Emote Tons
Albright & O’Malley & Brenner’s 26th Annual Pre-CRS Seminar kicked off yesterday morning (2/19) with a look at Roadmap 2020. The company’s Mike O’Malley and Becky Brenner were on hand to share key takeaways from the study, which included 9,180 respondents in the 25-54 demo. Among them: Facebook remains the preferred social media platform while Instagram continues gaining traction. An increase in Spotify and Pandora for in-car listening was juxtaposed with TSL growth for AM/FM radio on mobile, in cars and on smart speakers. The competitive landscape is expanding, and a multitude of opportunities are available to broadcasters in the podcasting realm. Additionally, “the big three” are still the big three: music, talent and environment. Listeners rate, in order of importance, stations playing the best music, feeling good when listening to the station, and personalities who sound like friends.

While discovery continues on terrestrial radio, its effect is softening. Of the artists discovered in 2019, respondents most often cited River House/Columbia’s Luke Combs. Keeping with the music and discovery theme, A&O&B welcomed Valory’s Heath Sanders, who performed “Love Needs Making” and “Common Ground,” and Big Machine’s Payton Sanders, who played “’92” and his forthcoming radio single, “Like I Knew You Would.”

Zimmer Pres. John Zimmer and Zimmer/Columbia, MO Market Mgr. Carla Leible discussed the marketing bridge and the importance of omni-channel marketing while emphasizing a need for texture and layers within an existing broadcast business and sales structure. “The way to get to a client’s budget is through the creative process,” says Zimmer, who noted that in working with advertisers, he has seen a lean toward multi-platform marketing and the monetization of data. Leible shared the cluster’s hiring strategy: “Hire for attitude; train for skills.” She noted that station account executives serve as relationship managers while specialists in varied fields – social, digital, design and creative – handle internal workloads. “A key account might have eight to 10 people on a team,” she explains.

Second City actor, improv and sketch comedy specialist and Central Connecticut State University Assoc. Professor/
You & me...
Ain't it good to be alive?
Ain't no better place
Ain't no better time

Kenny Chesney
HERE AND NOW

In a world gone wild...
All We Have Is Here And Now

Everybody's waiting, but
they're waiting on what?
Better get to living
cause it's all we got

Arriving Feb 21
IMPACTING IMMEDIATELY
Theater Christie Maturo presented the rules for and benefits of incorporating improvisational best practices in on-air content, including the ability to form emotional connections with listeners. “It’s not about being funny,” she says. “It’s about being truthful and honest. Everyone can be 100% successful at being a good improviser, because it’s about sharing your personal truth.” While material is everything, Maturo said there’s nothing wrong with stealing from others and making it your own. She offered examples of following McSweeneys.net and Jimmy Fallon for inspiration.

WYCT/Pensacola PD Brent Lane and WIRK/West Palm Beach morning host Tim Leary then built upon the theme of emotional connection by speaking to the importance of genuine localization and connecting your station to the community. The takeaways? You have to be in the pond first in order to be the biggest fish. Be a champion both for your community and of your community. And, perhaps most importantly, “Don’t be a schmuck,” says Leary. Both advised to start simple by finding three things in your community that interest you, finding your own point of view and a new way to introduce those places, things, events or your audience.

YouTube Mgr./Nashville Label Relations Margaret Hart rounded out the event explaining the platform’s potential benefits for on-air talent and stations as a whole in building a brand and interacting with an audience. Her advice? “Start a channel.” Posting recap videos of morning show content, publishing in-studio performances, repurposing localized bits, and filming local, artist and pop culture news segments are among the easiest entries into original content creation. To start smaller, begin by creating playlists of favorite videos for your channel.

Those interested in seeing the full presentation of Roadmap 2020 can contact A&O&B’s Brenner here or O’Malley here. –Monta Vaden

Chandeliers & Country Music

Convening in the contradictory, yet fittingly named Broadway Ballroom, CRS 2020 attendees were welcomed to the 2nd Annual Warner Music Nashville Kickoff Luncheon Wednesday (2/19) by Chairman/CEO John Esposito. In recapping goals met and exceeded in the past year and ambitions for the one ahead, Esposito declared, “The year of 2020 will be the year we break three female artists.”

Before performing emcee duties, WMN SVP/Radio & Streaming Promotion Kristen Williams renewed the label’s commitment to the FTL Sarcoma Fund, an organization established in memory of the late Lindsay Walleman, who died of sarcoma at 28. “We ask for your help in keeping Lindsay’s legacy alive,” said Williams. “All that takes – in true Lindsay style – is spreading the word and spreading her spirit. And if I know Lindsay, and I did, she’d be ready for some country music.”

First to the stage, Chris Janson thanked Country radio for “making my dreams come true” before breaking out his newly-mastered ukulele to play “Done,” a song he professed is “my favorite I’ve ever written." Michael Ray sang “Her World Or Mine,” which was debuted at CRS 2018’s New Faces of Country Music Show (where he happened to meet his now-wife, Carly Pearce), followed by one of the label’s two women currently in the Top 15, Gabby Barrett, giving us a whole mood with “I Hope.”

The physical embodiment of the state of Texas, Cody Johnson, followed Janson’s lead-in, performing his “favorite song I’ve ever written,” with “Dear Rodeo.” Next up, a performer whose energy and enthusiasm could only be eclipsed by the number of rings on his fingers, Shy Carter sat at the keyboard for “Good Love,” with hopes it “blesses your socks off, and your feet get cold and your hearts get warm.”

“We have another goal in our sights … to break Ashley McBryde,” asserted Esposito. “She’s proven she deserves to be in this format, she belongs in this format, she deserves your attention. And you’re going to hear a lot of shit from me in the hallways about that this week.” McBryde offered latest single “One Night Standards,” which her mother called “a little uncomfortable.” McBryde laughed, “I’ve been uncomfortable for 3 1/2 minutes before, haven’t you?”
Standing On Ceremony

Sandwiched between artist sessions by Miranda Lambert and Rascal Flatts, CRS 2020 Opening Ceremonies hit its expected marks and packed in a couple surprises, as well. Not among the latter were some dad jokes from CRB Exec. Dir. RJ Curtis, who welcomed CRB Board President and master of ceremonies Kurt Johnson. Warner/WAR’s Gobby Barrett soared through the National Anthem, with colors presented by U.S. Marines. Army band Six String Soldiers engaged the crowd with a one-song acoustic performance, and this year’s Rusty Walker Scholarship recipients were recognized.

St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital’s Teri Watson and Alabama’s Randy Owen celebrated Tom Rivers Humanitarian Award honoree Lon Helton via video. “You have been a champion of our mission ever since you first walked through the doors of St. Jude 30 years ago,” Watson said. Calling the honor “special and humbling,” Helton said, “It’s special because it bears the name of Tom Rivers, and Tom was a good friend. He did so much to help people have better lives ... and for the community, both personally and over the airwaves.

“It’s humbling because I look around ... and see a room full of humanitarians,” he continues. “Hell, we’re in an industry full of humanitarians. No group on the planet gives back more than Country radio, records and the industry.” In closing he said, “I’m going to echo Kenny Chesney and say I’m pretty uncomfortable receiving this as an individual, so I will proudly accept this on behalf of all of you who do so much to help the people of your communities.”

Flatts took the stage to recognize this year’s Country Radio Hall of Fame class, but were surprised with their own honor. Johnson presented the CRS Artist Achievement Award to the trio, who will soon embark on their final tour. A video tribute featured radio and label friends; Flatts will be officially honored at the Country Radio Hall of Fame Dinner June 24 in Nashville.

—Chuck Aly

Flatts Out Emotion

A love fest, a comedy show and the perfect close to CRS 2020’s first day of sessions. CMA’s Sarah Trahern steered a conversation with Rascal Flatts’ Gary LeVox, Jay DeMarcus and Joe Don

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Rooney that was packed with laugh out loud stories and a few that had attendees wiping their eyes. Trahern got right to the point: the farewell tour. “Why now?” DeMarcus dispelled any rumors of discord inside the band. “We didn’t have a fight,” he said. “We all still get along. In fact, we probably love each other now more than ever.”

Trahern’s questions about their music videos had DeMarcus sharing a story about a monkey almost attacking him that had the room howling. And Rooney talked about the controversial “I Melt” video in which his naked posterior was shown. Amidst the funny stories, there were heartfelt tales, too. Asked about the final tour, Gary said it’s about the relationship with fans and Country radio, “Saying thank you and sharing the love.”

Each expressed gratitude for the tour offering opportunity to thank and love on fans and radio, but they also confessed it will be difficult. “Saying goodbye is going to be really emotional,” DeMarcus said. “When next year comes, there is no tour and I can’t look to my left and see my cousin and Joe Don, it’s going to be sad.”

—Sue Wilson

Amazon Grace

The third annual Amazon Music Presents: Country Heat At CRS (2/19) offered attendees compact sets from Niko Moon, Gabby Barrett, Jon Langston, The Cadillac Three and Kelsea Ballerini, each of whom highlighted recent projects. Moon, Barrett and Langston each capped their four-song sets with current radio singles “Good Time,” “I Hope” and “Now You Know,” respectively, with Barrett reminding radio attendees, “Y’all are making people’s dreams come true!” The Cadillac Three shared...
four from their recently released Country Fuzz project, including “Hard Out Here For A Country Boy.” Ballerini, who remarked that it was her first show of the year and her first time on the ballroom stage since her New Faces show, treated the audience to a five-song performance with current single “Homecoming Queen” coming mid-set in acoustic form. “Thank you for giving [the single] the megaphone of radio,” she said, thanking Country radio. Ballerini also previewed unreleased music from her forthcoming album before closing the night with chart-topper “Peter Pan.”

–Monta Vaden

The Day Ahead

6:30-7:50am  Belivers Breakfast
Sponsored by: Parenting Today’s Teens
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 1-2

8-8:50am  Digital + Streaming Breakfast
Emily Cohen, James Crowley, Tim Foisset and Kelly Rich
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 3-4

8-8:50am  Programming Mentoring Breakfast
Kurt Johnson, Charlie Cook, Rod Phillips, Tim Roberts, M. Fletcher Brown, Mark Razz, Melissa Frost, Carletta Blake, Buzz Jackson, Kenny Jay and Mike McVay
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 5-6

8am  Sales Mentoring Breakfast
Sarah Fraizer, Allison Warren, Dan Endom, Jeff James, Judy Lakin
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 1-2

8:30-10:30am  in2une/AWAL/GCE Breakfast
Canaan Smith, RaeLynn, John King and Chris Bandi
Omni, Level 1, Kitchen Notes

8-11am  SBG Recovery on the Row
Omni

8am-5pm  Riser House Entertainment Lounge
Omni, Level 2, Music Row 1

8am-6pm  Big Loud Lounge
Omni, Level 2, Music Row 2

8:30am-4pm  ABC Audio: All Access Pass with Stephen Hubbard
Omni, Level 2, Music Row 6

8:30am-5:30pm  SpinIntel: Airplay Analytics Reimagined
Omni, Level 2, 5th Avenue Pre-Function

9am-5pm  Six-String Soldiers
Omni, Level 2, Music Row 3

9am-5pm  United Stations
Omni, Level 2, 5th Avenue Pre-Function

9-9:50am  Do Metrics Prove The Music?: Three-Year Trend Case Study
Moderator: Katie Dean; Panelists: Jeff Green, Grover Collins and Matthew Hargis
Omni, Level 2, Legends D-G

9-9:50am  Leading Your Leaders In 2020
Moderator: Tom Baldrica; Panelists: Steve Reynolds, Scott Clayton and Mike Dungan
Omni, Level 2, Legends A-C

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10-11:15am
CRS Research Presentation: Do You Know Your Listeners As Well As You Think You Do?
Mark Ramsey
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom, D-G

11:30am-1:50pm
Team UMG at the Ryman
Ryman Auditorium

2:30-3:15pm
Why I Use Audio: The Advertisers’ Perspective
Moderator: Tom Hanrahan; Panelists: Jennifer Hungerbuhler and Tina Murray
Omni, Level 3, Legends Ballroom A-C

2:30-4pm
All The Singles, Ladies: Breaking Female Artists
Moderator: Katie Dean; Panelists: David Corey, Johnny Chiang, Nate Deaton, Damon Moberly, Emily Cohen, Marion Kraft and Kris Daniels
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

3:15-4pm
Tech Crystal Ball
Moderator: Fred Jacobs; Panelists: Lauren Fisher and Simon Dawson
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom A-C

4-5pm
Sun Broadcast Group Bar + Lounge
Sponsored by SBG
Omni, Level 2, 5th Avenue Pre-Function Area

4:15-5:15pm
Artist Keynote: Eric Church
Eric Church
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

5-6pm
SSM Nashville Happy Hour
Omni, Level 2, Music Row 1

5-7pm
In Harmony: CRS at the Museum
Sponsored by: CMHoF and Sony Music Nashville
Tenille Townes, Adam Doleac and Niko Moon
Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

7-10:30pm
Bob Kingsley’s Acoustic Alley
Sponsored by Bob Kingsley’s Country Top 40 and First Tennessee Bank
First drink sponsored by ASCAP
Garth Brooks, Rhett Akins, Jessi Alexander, Chase McGill, Neal Thrasher, Cary Barlowe, Ashley Gorley, Natalie Hemby, Eric Paslay and Jimmy Robbins
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

10pm-midnight
CRS Ping Pong Showdown
Brett Young, Scotty McCreery, Matt Stell, Charles Kelley, Dave Haywood, Cassadee Pope, Lindsay Ell, Tim Roberts, Rod Phillips, Johnny Chiang, Michael Levine, Chris Huff, Mike Kennedy and Gator Harrison
Omni