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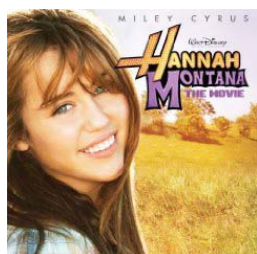
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Country Sales Blooming?

by David M. Ross

What a difference a week [or two] makes. In fact, the country sales picture has totally transformed itself from being down about 14% a few weeks ago to lagging a mere 3.1% for the week ended 5/3/2009. All is looking bright and sunny, or is it? Beneath the glad tidings there are industry executives who dispute the rosy results.

So what changed? First we've had solid CD releases in the last five weeks from **Rascal Flatts** (total sales: 744,479), **Jason Aldean** (196,015) and **Keith Urban** (312,305). But adding the single strongest push to the numbers was last week's surprise addition of the *Hannah Montana* movie score to the country album chart. The soundtrack which resided on the pop chart exclusively for its first four weeks, has sold a total of 744,479 units which now helps considerably to brighten the country stats. According to *Billboard* Chartman **Wade Jessen**, a CD must have at least half its tracks be by country acts or stylistically appropriate to be included on the Top 75 Current Country list. Jessen points to the **Miley Cyrus** "Climb" single which has become a driving factor at country radio, gaining millions of impressions as another reason warranting the CD's inclusion on the Country chart. Regardless, there are some execs that fear this inclusion distorts the reality and severity of the country sales situation and flat don't agree with the decision.

Shifting gears, the current week featured new debuts from Arista's **Jason Michael Carroll** (No. 7; 16,257) and BBR's **Dean Brody** (No. 32; 2,706). **Jason Aldean** owned the No. 4 chart position (24,193), trailing *Hannah* (No. 1; 85,644), **Rascal Flatts** (No. 2; 52,707) and **Taylor Swift** (No. 3; 28,643). **Kellie Pickler's** CD (4,564) gained 19% this week showing the strength of her new single which was downloaded 31,123 times. Also noteworthy is the 27% increase in digital download singles for **Gloriana**. Both Pickler and Gloriana appear to be

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Tom-Leis Music and Stone Village Music recently signed **Brandon Kinney** to a co-publishing deal. Kinney wrote **Randy Houser's** current single "Boots On" and has written for artists including **Lonestar, Randy Travis** and **Willie Nelson**. (L-R): BMI's **Jody Williams**, Stone Village Music owner **Kerry Kurt Phillips**, Stone Village Music Creative Dir. **Ronna Reeves**, Kinney, Tom-Leis Music partner **Leslie DiPiero** and Tom-Leis Music Chief Mgr. **Bubba Tomlinson**. Photo: *Martina Hamlin*



Legendary guitarist **Wayne Moss** was honored on Saturday (5/2) as part of the **Country Music Hall of Fame®** and **Museum's Nashville Cats** series. During the program, which pays tribute to Nashville's veteran musicians, Moss shared stories from his impressive session career and demonstrated a handful of his guitar licks from classic recordings by **Waylon Jennings, Rob Orbison** and others. (L-R): guitarist **Ray Edenton**, pianist **Pig Robbins**, program host **Bill Lloyd**, guitarist and producer **Jerry Kennedy**, harmonica player **Charlie McCoy**, Moss, bassist **Bob Moore** and fiddler **Buddy Spicher**. Photo: *Donn Jones*.

benefitting from their opening act exposure on the sold-out Taylor Swift tour.

Looking across the charts, the week's big mainstream debut was courtesy The Troubadour—**Bob Dylan**, who grabbed the top location with 124,603 unit scans. The all-genre stats show the industry down 13% Y/Y which compares badly with country's Y/Y of -3.1%.

Upcoming releases to watch include a **Kenny Chesney Greatest Hits** (5/19) and a **Brad Paisley** disc (6/30).

Get Ready To Cast Your Vote

21st Annual Music Row Awards Underway

Music Row's 21st Annual Awards will be announced in the publication's June/July issue and plaques presented at ASCAP on June 30. Featured will be the **Top Ten Album All-Star** Musician accolades which are determined based upon the number of Top Ten CDs that each musician appeared on during the eligibility period (5/1/08- 4/30/09). Also included will be the subscriber-voted **Breakthrough Artist, Producer of the Year, Song of the Year** and **Breakthrough Songwriter** choices.

Nominees in the reader-voted categories will be announced on May 18, and numbered ballots will be emailed to readers May 27.

MUSICROW
AWARDS



WMG Announces Results

by *David M. Ross*

Warner Music Group (WMG) reported its digital revenue was up 6% this past quarter. Somewhat less accessible in the report is the information that the music company has written off most all of its \$35 million investments in lala.com and imeem.com. Actually, a total of \$33 million



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was charged against the two startups. This action is commonly referred to as an asset writedown, which is a way for a company to acknowledge that something purchased previously is now worth less than originally paid. According to AllThingsDigital.com, Warner noted that overall music sales were off 17.6% for the last quarter contributing to a loss of 45¢ per share on revenue of \$668 million. Analysts were expecting revenue of \$730 million. The 6% digital increase is also worrisome the article adds, "because a year ago digital revenue had increased 48% over the previous year."

Industry News

by Peter Cronin

A memorial concert for **Loretta Johnson**, one of three co-founders of the International Fan Club Organization (IFCO), will be held June 9 from 6:00 to 9:00 PM at the Nashville Palace. Johnson passed away from bone marrow cancer in Nashville on April 13. Artists performing will include **Billy Yates, Charlie McCoy, Linda Davis, Buddy Jewell, Ty Herndon, Michael Peterson, Jimmie Van Zant, Steve Hall & Shotgun Red, Ricky Lynn Gregg, Deborah Allen, Baillie and the Boys, Annie Simms, Tommy Cash, David Church, and Moore & Moore**. Proceeds from the event benefit the Loretta Johnson Medical Fund.

Cold River has announced the hiring of **Jeff Davis** as Director of Radio Promotions. Davis was most recently with Country Thunder and was the PD for WGNE in Jacksonville prior to that. Cold River is home to rising artist, **Katie Armiger**, the highest charting independent

female artist since 2003 on *MusicRow*. Davis can be reached at jeff@coldriverrecords.com or 615-260-4975.

Universal Music Group

Nashville has partnered with participating Outback Steakhouses in Tennessee and Kentucky for a special Mother's Day promotion. Every mother who

dines at a participating Outback on Mother's Day will receive a UMG Nashville CD Sampler and a \$10 Outback coupon. Everyone that dines will receive a sweepstakes offer to win concert tickets, Outback gift cards and a 2\$ coupon toward the purchase of CD's through a custom UMG/Outback site.



Major Bob Music's Dir. of A&R Jesse Frasure won the Biggest Fish Award for the 4th Annual ASCAP/ole Fishing Tournament held during the Key West Songwriters Festival. (L-R): ole CCO Gilles Godard, ASCAP's Ralph Murphy, ole Chairman/CEO Robert Ott, Frasure, ASCAP's Mike Sistad and Jesse Willoughby. Inset: 1st Mate of the boat "Triple Time" with Frasure and his fish. Photo: Alan Mayor

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Artist News

by Michelle Ross

Dolly Parton was honored with an honorary doctorate degree this morning (5/8) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Governor **Phil Bredesen** joined acting UT President **Jan Simek** and Chancellor **Jimmy G. Cheek** for the commencement.

Grammy award winner **George Strait** and his **Ace in the Hole Band** are gearing up to play in Houston for the first time since 2001. Strait's tour will stop at Houston's Reliant Stadium on August 8, and he's bringing some special guests including hit duo **Sugarland**, WB artist **Blake Shelton** and Mercury's **Julianne Hough**.

Kate & Kacey will make their debut at the Grand Ole Opry House tonight (5/8). The Big Machine duo will round out a bill that also includes **Aaron Tippin** and **Mountain Heart**, among others.

Bucky Covington will host his first annual fan club party this year during CMA Music Fest in Nashville. The event will take place on Wednesday, June 10 at Rocketown and will include dinner, a live concert, meet & greet and goodie bags for all attendees. It's only open to fan club members.

Keith Anderson, **Tim McGraw**, the **Warren Brothers**, **Lance Miller** and ESPN's *Baseball Tonight* host **John Kruk** recently participated in *Stepping Up to the Plate*, a benefit for the Tug McGraw Foundation, a nonprofit organization that works to improve the quality of life for adults and children living with brain tumors. The 3-day baseball tournament featured competition between youth teams from Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama and Ohio.

As the spokesman for the National Council for Adoption, **Rodney Atkins** has recorded a series of public service announcements for their **Families for All Campaign**, which focuses on kids in foster care who need loving homes. Atkins has also written a letter in honor of May being National Foster Care Month about how adoption changed his life. In his letter Rodney says, "Adoption changed my



SESAC joined forces with the CMA on a panel during the annual Nashville Film Festival in April. Panelist included **Dana Sano** (Two Lovers, Dan In Real Life), **Ann Kline** (ER, The West Wing) **Lindsay Fellows** (Journey To The Center Of The Earth), **Rachel Levy** (VP Motion Picture Music/Weinstein Co.), **Geoff Bywater** (Head of Music/Fox TV) and **Marianne Goode** (VP Music/Lifetime). Nashville entertainment attorney **Jim Zumwalt** served as moderator. (L-R) front: **Levy**, **Frankie Pine** (Santa Clause 2, Ocean's Eleven), **Fellows** and **Goode**. Back: **Zumwalt**; SESAC's **John Mullins**, **Amy Beth Hale** and **Shannan Tipton-Neese**; **Rudy Chung** (Eleventh Hour, CSI: Crime Scene Investigation) and **Stacey WidELITZ** (Pres. Nashville Film Festival). Photo: Alan Mayor



Each year Tin Pan South donates proceeds from one show to a worthy charity. During the 2009 festival, NSAI chose MusiCares. The benefit held at the Mercy Lounge raised \$1300. (L-R) front: **Mark Ford**, NSAI Assoc. Exec. Dir./Tin Pan South Shows Coord.; **Debbie Carroll**, MusiCares Exec. Dir.; and **Jennifer Purdon Turnbow**, NSAI Finance Dir./Tin Pan South Co-Dir. Back: songwriter **Vickie Raye**; **Bart Herbison**, NSAI Exec. Dir.; **Susan Myers**, NSAI Sponsorship Dir.; and **Erin Burr**, NSAI Communications Dir.

CONGRATULATIONS BA ARTIST JONELL MOSSER - "TRUST YOURSELF" ALBUM DROPS APRIL 28.

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CONGRATULATIONS BA WRITER JOSH THOMPSON - SIGNED AS AN ARTIST TO SONY/COLUMBIA.



Warner Bros. Records artist **James Otto** recently visited *WKIS* where he performed for listeners. (L-R): *WKIS* PD Ken Boesen, Otto and *WKIS* MD Scott Simon.



Capitol Records Nashville artist **Eric Church's** *The Young & Wild Tour* had back-to-back sold out shows in Charlotte, NC and Greenville, SC. (L-R): **Angela Lange**, Capitol Nashville SE Dir. Promotions; Church; and WSOC OM/PD DJ Stout.



Universal Records South artist **Jonathan Singleton** recently visited *KEEY* in Minneapolis, MD. (L-R): *KEEY's* JD Greene, Singleton and Universal South's Jordan Pettit.

life, and it can change yours, as well as that of a child in foster care who needs a loving, permanent family." You can read his entire letter at FamiliesForAll.org/downloads.

Country and Rock and Roll Hall of Famer **Brenda Lee** will host the 30th anniversary celebration of *Sunday Mornin' Country* at the Grand Ole Opry House on Sunday, June 14 at 2:30 PM. Billed as a "special gospel music celebration for the whole family," the show will feature **Bill Anderson, Linda Davis, Jean Shepard, The Whites, Charlie McCoy, Jason Crabb** and more.

1720 Entertainment has announced the signing of singer-songwriter **Stevie Walker**. She will release her first single, "Don't Wanna Be Me Today," to country radio in July, with her debut album following this fall. Walker's tunes have been featured on the soundtracks of *The Wedding Planner* and *Cruel Intentions, Part 2*, as well as



Stevie Walker

episodes of the hit TV shows *Laguna Beach* and *Saving Grace*. Walker also has a song, "Walk Away," on Martina McBride's latest album. www.myspace.com/steviewalker.

Gaither Music Group has released *The Oak Ridge Boys: A Gospel Journey* on DVD and CD. The DVD debuted on the Billboard Music Video chart at No. 2. Hosted by **Bill Gaither** and filmed before an intimate audience of friends and fellow-artists at Gaither Studios, the DVD features over 90 minutes of live performances by the **Oak Ridge Boys** singing their best-loved gospel favorites, combined with vintage footage and photos of their 36-year journey together.

The Charlie Daniels Band recently concluded their third overseas visit of U.S. military troops in Kuwait and Iraq. The musicians toured bases in Ar Ramadi, Balad, Al Qayyarah, Tikrit and Kuwait. Stars for Stripes, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing celebrity entertainment to troops deployed overseas, organized the seven-show, nine-day trip. www.CharlieDaniels.com/tour.htm

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Lyric Street artist **Bucky Covington** was in the Windy City recently to co-host WUSN/Chicago's "Ray and Bucky Outdoor Show" with Ramblin' Ray. (L-R): US99 Morning Show producer **Lisa Kosty** and Covington.



Universal Records South artist **Joe Nichols** recently dropped by the WSIX Studios to hang with **Gerry House** (L) and **Mike Bohan** (R). Nichols' new single "Believers" is nearing Top 40.



Black River artist **Sarah Darling** recently visited WUBE-FM to promote her new single "Jack Of Hearts." (L-R): **Rick Baumgartner**, VP Natl. Promotion BRMG; **WUBE PD Travis Moon**; **Darling**; and **Joe Carroll**, BRMG Promotion.

The CMA has announced that **Little Big Town** and **Josh Turner** have been added to the performance lineup for the CMA Music Festival's Nightly Concerts at LP Field. The festival takes place June 11-14, in Downtown Nashville.

Neal McCoy is taking applications for the first-ever East Texas Angel Network Singing Star Contest. Five contestants will be chosen to perform one song each at the 15th Annual East Texas Angel Network Benefit concert (9/26). The winner will take the stage with Neal McCoy at a future concert date. www.easttexasangelnetwork.com

Sparta, Tennessee, home of bluegrass legend **Lester Flatt**, will celebrate the musician's memory with a special event on May 23. In 2007, the Tennessee State Legislature declared the 4th Saturday in May to be "Official Bluegrass Day in Tennessee," and in keeping with the branding of Sparta as "Bluegrass U.S.A.," the city will host *Liberty Square: A Lester Flatt Celebration*. Artists including **Rhonda Vincent, Williams & Clark Expedition** and **Nothin' Fancy** will perform.

Curb artist **Jo Dee Messina** will take a break from her *Music Room Series Tour* and return to Nashville this

Saturday (5/9), to sing the National Anthem prior to the 68th running of the Iroquois Steeplechase at Percy Warner Park. Messina will be back on the road this summer for a series of dates beginning June 6 in Dubuque, Iowa.

This Saturday (5/9), Mercury Nashville artist **Billy Currington** will perform an exclusive pre-race concert at the 2009 Southern 500 at Darlington Raceway in Darlington, South Carolina. In addition to the pre-race concert, Currington will also perform the National Anthem prior to the Southern 500 which is scheduled to be aired on Fox.

The Bellamy Brothers have enjoyed lots of hits since they appeared on the scene back in 1975. But none of the duo's songs has endured like their initial hit, "Let Your Love Flow," which is enjoying a resurgence 34 years after its release. In the UK, the song is featured on a Mother's Day-themed, five-disc album project, *101 Housework Songs*, which hit the top spot on the Top 40 Compilation Album Chart. "Let Your Love Flow" was also recently featured on AMC's Emmy-winning drama, *Breaking Bad*. In addition, the song on a BMI list of the Top 100 Song of the Century.

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by Robert K. Oermann

It's a left-field kinda day.

Despite the presence of a number of marquee names in this week's reviewing stack, the award winners are the lesser knowns.

Up-and-comer **Holly Williams** lands her first **Disc of the Day** honor. By the way, her excellent last single ("Keep the Change") was not co-written by her sister, but rather by Hillary Lindsey. The label information was incorrect.

Our **DisDiscovery Award** goes not to a major-label artist, but to a lovely Nashville indie lass named **Sarah Darling**. If you have any doubts that she can deliver live, there's a clip on her website of her performing "Don't Love Me" (also on the album) at Puckett's.

HOLLY WILLIAMS/Mama

Writer: none listed; Producer: Justin Niebank & Holly Williams; Publisher: none listed; Mercury

—Produced with acoustic sparkle, this upbeat ode to mama is also written with deep truth and gifted with a delicious melody. Holly seems to improve in giant steps with each release. I think I'm falling in love.

JEFF GRIFFITH/Dip Me In Beer

Writer: Jeff Griffith/Hobson Smith; Producer: Bill Green; Publisher: none listed, BMI; BGM (888-455-5504)

—He wants to be thrown into "a redneck mosh pit," whatever that is. Who says nobody makes honky-tonk music anymore? You don't get any more "honky" than this.

JIMMY WAYNE/I'll Be That

Writer: Jimmy Wayne/Bob Regan/Kevin Paige; Producer: Mark Bright; Publisher: Grandma Dynamite/Green Hills/Travelers Ridge/Regan/Big Loud Bucks/Universal/Z Songs/K.P.P./B.D.A.J., ASCAP/BMI; Valory Music

—Love the breathless rhythm track and the softly sensuous singing. This fulfilling-fantasies ditty rushes by like a cool, gentle wind in your face.

THE PARKS/As Long As You're Goin' My Way

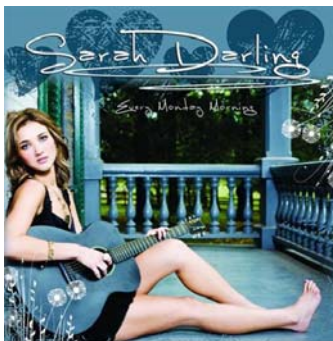
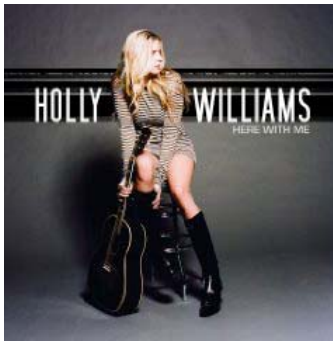
Writer: Johnny Park/Clint Park/Brett Beavers; Producer: Johnny Park & Clint Park; Publisher: WB/Warner-Tamerlane/Sony-ATV Tree/Run the Tropline, ASCAP/BMI; Carolwood

—The production is too "busy" sounding, the vocal is mixed too low in it, and the song doesn't kick in until they get to the chorus.

DOLLY PARTON/Everyday People

Writer: Sylvester Stewart; Producer: Mike Post; Publisher: none listed; RCA Legacy (track)

—What a gal: Her *9 to 5* musical opens on Broadway, and one week later it is nominated for four Tony Awards! The 1980 movie that inspired it also inspired a Dolly



concept album called *9 to 5 and Odd Jobs*. That LP has now been reissued on CD with three bonus tracks including this previously unissued, sprightly rendition of the Sly and the Family Stone classic. The other two bonuses are a frothing disco remix and a karaoke track of the title tune.

TRACE ADKINS/All I Ask For Anymore

Writer: Casey Beathard/Tim James; Producer: Frank Rogers; Publisher: Sony-ATV Acuff-Rose/Warner Tamerlane/T Bird's, BMI; Capitol Nashville (track)

—Trace with a string section? You bet. On a stately, inspirational, common-man ballad, no less. I've always said this guy is underrated as a vocalist, and this is one of his most expressive performances ever.

NATHAN LEE JACKSON/Small Town Rain

Writer: none listed; Producer: Jeff Glixman; Publisher: none listed; CO5/Star City (615-469-1756)

—Nicely done. The production rocks

happily, and his earnest vocal is as comfy as a well-worn shoe. This kid has the goods.

JOHN ANDERSON/Cold Coffee And Hot Beer

Writer: none listed; Producer: James Stroud & John Anderson; Publisher: none listed; Country Crossing (track) (615-750-5938)

—Drawling and bluesy, this totally swings. John is eternally cool. Somebody get the name of that barrelhouse piano player.

CHARLIE ROBISON/Beautiful Day

Writer: Charlie Robison; Producer: Charlie Robison; Publisher: Bantex, BMI; Dualtone (track) (www.dualtone.com)

—The title tune to Charlie's new CD chronicles one woe after another in sunny L.A. The track is excellent, with dynamite country-rock guitar and snazzy organ riffs. And it goes without saying that his steeped-in-Texas vocal performance is a winner. Most of the collection is self-penned, but there are also a pair of Keith Gattis tunes, a rocking number courtesy of Bobby Bare Jr. and an evocative cover of Bruce Springsteen's "Racing in the Street."

SARAH DARLING/Jack Of Hearts

Writer: Sarah Darling/Marc Beeson/Don Pfrimmer; Producer: Jimmy Nichols; Publisher: Want a Fresh One/Sarah Darling/Crossfire 3/Wounded Sky/EGBE, ASCAP; Black River (track) (www.sarahdarling.com)

—Evidently, Sarah was featured on a 2003 E! network reality show called *The Entertainers*. You couldn't prove it by me, but I know a singer when I hear one. The production is percussively perfect, and the extremely well written song has a melodic hook and/or an ear-catching line around every corner. The album is called *Every Monday Morning*, and I strongly urge you to give it—and this single—your full attention.