff Party
Hosted by DJ Ty Street
Sponsored by Encore Technologies
Omni, Level 2, Broadway Pre-Function

3pm
Opening Ceremonies
Sponsored by Sarah Cannon
Cam, Mayor Megan Barry
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

3:30pm
Artist Humanitarian Award Presentation
Sponsored by Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals
Dierks Bentley, Zac Brown
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

3:30pm
Tom Rivers Award Presentation
Dan Halyburton
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

4pm
Featured Speaker: Dierks Bentley
Sponsored by DAV
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

5pm
Black River CRS Show
(invite only)
Kelsea Ballerini, Jacob Davis, Abby Anderson
Bell Tower, 400 4th Ave. S.

5pm
SSM Nashville Happy Hour
Alexandra Demetree and Branch & Dean
Omni, Level 2, Music Row 1

5pm
Yoga Class by Shakti Power Yoga
Omni, Level 3, Mockingbird 1

5:30pm
Welcome Reception
Sponsored by CMA & Live Nation
Omni, Level 2, Broadway Ballroom

6pm
Bar Frog Music and Friends
Amber Hayes, Bailey James, Mark Bray, Nick Hickman, Rick Monroe, Smith & Wesley, Tony Jackson, Williams Honor
The Studio Nashville (3315 Charlotte Ave)

7pm
Amazon Music & CRS Monday Night Showcase featuring the Radio Ink Best Country PD Awards
Sponsored by Amazon Music
Performances powered by Live Nation
Jason Aldean, Jordan Davis, Jimmie Allen
Omni, Level 2, Broadway Ballroom