A PUBLICATION OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

Magazine

MAY 2024

HARDY
Talks Mental Health

In this issue:

EXPLORING MENTAL HEALTH IN MUSIC

COUNTING DOWN TO CMA FEST 2024

CONNECTING THE TOURING INDUSTRY ONE GIG AT A TIME

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HELLO, MEMBERS!



Hello CMA Members!

2024 has already been a year to celebrate, and we're happy to share the good news in this edition of *CMA Close Up Magazine*.

Since you last heard from us in December, we have celebrated those who work behind the scenes at the CMA Touring Awards, honored songwriters at the CMA Triple Play Awards, and announced three inspirational individuals who will be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame later this fall. We've also traveled around the globe witnessing the international success and growth of Country Music. Our genre is stronger than ever...thanks to you.

In this issue you'll get an inside look at the career of one soon-to-be Country Music Hall of Fame inductee, a rundown of the Touring and Triple Play Awards, a recap of the C2C and CMC Rocks festivals, plus a preview of next month's CMA Fest. You'll also read about what some of your fellow CMA members have been up to and learn about the many professional development tools that are available through your CMA membership.

While this year has been full of successes, we know that the pressures of daily life, especially within our industry, can often weigh heavily on us. With May being Mental Health Awareness Month, this edition of *Close Up* also focuses on mental health and our commitment to fostering open dialogue, eradicating stigma and providing resources to support your journey – whatever that may look like.

I consider it such a privilege to be part of this very special community and it is an honor to serve you as this year's CMA Membership Chair. I appreciate you all and everything you do to keep Country Music thriving. More exciting times to come!

Warm regards,

Sally Williams CMA Board Membership Chair

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

By Dr. Chayim Newman Psychologist | Co-Founder, Amber Health

Founded in 2020 by Dr. Chayim Newman and Zack Borer as an expansion of their work with music industry professionals, Amber Health provides comprehensive, evidence-based mental health services for all sectors of the music industry, highlighting the human experience of those who work in it.

Dr. Newman holds his PhD in Clinical Psychology. His private practice, specializing in clinical care for artists, touring crew, and other music industry members, focuses on the use of a variety of therapeutic modalities (ACT, CBT, mindfulness, traditional psychotherapy) in supporting psychological and emotional wellbeing. Having been involved in the music industry for over two decades as a touring performer, event producer, and artist liaison prior to launching Amber Health, Dr. Newman possesses a first-hand understanding of its unique challenges and stresses.

Dr. Newman was also the co-founder of the Tour Health Research Initiative (THRIV), dedicated to conducting research on mental health in the touring sector, and was the co-creator of the weekly Come Together music industry online support groups.

In early 2020, just before the pandemic, we set out to conduct what became the largest research study in the music industry's history, looking at the prevalence of mental health issues for touring artists and crews. Since that time, we've replicated our findings with production teams, festival staff, and across numerous industry organizations. The results were revelatory and yet confirmed what many of us have known for years – that humans in the music industry are experiencing mental health challenges at an alarming rate

Oftentimes, articles containing "tips" on bettering one's mental health are filled with little more than buzzwords and the newest pop psychology trends. As clinicians with decades of combined experience, we know that supporting and maintaining one's mental health is a life-long endeavor, requiring intention and commitment, and with no shortcuts or magic bullets. Below, rather than quick fixes, we offer some thoughtful ways to approach our human experience, hopefully leading to better coping when times get tough, and, ultimately, the ability to lead a more meaningful day-to-day life.

THE WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

As those in substance use recovery learn early in their healing journey, we often spend too much time fighting against the things we can't control – leading to frustration, resentment and lackluster results in creating lasting change. Mental health outcomes improve when we work to accept the experiences we can't control, even when uncomfortable, and shift our attention and efforts to improving those parts of our experience that we can control.

THIS MOMENT IS MANAGEABLE

Think about every single traffic jam we'll ever sit in for the rest of our lives, or every argument we'll have in our relationships, or every hour we'll spend in the studio trying to get that vocal take recorded exactly right. Overwhelming, right? Yet that is how our minds impulsively function, worrying about moments in the future and stressing about situations that, even if likely to occur eventually, aren't occurring right now.

Fundamentally, that anxiety is vital to our survival. It helps us plan and feel equipped to address the challenges that eventually show up, but it also leads

to stress and discomfort – and our worrying about some future situation often doesn't bring us closer to solving it.

This one moment we're currently living in is often manageable. Most of the time, we have the inner tools to deal with whatever is happening right in front of us. Our work is to learn to recognize our mind's tendency to jump to future worries, and to simply invite our attention back to whatever is happening in the room around us. One show at a time, one recording session at a time, and one moment at a time.

PAIN IS A STREET SIGN

Our society continually reinforces the message that our goal should be to maximize pleasure and, more importantly, to minimize pain. We seek ways, some healthy and some not, to reduce our experiences of pain. Yet, pain is a normal part of life and our attempts to avoid pain can often make our circumstances much, much worse.

But there is another way of approaching pain, especially when it comes to our emotions. Whether it's sadness, anxiety, worry, stress, or frustration, emotional pain is also an internal "street sign" pointing at something that matters to us deeply. We don't get anxious or frustrated about outcomes that don't matter to us, we simply ignore them or quickly acknowledge them and move on. Where we hurt is where we care.

If we shift our approach from fighting our emotional discomfort to asking ourselves, "Why am I feeling this? What does it say about what matters to me?", we can then shift our energies towards leaning into the things that we're being reminded are important to us, rather than being railroaded by the feelings that appeared along the way.

FINDING YOUR WHY

The great philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche famously wrote, "he who has a why to live for can bear almost any how." At Amber Health, we see this daily in our work supporting the humans of the music industry. Touring is stressful, recording is stressful, and working in the companies of the industry is stressful. Magical, but stressful nonetheless. When individuals reconnect to their why - their sense of a deeper purpose and what is meaningful for them in their work, the how - the circumstances of their day-to-day and the stresses - become much more bearable.

THE POWER OF A FIVE-MINUTE ANCHOR

Behavior change is difficult. Really difficult. It's why many people fail at managing their weight, quitting drinking, or exercising consistently, especially over long periods of time. When it comes to behavior change and when it comes to good mental health, consistency is key. Which is why the best behavior change starts very, very small. It starts with behaviors that we can stick to consistently, every day, if possible, throughout our lifetime. Don't sleep on the power of five minutes, when those five minutes become a consistent part of our daily routine. Everyone we support has been encouraged to commit to a small anchor behavior of their choosing, every day, whether on the road or at home. Those who stick with it often report that it has changed their daily experience in a significant way, and for many, it has become the highlight of their day. Whether it's stretching or physical movement, a breathing exercise, journaling, meditation, prayer, or even a brief walk, investing in your mental health for five minutes is a daily act of reminding yourself that you matter and that you are worth taking care of. In the intensity of this magical and challenging industry, we can all use that reminder.

To read more about the research findings or learn more about how to get support for your tour or team, visit us at amber.health.

RESEARCH

Our research team's 2020 survey (pre-pandemic) revealed never-before-seen data on the health and wellness of touring artists and crew.

The findings were published in the *Journal* of *Psychiatric Research* in 2021.



34%

reported suffering from clinical levels of depression vs 7% for the general population



74%

reported touring strained their relationships



26%

reported serious suicidal ideation (either a previous suicide attempt or considered suicide within the past year)



45%

reported drinking alcohol regularly



58%

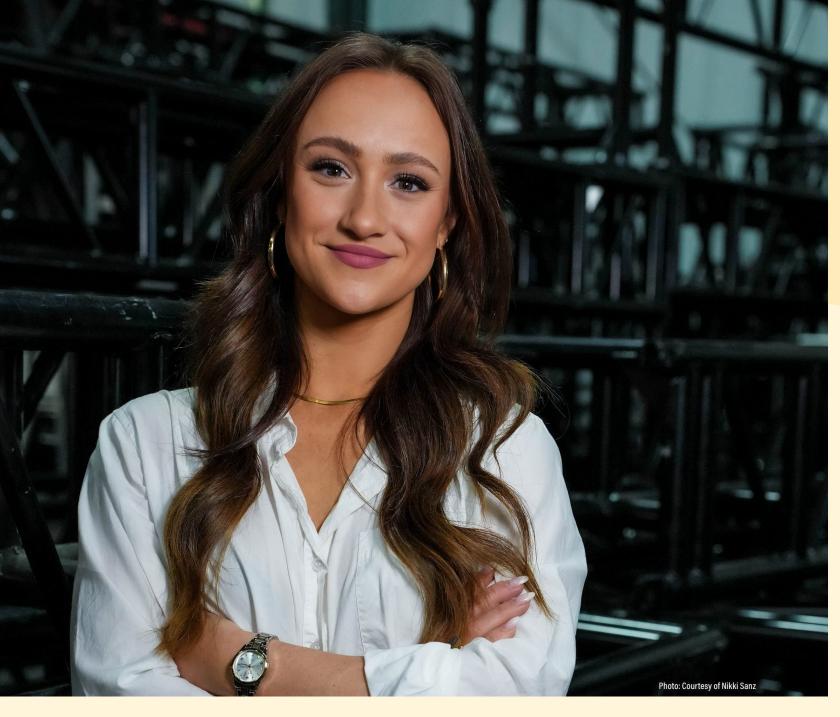
reported having lost a tour colleague to suicide



17%

reported attending therapy even monthly (or more often)

THINGS WE CAN'T CONTROL OTHER PEOPLE'S MOODS OTHER PEOPLE'S BEHAVIORS STRESSFUL NATURE OF THE BUSINESS AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS & FEELINGS EXTERNAL METRICS OF SUCCESS OTHER PEOPLE'S LIKES DISLIKES OUR COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS



GIGGS: CONNECTING THE TOURING INDUSTRY

By Lisa Valentine

The power of live music is undeniable. When the pandemic brought concerts and touring to a halt, the absence of that shared experience and electricity that only a live show can bring was felt around the world. Now that live music is back and bigger than ever, teams are touring full force and making sure their crews are filled with the best of the best. Whether you're looking to staff a tour or a touring pro looking for your next job on the road, the new platform GIGGS connects top talent with the companies and camps that bring tours to life.

GIGGS Founder and touring pro Nikki Sanz moved to Nashville the day after she graduated college

because she was constantly told that to get into the touring world you needed to know the right people, and she was determined to meet them. She built her career working on shows for artists such as Eric Church, George Strait, and many more. Coming out of the pandemic in the spring of 2022, she found it harder than ever to fully staff qualified crews. She saw the need for connecting tour pros with employers looking to hire that went beyond the word-of-mouth pipeline that has been the norm of the touring world.

"I was struggling to find my next gig, but it is even harder to find good people to staff these tours," explains Sanz. She continuously saw that there were qualified people looking for gigs and companies in need of hiring, but often they weren't finding each other.

Sanz launched GIGGS in November of 2023 as a way to bridge that gap. "I've likened it to the LinkedIn of the live production industry...It's just an efficient way to find people you never would've found."

Touring professionals in all aspects of live production can sign up for an account and build out a profile to showcase their resume



and interests, as well as connect with other freelance professionals on the platform. Companies of any size can post listings for jobs they're looking to fill, including touring gigs, local hire gigs, or non-touring permanent job needs. Once individuals build out their profiles, they can simply apply and have their profile sent directly to the person hiring. The platform opens up the hiring pool exponentially because it gives access to qualified individuals from all over the world.

Since its launch, GIGGS has had approximately 10,000 individuals register on the platform and hundreds of jobs have already been filled. Over 100 companies of all sizes, including Live Nation, Red Light Management, Clair Global, PRG, and PTP Live have hired using the platform.

Sanz was inspired to build a program that helped open communication and opportunities in a way that broke down barriers to entry. She wanted to create an affordable tool that she wished had existed when she was coming up in the industry. Keeping signup costs low is a huge priority in order to be inclusive of companies of all sizes and individuals at any stage in their career.

"It's the connector, it's the community builder, and it's professionalizing our industry."

"I would like to have it be up to me, if I get a job or not," explains Sanz. "Not leaving it up to someone else putting my name in and putting in a good word for me, so this is giving more opportunity and access to all people. It's giving a voice to any underrepresented group. Now everyone is in the same playing field."

She continues to place great importance on building relationships and works to connect these professionals in real life by setting up informal hangs for GIGGS members all over the country. After years of living and working on the road, Sanz knows that the tour life is unlike any other industry, and she wants GIGGS to help the industry connect.

"One, it's professionalizing our industry so that we can find jobs more efficiently for the first time ever instead of letting it be up to word of mouth," she says of GIGGS. "[Touring pros] are too technical, too advanced, and these jobs are too high paying to leave it up to that method. Secondly, we need community. We created a centralized hub for the best professionals and companies to connect in what can be a lonely industry. Lastly, it's leveling the playing field for everybody. It's letting people have access to word-of-mouth jobs they would not normally hear about. And it's for employers to find top-tier talent that they would not normally have the chance to meet. GIGGS brings them together. So it's the connector, it's the community builder, and it's professionalizing our industry."

With the platform successfully off the ground, there are plans for GIGGS to expand into other areas of the live production world, including experiential marketing, sports, TV, film, theater, and more.

"We're a little crazy," says Sanz. "We work crazy, weird jobs, and we freelancers don't have stability like a lot of people in this world. But, there's something about events, the live experience, entertainment, and music that just brings us to life."

Whether you're a live production professional looking for your next gig or a company looking to hire, visit www.GIGGS.live.

WE ARE Country Music's PREMIER TRADE ASSOCIATION

We are built by the Country Music community. With 16 categories of Membership, we ensure our benefits include impactful and necessary resources for the individuals who make everything work behind the scenes. From networking, mental health resources, guidance on health insurance, ongoing training and more, we pride ourselves on providing benefits to make your life better, your career stronger and your community fuller.







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LEARN MORE AND APPLY

CMA INDUSTRY MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

GINA MILLER

MILLER IS AN INDUSTRY EXECUTIVE AND MUSICIAN WHOSE DESIRE TO SERVE AND ADVOCATE FOR THOSE IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY LED HER TO BECOME AN INDUSTRY TIER MEMBER

By Cillea Houghton

Gina Miller's life purpose is to serve through music, a purpose she's been operating in since birth. Raised in South Memphis, TN, Miller was born with music in her blood. Her family tree is comprised of musicians and vocalists, including her mother who was the local piano teacher and church pianist. Miller was enrolled in piano lessons at a young age, sang and played instruments growing up, and was in choir and marching band through college. She later got a degree in music and was licensed to teach music in school. "I was born to do music," Miller tells CMA Close Up. "I was engulfed and surrounded by music since birth. It's a huge part of my life's work. It's totally connected to my purpose and why I am here. Music is my life."

Miller turned her passion into a profession after she moved to Nashville and connected with the CEO of Light Records, now a subsidiary of MNRK Nashville (formerly Entertainment One), comprised of many of the gospel artists and songs Miller grew up listening to. "I said to him, 'I need to come work for you,'" she recalls asserting. Every day for nearly a year, Miller showed up at the office for an "untraditional internship" where she worked for free and learned the ropes. Her tenacious spirit led to a part-time coordinator position, with Miller spending more than 20 years climbing the ranks to her current position as Senior Vice President and General Manager at MNRK. Miller and her son own Origins Music Group, a management and artist development company where they manage artists, consult and create live shows in Country and Americana music.

"I love being able to serve," Miller affirms. "I love putting myself in a position to share, to create opportunities, to educate, and to give access. So, if I can do any of those things, at any point in time, I feel like I'm absolutely working and walking in my purpose." Miller is also a board member of The Recording Academy, Americana Music Association, and Music Business Association, in addition to recently lending her voice in such spaces as the National Museum of African American Music's panel on amplifying Black women's voices in Country Music and Middle Tennessee State University's Women of True Grit event. "I frequently get the opportunity to not only advocate for women, but for artists and minorities," she continues. "It is an honor to do so. Sometimes it takes those that have the loudest voices in the room to speak up and say something. The greatest gift one can be given is responsibility. I believe it is my responsibility to make sure that certain groups are seen, heard, valued, respected, and afforded access and the opportunity to have a place."

Another way the Nashville music executive empowers artists is by allowing them to form their own identities and show up as their "highest self." She also helps put resources in place for artists dealing with mental health struggles, such as encouraging them to seek therapy, and helping artists or executives get the resources they need if they're caregivers for aging parents or if they have entrepreneurial pursuits. "That's another extension of being an advocate," she remarks. "Advocating for artists to have the best mental health is really important because that's a part of who they are as humans. If we are going to have the best artists in the world, we want them to be the best in every area of their life."

Miller's advocacy also extends into her role as a CMA member. Wanting to be part of organizations that represent all sectors of the music industry, she joined CMA after working with Country artists, as well as her many friends who work in Country Music.

"Being a CMA member has definitely helped when it comes to networking and strengthening relationships with other executives working within the Country space," she explains. "That's been a great benefit to me." Miller believes that her presence at CMA creates a space for other people of color to have their voices heard in Country Music.

"Representation does matter," she states. "I know how important it is for CMA to support minority artists, so being able to bring my own expertise and presence to the table I think encourages other people that they can see me and see that there's a place for them too that's not exclusive to me. There's a welcoming party when they join and committee for them to serve as well."



CMA CLOSE UP Events

May 23: New Member Orientation

New and returning members are welcome to attend this informational lunch and learn all about CMA Membership, its benefits, inclusions, resources and more. Drinks and light bites will be served. More information and an official RSVP will be sent at a later date. These orientations are currently only open to Professional Tier members. Please email membership@cmamember.com if you're interested in attending.

June 6-9: CMA Fest

Experience four days and nights of Country Music in downtown Nashville at CMA Fest, the Ultimate Country Music Fan Experience. More information regarding member-exclusive events during our annual festival will be sent in our CMA Membership newsletter closer to June.

June 26: June MemberSIPS

June's edition of MemberSIPS will focus on "Genre Bending." Please contact membership@cmamember.com for more information.

July 18: New Member Open House

Head to CMA HQ for a laid-back member hangout and networking hour. Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about and connect with your CMA Membership community.

July 23: July MemberSIPS

This month's MemberSIPS event will focus on professional development opportunities in the music industry. More details will be shared closer to the event. Please contact membership@cmamember.com for more information.

July 28-30: CMA EDU Leadership Summit

Created to develop and support the next generation of music industry leaders, CMA EDU is offered to students who demonstrate a drive to succeed in the music business. The multi-day conference, held at CMA HQ, will include three days of professional development training, industry education and community-building opportunities for college students from around the country.

August 22: August MemberSIPS

August's MemberSIPS event will focus on songwriting and will be hosted by Nashville Songwriters Association International. More details will be shared closer to the event. Please contact **membership@cmamember.com** for more information.



September 10: September MemberSIPS

September's MemberSIPS event will focus on how to build a business case for expanding your work and will take place at CMA HQ. More details will be shared closer to the event. Please contact membership@cmamember.com for more information.

September 17: Music Teachers of Excellence

The CMA Foundation's annual philanthropic event honors 30 music teachers—10 teachers from Metro Nashville Public Schools, 10 from districts across the state of Tennessee, and 10 from across the United States. Honorees are selected for their commitment to bringing a high-quality music program to their students and the impact they have had on their school community through music.

September 19: New Member Orientation

This is a second opportunity to explore all the benefits, resources, and research available to you as a CMA Member. These orientations are currently only open to Professional Tier members. Come learn more about how to make the most out of Membership and meet other members!

October 16: October MemberSIPS

October's MemberSIPS event will focus on targeting college markets and will be hosted at CMA HQ. More details will be shared closer to the event. Please contact membership@cmamember.com for more information.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

























A CASE STUDY FOR EXPANDING MUSIC AND ARTS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

FROM THE DESK OF TIFFANY KERNS, CMA FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Music and arts education are vital, inspiring the next generation of thinkers, creators, innovators, and leaders. A decade ago, our community wholeheartedly rallied behind the creation of the CMA Foundation to further support music education. Since then, the CMA Foundation has invested more than \$30 million across the country, thanks largely to the community's generosity. In just a few weeks, we will welcome more than 300 artists and tens of thousands of fans to Nashville for CMA Fest, where a portion of proceeds are donated directly to the CMA Foundation. We often say it takes a village, and we are so incredibly proud that our 7,000+ CMA members are part of that village.

The CMA Foundation supports budding musicians while also leveraging the impact that music has on students' development overall. Research shows that music and arts education are critical to schools because they help improve

academic achievement in math and reading, increase student participation and classroom engagement, improve attendance, and enhance social and emotional development. Music education is proven to be an integral part of brain development, human connection, and stress relief. It also helps students over the biggest hurdle to learning: showing up and participating. Our work aims to ensure that the benefits of music are available to every student — in all communities — by providing support and resources to teachers, amplifying the incredible work of music educators, and raising public awareness on the issues that are faced on a local and national level.

We launched a major initiative, State of the Arts (SOTA), in 2018-19 as a public-private partnership with the Tennessee Department of Education supporting music education in eight school districts. Through this initial

targeted investment, we learned that the variety and quality of arts education programming in Tennessee differed from school to school and district to district. This led us in 2021 to launch a needs assessment made available to all school districts in Tennessee so that we could truly understand the inequities in arts education and identify solutions. The CMA Foundation partnered with The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation to conduct the assessment.

"I truly believe that State of the Arts is the CMA Foundation's most impactful work to date."

This month, we will release the full findings from our multi-year State of the Arts project. I truly believe that State of the Arts is the CMA Foundation's most impactful work to date. The report, titled "Face the Music: A Case Study for Expanding Music and Arts Education in Schools" shines a light on how state and local education agencies, decision makers, and funders can make better and more insightful investments in programs, sharing promising practices and recommendations for sustainable programming so that all students can have the life-changing experience of studying arts and music.

From a CMA Foundation perspective, this report is a tool that will significantly inform our investment strategy, while also helping guide prospective donors in charitable giving. We know that we must have this level of detail and information from teachers, school leaders, and districts to make strategic and impactful investments. It allows us to move from meeting one-time needs to strengthening the systems and decision makers that support music education in our schools. Focusing on the school district level allows us to look at the whole community, not just single schools. The assessment results also provide a road map directly to the participating districts to help them achieve their goals for each student. Our hope is that others will see the value of this work as a model to advocate for equitable access to music and arts education for all students, replicating projects like this across the country.

We believe that by highlighting the data detailed in this paper, we can advocate for greater support and investment in music and arts education initiatives, and we can inform the public about the specific policies, resources, and funding needed to eliminate barriers challenging student access throughout the state of Tennessee. The report lifts up a series of recommendations that engage multiple stakeholders — educators, policymakers, philanthropy, and the entire community.

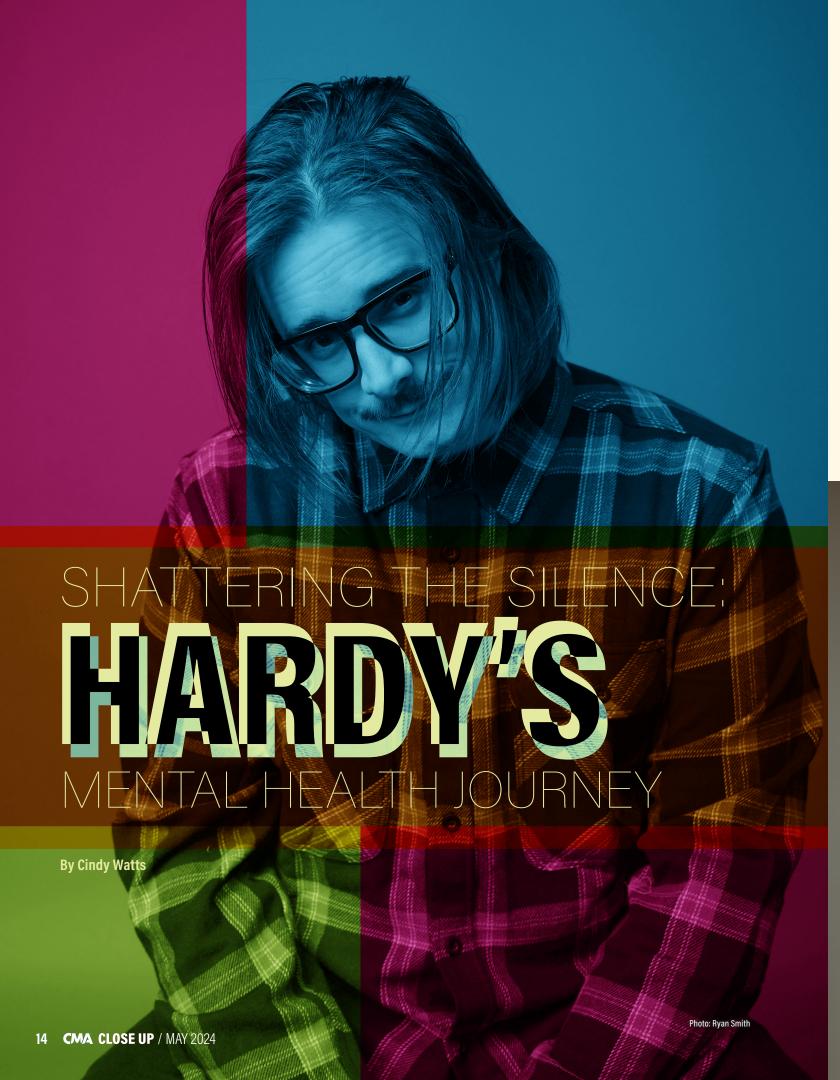
The research is clear: arts and music classes are a must-have, not a nice-to-have. Now is the time for communities — including government at every level,



philanthropy, nonprofits, educators, parents, school leaders and others — to prioritize these important programs so every student can thrive. We strongly believe that each of us has a role to play in supporting music education for our children. We can all participate in advocating for what is needed while celebrating the wins and the successes we are seeing from individual teachers in classrooms, and in schools and districts throughout Tennessee. Together, we can work toward ensuring that every student, in every state, has access to enriching and transformative music and arts experiences that empower them to reach their full potential.

As we take part in CMA Fest this summer and celebrate this year's Music Teachers of Excellence in September, join us in celebrating the importance of music in our lives, identify the ways you can individually and collectively give back, and very simply — thank a music teacher.

As always, if you are interested in learning more about engaging with the CMA Foundation, please reach out to **contact@cmafoundation.org.**



Michael Hardy, known as HARDY artistically, was playing golf in October when he started having chest pains. His heart rate spiked, he was short of breath and his hands went numb. The two-time CMA Award winner was convinced he was having a heart attack. He called a doctor, then drove himself to the hospital.

"They were like, 'You're good, dude,'" Hardy recalls.
"'We think you just had a panic attack.' And I was
like, 'Oh my God.'"

His health scare eventually prompted him to cancel several shows so he could devote himself to his mental health. But it took him a while – and a couple of other close calls – before he knew what to do.

May is Mental Health Awareness month, and Hardy hopes that sharing his mental health journey will encourage others with similar struggles to seek help. He also hopes publicizing his story will educate friends and families of those who suffer about the realities of anxiety.

"Anxiety is a natural response to stress, and it's the most common mental health condition in the U.S.," explains Miles Adcox, chairman and proprietor of Onsite, a Nashville-based mental wellness facility. "I've been at the intersection of music and mental wellness for over 20 years and find the demands of the music industry, its grueling schedules and constant pressure can make creatives more susceptible to conditions like anxiety."

Adcox says that artists like Hardy, who choose to be authentic and vulnerable about the highs and lows in their lives and careers, have the opportunity to encourage people in need of hope that those in his profession may never otherwise reach.

"I couldn't be prouder of Hardy for using his influence to illuminate such an important and common challenge that, if discussed more openly, can change and save lives."

Hardy believes there is a negative stigma around depression and anxiety because it's complicated for people who don't suffer from it to be able to understand why those who do "just can't snap out of it."

The singer didn't understand it, either, until he was forced to face it that day on the golf course. His first severe anxiety attack happened near the first anniversary of the tour bus crash, which seriously injured him and several of his band and crew.





A few days later, he had another panic attack. This time, Hardy was home in bed with his wife, and he knew it wasn't a heart attack, but he didn't understand why he was having them or why they were happening then. The attacks struck when he felt safe and relaxed. He was being healthy, had stopped drinking and was seeing a therapist to come to grips with the new reality of his life and career.

"The feelings I had were very similar to the moments after the wreck when I thought I was going to die," he says. "It was just this helpless moment of, 'I'm dying, and there's nothing I can do about it.' It was really, really, really scary because if you've been through it, it's helpless, and it's impossible to snap out of it once it's going too far."

Hardy called his manager and then left to play his weekend shows the next day.

"It was the hardest thing I've ever had to do because I was in such a horrible mental state, the worst that I've ever been in on stage," he says.

He made it through the first concert, but Hardy couldn't complete the weekend. His father and a friend from his hometown in Mississippi had come to the show in Talladega, AL, and planned to go to a NASCAR race with the singer the next day. Hardy was too overwhelmed to attend. He went home to figure out what to do next.

"I immediately just said, 'Alright, I'm getting help. I'm not suffering through this without knowing what to do," Hardy says, explaining he canceled a weekend of shows and called Adcox for guidance.

Hardy completed three days of intensive trauma therapy, which he described as "really difficult." During the process, he learned that after someone experiences trauma, it takes an extended period of time to heal and not suffer from anxiety. The therapist explained anxiety was something Hardy would endure for the foreseeable future but that he could learn how to navigate and control it.

"The biggest thing I learned at Onsite was how to handle it," he says, sharing his two most effective tips for controlling anxiety.

Hardy learned anxiety is a feeling – just like any other – and it will pass.

"Nobody lives in an emotion," he says. "Nobody lives and breathes every day dealing with anger or with even joy or jealousy. Anxiety is just another emotion, and most waves of anxiety last 10-to-15 minutes, and then the big wave is gone."

If Hardy can feel the anxiety start to creep in, he tries to address it and say, "What's up, anxiety? How's it going?" Then, he looks back on it in 20 minutes and acknowledges it was a brutal wave, but he survived it.

He also speaks to the anxiety instead of from the anxiety. The difference is instead of saying, "I'm freaking out," he says, "I have anxiety right now."

"If you speak for the anxiety, it's like you're standing beside it instead of embodying it and letting it become a part of you," he explains.

To manage his anxiety further, Hardy cut his touring in 2024 from 60-plus dates to approximately 34 shows, with most of his travel concentrated in the summer months. He may tour more extensively in the future, but for now enjoys being home on the weekends and not rushing to leave again.

"The touring was taking its toll on my sleep and my body and everything else," he says. "I want to get out on the forefront of all that. I don't regret the decision one single second."

Taking care of himself and his well-being continues to be a top priority and sets a rare example for other artists in the genre. Regardless of how many shows he decides to play this year, Hardy wants those with anxiety to know he's still fighting alongside them.

"You're not alone, and I got you," he says. "We can all go through this together. I have this platform, and I'm just saying, 'If you know someone with anxiety, give that person some grace. Put your arms around them. Don't judge them. It's a very, very real thing."



CMA PROFESSIONAL MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

LYDIA SCHULTZ CAHILL

A MEMBER OF THE PROFESSIONAL TIER, CAHILL IS A SENIOR DIRECTOR AT SESAC WITH A PASSION FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND PEOPLE

By Jeremy Chua

Country Music has always been a part of Lydia Schultz Cahill's life. Growing up in a small farming community, the Wisconsin native recalls spending her younger years farming with her dad, listening to Country songs on the tractor, and watching the CMA Awards. She didn't choose Country Music — Country Music chose her.

A first-generation college graduate, Cahill's college journey began with an "undecided major" at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point for two years, before moving to Nashville for Belmont University's Music Business program in the winter of 2010. "I didn't know about the different parts of the music business. I didn't know about publishing or about PROs (Performance Rights Organizations). But I always wanted to be around music," Cahill tells *CMA Close Up.* "So, I thought, 'Well, I'm not around it here in Wisconsin, so I guess I'll move and try it."

At Belmont, Cahill found her passion for the songwriting community—something she's since been enamored with. "I learned that Reba McEntire didn't always write the songs she was singing. Somebody else wrote those songs. So, in learning about songwriters, I thought, 'There are people that get to write songs for people for a living? That's a job? I want to help them,'" Cahill recalls.

After receiving her degree, Cahill worked as an assistant, in the Legal and Finance Department at Broken Bow Records and as Creative Director at Magic Mustang Music, before joining SESAC in 2016 and rising to her current role as Senior Director of Creative Services, where she frequently works with publishers, managers, booking agents and songwriters, including Blanco Brown, Allison Veltz Cruz, Chris LaCorte, Jon Nite, Pillbox Patti, and Jenny Tolman.

Cahill's day-to-day primarily revolves around supporting SESAC songwriters. "They are the reason I have a job and get to call Nashville home." Cahill shares. "In my role I am kind of a bridge between the songwriters and SESAC. I make sure all the not-so-creative things like song registration are handled so they can focus on being creative." In her role she also works closely with publishers, managers, lawyers, and agents. "My network is very important to me because it helps me to better the careers and lives of the songwriters I work with."

A CMA member since 2013, Cahill says she's experienced first-hand the support CMA provides its members. "I feel like CMA is very open to supporting their members however members ask to be supported. They're very good listeners and they always do a great job at showing up for their membership community," she shares while also underscoring the importance of active members for CMA "to continue the good work that they're doing." In her capacity as an industry professional, Cahill hopes to help reduce the mental health stigma and help peers dealing with imposter syndrome, burnout, performance anxiety and other related issues. That's why as things slowed down in 2020, she seized the opportunity to do something she's long wanted to do — enroll in the University of Tennessee's Masters of Social Work program. "If not now, when?" Cahill thought to herself. "'You've always been really passionate about mental health, and you've never had this type of downtime in the evenings. Why don't you use this time to go back to school?" Cahill has taken her Master's program "very part-time" to prioritize her job at SESAC, and she plans to keep it that way after graduating in May.

"I will remain 100% committed to my role at SESAC while taking on a small caseload of clients," Cahill shares. "My education has been extremely beneficial in providing mental health education services to songwriters while in my role at SESAC. Having the language and network of other [therapists] has made me a resource for others in our industry seeking help. Finding ways to use this degree effectively for good in my current role has been really rewarding."

With her passion for mental wellness and people, Cahill hopes to use the knowledge she's gleaned to help fellow professionals navigate mental health problems and be a voice for the struggling.

"This industry can be a 24/7 job. I think [normalizing] taking the time to seek the therapies and treatments we need to keep us successful is so important," Cahill says. "Working to break the stigma around mental health is a must. If you were struggling and sought help, sharing your story can be powerful. You never know who you could inspire or who might need to hear your story. I always like to remind people we are humans first and humans make mistakes. It is okay to ask for the help you need."











CMA TOURING AWARDS

This February, the touring community took the rare opportunity to come together and honor 20 of the top touring professionals in Country Music. The touring sector, which now comprises CMA's largest membership category, was celebrated at the CMA Touring Awards during an unforgettable ceremony hosted by two-time CMA Entertainer of the Year, Keith Urban.

CREW OF THE YEAR

"All-American Road Show Tour" Crew - (Chris Stapleton)

BACKLINE TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR

Joel "Tico" Jimenez - (Thomas Rhett)

BUSINESS MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Duane Clark - (Flood, Bumstead, McCready & McCarthy)

COACH/TRUCK DRIVER OF THE YEAR

Erin Siegfried - (Lainey Wilson)

FRONT OF HOUSE ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

Arpad Sayko - (Chris Stapleton)

LIGHTING DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

Mac Mosier - (Chris Stapleton)

MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Mandelyn Monchick - (Red Light Management)

MONITOR ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

Bryan "Opie" Baxley - (Kenny Chesney)

PRODUCTION MANAGER OF THE YEAR

John Garriott - (Chris Stapleton)

PUBLICIST OF THE YEAR

Tyne Parrish - (The GreenRoom PR)

STAGE MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Todd Green - (Chris Stapleton)

SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY OF THE YEAR

Clair Global - (Nashville, TN)

TALENT AGENT OF THE YEAR

Jay Williams - (WME)

TALENT BUYER/PROMOTER OF THE YEAR

Louis Messina - (The Messina Group)

TOUR MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Meg Miller - (Lainey Wilson)

TOURING MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

Paul Franklin - (Chris Stapleton/Vince Gill - Steel Guitar)

TOUR VIDEOGRAPHER/PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

CeCe Dawson - (Lainey Wilson)

TOUR VIDEO DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

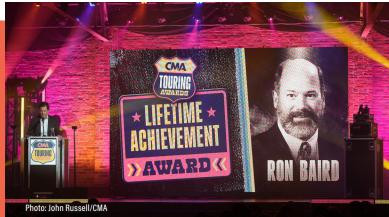
Chris Jones - (Jelly Roll)

VENUE OF THE YEAR

Red Rocks Amphitheatre - (Morrison, CO)

UNSUNG HERO OF THE YEAR

Kelsey Maynard - (Old Dominion - Assistant Tour Manager)



CMA HONORS RON BAIRD WITH CMA TOURING LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

This year, Ron Baird, former agent and head of Creative Artist Agency's Nashville office, was posthumously honored with the 2023 CMA Touring Lifetime Achievement Award. Baird's stepson as well as co-head of CAA's Nashville office, Marc Dennis, accepted the award on behalf of Baird, sharing the impact his stepfather had on the touring community.

CMA TOURING MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

CMA also unveiled its new Touring Mentorship Program at the 2023 CMA Touring Awards. This program allows early-career touring professionals to gain knowledge and opportunities from industry veterans across seven roles, including Tour Manager, Band Leader/Musician, Production Manager, Production Assistant, Front of House Engineer, Monitor Engineer and Lighting Director/Designer. The six-month program will run from April to October, with mentors and mentees meeting once per month. Though mentors and mentees have already been chosen for this year's program, interested members are encouraged to visit the CMA member website to learn more about future opportunities.

2024 CMA TRIPLE PLAY AWARDS

On April 15, the Country Music community honored seven songwriters at the 2024 CMA Triple Play Awards. These awards are given to songwriters who have earned three No. 1s within a 12-month period based on the *Country Aircheck, Billboard* Country Airplay and *Billboard* Hot Country Songs charts. The ceremony took place at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville and was hosted by composer and CMA Board member, Jim Beavers.

THE 2024 CMA TRIPLE PLAY AWARD RECIPIENTS:

JELLY ROLL

"Son Of A Sinner," recorded by Jelly Roll

"Need A Favor," recorded by Jelly Roll

"Save Me," recorded by Jelly Roll featuring Lainey Wilson

ASHLEY GORLEY

"She Had Me At Heads Carolina," recorded by Cole Swindell

"You Proof," recorded by Morgan Wallen

"Last Night," recorded by Morgan Wallen

"What He Didn't Do," recorded by Carly Pearce

"Gold," recorded by Dierks Bentley

"Girl In Mine," recorded by Parmalee

"Thinkin' Bout Me," recorded by Morgan Wallen

"God Gave Me A Girl," recorded by Russell Dickerson

"World on Fire," recorded by Nate Smith

"Save Me The Trouble," recorded by Dan + Shay

"All I Need Is You," recorded by Chris Janson

"TRUCKBED," recorded by HARDY

CHARLIE HANDSOME

"Wasted On You," recorded by Morgan Wallen

"You Proof," recorded by Morgan Wallen

"Last Night," recorded by Morgan Wallen

CHASE McGILL

"With A Woman You Love," recorded by Justin Moore

"5 Foot 9," recorded by Tyler Hubbard

"Next Thing You Know," recorded by Jordan Davis

HUNTER PHELPS

"Best Thing Since Backroads," recorded by Jake Owen

"New Truck," recorded by Dylan Scott

"wait in the truck," recorded by HARDY featuring Lainey Wilson

JORDAN SCHMIDT

"wait in the truck," recorded by HARDY featuring Lainey Wilson

"Bury Me in Georgia," recorded by Kane Brown

"Watermelon Moonshine," recorded by Lainey Wilson

THOMAS RHETT

"Half Of Me," recorded by Thomas Rhett featuring Riley Green

"Angels (Don't Always Have Wings)," recorded by Thomas Rhett

"Stars Like Confetti," recorded by Dustin Lynch





CMA HONORS TROY TOMLINSON WITH CMA SONGWRITER ADVOCATE AWARD

During the ceremony, Troy Tomlinson was presented with the CMA Songwriter Advocate Award, an honor given to an individual who has continuously supported and advanced songwriting and the careers of songwriters. Throughout the night, Tomlinson was surprised with performances by Kenny Chesney and a writer's round featuring Chase McGill, Jim Beavers and Tom Douglas, celebrating his 40-year career promoting and advocating for songwriters. Artists, songwriters and industry personnel whose lives and work Tomlinson has touched also created a montage of video messages thanking and congratulating him on this achievement.

CULTIVATING THE GROWTH OF COUNTRY MUSIC IN THE U.K.

By Lisa Valentine

Over the past decade, the popularity of Country Music has continued to spread around the globe. While Nashville is known as "Music City" and the hub of the Country Music industry, Country consumption and growth in the U.K. market is continuing to turn heads. Decades of building relationships and cultivating an environment in the U.K. that is not only receptive to Country Music but is hungry for it, is showing tangible results across the United Kingdom more than ever before.

This summer Morgan Wallen and Shania Twain will headline two of the nine BST Hyde Park festival dates in central London. With a capacity of 65,000, this marks the first time Country artists have headlined a mainstream U.K. music festival, which underscores the huge strides the genre is making in the U.K.

According to the Official Charts Company (OCC), there has been a 40% increase in Country Music audio and video streams in 2023, which has outpaced the U.K.'s music industry streaming as a whole by 4x (the U.K. market had a 10.6% growth in 2023). Outside of Christmas music, Country Music is the fastest growing genre in the U.K. with one out of every 100 music streams in the U.K. being Country. The genre's market share comprises 1.2% of the total streams in the U.K., up from 0.96% in 2022. Typically, the fourth quarter of every year proves to be the lowest streaming quarter, however in 2023, the fourth quarter saw an increase of 7% in streams from the third quarter. Furthermore, this data

on Country Music in the U.K. does not encompass Taylor Swift's Country Music, which further demonstrates the impressive growth seen in the consumption of the genre in the U.K. in 2023.

Another key indicator of the growth in the market has been the establishment of the first ever Country genre-specific radio chart, the U.K. Country Radio Airplay Chart, which launched in March 2024. The chart came about due to a joint effort between the global radio airplay monitoring company, Radiomonitor, and CMA's U.K. Task Force members. The chart highlights the Top 20 songs each week from a selection of new releases up to three years old, measured by impressions, the number of people each play is heard by.

"The launch of the U.K. Country Radio Airplay Chart has been a significant milestone for Country Music in the U.K.," says Alex Hannaby, Head of U.K., Big Machine Label Group, who has been instrumental in its launch. "It's been a true testament to the incredible teamwork and collaboration between industry experts and Radiomonitor here in the U.K. and a reflection of the growth of Country Music recently. I'm excited to see the growth of Country Music continue and the impact of the radio chart unfold alongside that."

To help foster a community of Country Music fans across the pond, CMA also recognized early on the importance of building connection among the music





industry professionals in the U.K. who championed the genre, creating its U.K. Task Force more than a decade ago. This group of music business individuals across labels, DSPs, promoters, agencies, and more have been coming together for years to help plant the seeds of Country Music across the U.K., and over the past decade have witnessed those seeds take root and grow the love of the genre.

Anna-Sophie Mertens, Vice President, Touring, Live Nation U.K., has been a member of CMA's U.K. Task Force since 2018 and has served on CMA's Board of Directors since 2020, working to represent the Country Music industry from an international perspective.

"The task force is a truly magnificent group with key stakeholders and influential professionals from live, label, press, radio and streaming services," shares Mertens. "It's a remarkable and truly one-of-a-kind group that gets together regularly throughout the year to find ways to move the genre forward."

Anyone who has experienced a Country show in the U.K. can tell you that the energy and dedication of the Country fan base in the U.K. is something special and unlike anything they've ever experienced before.

"The fans in the U.K. will really dig into the artist's work and back catalogue," explains Mertens. "As many artists will tell you, the fans here will sing back every single song—even the deep cuts of a record—making the experience of touring internationally truly special. In terms of development, we are certainly seeing younger fans at concerts, especially in the 18-35 age bracket, which is super exciting. The U.K. is one of the strongest international markets for Country Music and it has been building steadily for many years, but in the most recent years we've seen an explosion in the genre with ticket sales doubling and tripling at theater level and several artists selling out U.K. arena shows in minutes, such as Morgan Wallen, Shania Twain and Chris Stapleton, all of which we work with," says the Live Nation executive.

Over the years, CMA has prioritized bringing Nashville songwriters and artists to U.K. audiences through its CMA Songwriter Series and *Introducing Nashville* shows, as well as supporting existing events in the U.K. such as Country Music

Week and partnering early on with C2C: Country to Country festival. C2C was launched by AEG U.K. in partnership with SJM in 2013, spearheaded for AEG by CMA's Vice President of International Relations and Development, Milly Olykan, years before she worked for the trade association. The festival helped legitimize and validate the genre in the territory, but throughout the past decade since its inception, the genre has grown exponentially outside of this annual event.

"Country was also served in large part by C2C in the U.K. – one weekend a year," explains Mertens. "The big development is that it has broken out of that, with artists touring regularly and building solid fanbases as well as new festivals like Highways at the legendary Royal Albert Hall every May and The Long Road Festival in August. When artists strategically invest in international touring, they have been rewarded with strong ticket sales and ever-growing fanbases, in some cases bringing their headline attendance in line with shows in the U.S. or even exceeding it!"

Baylen Leonard, Creative Director for The Long Road Festival agrees, stating, "Proof that Country is on the up in the U.K. is everywhere. From practical things like more year-round touring from U.S. acts and huge increases in ticket sales and growth in audience for The Long Road Festival each year, to more subtle things like hearing Country radio in taxis and barber shops, Luke Combs being played in pubs, Dasha in clubs, and Kacey Musgraves in bars that aren't Country proves that Country Music really is becoming a mainstream story in the U.K. Lainey [Wilson] got it right when she said, 'Country's cool again!"

For Mertens, if the past few years of growth of the genre in the U.K. is any indicator, she believes the future of Country Music is bright. "The U.K. is in such a great spot with Country Music thanks to all of the hard work by the CMA," she says. "We need to continue bringing stakeholders together via the task force and push down any last barriers we face. I would love to see greater representation of Country artists playing all-genre festivals and a commitment from artists to taking a week or two out of their U.S. summer schedule to make the trip. And all-genre playlisting on streaming services, for instance, but we are well on our way and cannot wait to see what the future will hold."

C2C: COUNTRY TO COUNTRY FESTIVAL



(L-R) Colbie Caillat, Lauren Alaina, Charlie Worsham and Stephen Wilson Jr. perform during a special CMA Songwriters Series show at the indigo at The 02 in London on Thursday, March 7.

Photo: BBC Badio Scotland

Ricky Ross (Broadcaster, BBC) receives the 2023 CMA International Country Broadcaster Award during an interview with Carly Pearce ahead of C2C at Ovo Hydro in Glasgow Sunday, March 10.

This March, CMA returned to C2C: Country to Country Festival in the U.K. and Europe as well as CMC Rocks Festival in Australia. CMA also awarded three of its 2023 CMA International Awards to individuals furthering Country Music outside of the U.S.

Ross Jones, Editor of Holler, a U.K. multimedia County Music platform, received the Wesley Rose International Media Achievement Award, while BBC radio host Ricky Ross was presented with the International Country Broadcaster Award and Natalie Waller, President of ABC Music, was awarded the 2023 CMA Jo Walker Meador International Award.

Introducing Nashville, CMA's international touring series, made stops in Rotterdam, Berlin, Stockholm, Oslo, London, Belfast and Glasgow throughout March, featuring Karley Scott Collins, Greylan James, Conner Smith and Lauren Watkins. The CMA Songwriters Series in the U.K. featured performances by Country artists Colbie Caillat, Lauren Alaina, Stephen Wilson Jr., Charlie Worsham and special guests Abbey Cone and Fancy Hagood. CMA also organized several

industry events in London, as well as hosted a C2C kickoff reception and panel discussion with BBC Radio 2.

CMA also returned as a sponsor to CMC Rocks
Festival in Australia, hosting an industry reception
at the CMA Bar. *Introducing Nashville*, featuring
performances by Cooper Alan, Priscilla Block and
Megan Moroney with support from Arun O'Conner,
returned to New Zealand as well, sharing the
signature sound of Nashville with the region's
growing number of Country Music fans.



(L-R) Alex Hannaby (Head of U.K., Big Machine Label Group) moderates a panel featuring Marc Dennis (Agent and Co-Head, CAA Nashville), Martha Earls (Owner, Neon Coast) and Rod Phillips (Executive Vice President of Country Programming Strategy, iHeartMedia) at the Blueroom at The 02 in London on Friday, March 8.



Natalie Waller (President, ABC Music) was presented with the 2023 CMA Jo Walker Meador International Award at the CMA Reception of CMA Reception at the CMA



(L-R) Milly Olykan (CMA Vice President, International Relations and Development), Megan Moroney, Kaylee Bell, Priscilla Block, Brent Eccles (Founder, Eccles Entertainment) and Cooper Alan backstage at CMA's Introducing Nashville set at The Tuning Fork in Auckland, New Zealand on Tuesday, March 19.

CMA LIFETIME MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

JOSH JENKINS

JENKINS IS A SONGWRITER WHO JOINED CMA AS A LIFETIME MEMBER AFTER TAKING HOME A TROPHY FOR SONG OF THE YEAR IN 2022

By Deborah Evans Price

Aspiring songwriters are often encouraged to find their tribe, and Josh Jenkins admits that advice played a key role in his success. Jenkins, who was named SESAC's 2022 Country Songwriter of the Year has an impressive list of credits that includes co-writing Jordan Davis' CMA Award-winning Song of the Year "Buy Dirt" and Walker Hayes' 2022 SESAC Song of the Year "Fancy Like."

"When you start out, you think, 'I have to write with the guys who have hits," he tells *CMA Close Up* over Zoom. "But you've heard the saying, 'Find your tribe,' and you learn quickly the serendipitous nature of this town is that you get paired up with people and it's like a blind date, but pretty soon you're making music together. You get in the room where there is this chemistry and connection so that gets it started."

Jenkins met Davis' brother Jacob when Jordan was still a bartender who had just signed his deal with Universal. "Buy Dirt" was written by two sets of brothers-Jordan and Jacob Davis and Jenkins and his brother Matt. "It was one of those moments that doesn't feel real," Jenkins says of winning CMA Song of the Year and in turn, becoming a Lifetime CMA member. "The whole journey of 'Buy Dirt' feels really special to me. Accolades are amazing and winning awards is amazing and that may signify something, but the thing that mattered around all of that was the connectivity in the relationship with my brother. It was two brothers on the song and so it felt like the uniqueness of the pairing of brothers, plus the family and life and things that mattered to us at that period of time, being recognized by CMA was such a powerful thing for us."

Family and music have long been intertwined for Jenkins. The siblings grew up performing in their family band in Texas. "Our dad was a songwriter that brought us up in music and we would write songs as kids. He did it—not professionally—but because he loved it," Jenkins says. "We grew up playing these oprys in Texas and little hole-in-the-wall spots. As an 11-year-old I was singing Gene Watson's 'Farewell Party,' 'The Race Is On' by George Jones, Merle Haggard's 'Daddy Frank' and all those old Country songs."

Despite his traditional Country upbringing, Jenkins found early success with Green River Ordinance, a pop rock band signed to Capitol Records out of New York that drew comparisons to Matchbox Twenty, Sister Hazel and The Fray. "We haven't

done something in a long time, but we're actually releasing new music," he says with a smile. "I got the itch and had songs and was like, 'Why don't we put some new music out?' So, we're putting music out just for the fun of it."

Jenkins is excited about reviving the band, but songwriting is his true vocation. "Creating songs is a unique journey and it takes patience, belief, faith and love for the craft," he says, "but also having someone alongside you that keeps you on track and encourages you when you need encouragement. [A good publisher] will shout from the rooftops and say, 'Hey, you need to meet Josh Jenkins!'"

Jenkins is quick to point out he's worked with some great companies over the years. "When I came into town, I got connected with Kobalt," he recalls. "They are an admin company, but they helped pitch my stuff and plugged me into Nashville. Then I met Robin Palmer, Chief Creative Officer at Smack. I was with Smack for eight years and obviously had a great run with them and loved them. They are my family and are amazing, but in the last six months, I've gone to Young Guns with Laura Wright."

Jenkins says finding the right publisher is crucial to finding your voice as a songwriter. "You want to also have a place as a writer to explore who you are. What is your gift as a writer? Are you more left of center? A good publisher allows a writer to explore that fearlessly and not feel like they've got to fit into a box," he says. "Sometimes if a writer feels like they have to fit into a certain box, they lose what was special about them. One of my heroes is Allen Shamblin ["I Can't Make You Love Me," "The House that Built Me"]. He communicated that he had a period in his career where he had to basically redefine himself because you could lose yourself in trying to be what someone else is as a writer and not know your own gift. A good publisher will help you preserve that."

Jenkins admits being a songwriter is a profession that can be tough on one's mental health. "It's putting your heart into something that, for better or worse, gets judged by people," he says. "You are going to hear 'no' a lot. Mental health for a songwriter is preserving your peace and protecting your craft. The sanctity of what you do has to be cared for.



"For me, it means knowing the zones that lead to unhealthy thought habits and then protecting yourself. Some of that is disconnecting from social media or just being careful, having the antenna up to know what leads you to life and what leads you to polluting your process."

Jenkins feels like there is "more awareness" of the importance of protecting mental health in the creative community these days, but we still have a long way to go. "I still think we're pretty reactive and not proactive," he shares. "We are in a business where the hamster is always running...The pressure that comes with constantly creating can work for some people, but it can be detrimental for others. Maybe there's a proactive approach to acknowledging the challenges and maybe the community needs to have more conversations around it. 'Hey, are you taking time to rest? Have you filled your cup? How do you protect yourself from comparison?' This is a heavy word, but despair could enter into the equation because getting cuts is really, really hard. I think there's a lot of room for putting wind in people's sails."

JAMES BURTON

THE IMPACT AND INFLUENCE OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

As Told to CMA Close Up by Keith Urban



I can't pinpoint the exact moment I heard James Burton for the first time, but it was probably on a live Elvis album that my dad had when Elvis would have either thrown James a solo or introduced him. Because I was a guitar player, I wanted to know the guitarist, so I feel like his name and his guitar playing has been a part of my life from the very beginning.

I loved him right away because he was playing with this iconic rock 'n' roll superstar, but James' Country roots were so deeply embedded in what was going on. He's playing this Tele and he's playing it clean, not using distortion, so it's a whole Country thing. It really didn't matter if it was in a rock song that Elvis was doing or a soul or Motown kind





of song, there was this Country element that James had that I always loved. He fused so many genres and styles into his own and he's influenced so many guitar players. To me, the great guitarists don't sound like anyone, but a lot of other guitarists that came after sound like them.

I'm sure some of his licks are probably embedded in what I do, and I'm not even aware of it. Growing up listening to somebody like James, it's inevitable that it's going to make its way into some of my guitar foundation. He's been the root of so much Country Music, so many hit songs, and artists that have been influential in the genre.

I'll never forget the first time I met James. We were playing a show in Shreveport, LA. Someone told me that James was there, and I could not believe he wanted to see me play. I met him side stage before we did our show and asked him if he

would get up and do a song with us. I can't remember what song we played. All I remember is singing the song, turning around, seeing James Burton smiling behind me and thinking to myself, "This guy is used to looking at Elvis!" I couldn't get it out of my head. He's used to grinning at the singer, but the singer was Elvis Presley. It was beautiful and I loved that it was in Shreveport, it just felt right. The whole thing was just wonderful. That was probably the early 2000's.

The next time that I saw him was when I'd written a song called "Coming Home" with Nicolle Galyon, J.R. Rotem and Julia Michaels. I used a lick of "Mama Tried" off Merle Haggard's record. We literally sampled that guitar playing and the guy playing was James. I didn't know it at the time, but the intro on "Mama Tried," that lick right there is James. So, when we had our No. 1 party for that song, I wanted to invite him because I thought it was right given that this piece of guitar playing on our record is James.

I think James is a good one to study because of his way of playing a solo to support the song, and not being some sort of show-off guitar player and being a disservice to the song. James was really a master of that. His solos are simple, but they are perfectly effective. There's a lot of flashy guitar players, but James being of service to the song and the artist he is playing for is what makes him so unique.

The only time I saw him play in person was in London. They were doing "Elvis On Tour" where they had a big video screen above the stage, and they'd taken footage from the Vegas shows and it was Elvis' band on stage and Elvis on the video screen above. I never got to see Elvis, so it was the closest I was ever going to get to seeing him. The place was packed to the rafters. The band was live on stage, really playing and they've got Elvis up on the big screen. All the reality was blurred so beautifully, and the funniest moment was Elvis up there in between songs introducing the band and of course he goes, "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome James Burton," and there's James on stage. It was so bizarre, but I got to see him play with Elvis.

James is a good one to study because of his ability to remain in service of the song. He was really a master at that. There's a lot of flashy guitarists, but his solos are simple, perfectly placed and perfectly effective. It's what makes him so unique.

So, when Sarah Trahern asked me if I wanted to call and let him know he was going into the Country Music Hall of Fame, I said, "Of course I want to give James Burton this extraordinary news!" He was ecstatic. I think he cried on the phone. It was beautiful.

CMA STUDENT MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

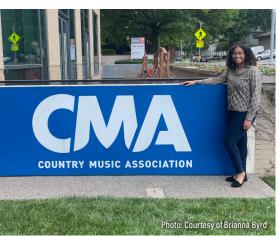
BRIANNA BYRD

BYRD IS AN OUTGOING PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA WHO HAS RECENTLY JOINED CMA AS A MEMBER IN THE STUDENT TIER

By Grayson Pitt

Brianna Byrd, a graduating senior Public Relations major at the University of Alabama, has always loved to be around creativity. As a kid, her relationship with music felt natural, taking trips to her local public library to watch music videos on library computers, locking herself in her room to listen to music on the weekends, and reading lyrics. The Tuscaloosa, AL native knows she has found a

Photo: Courtesy of Brianna Byrd



great song "...when I read lyrics that make me say, 'Oh, you have spoken universal truths in a way I have never heard before... I'm enamored." From the way she speaks about music, it is easy to see why she is interested in working in the music industry after finishing her education.

This past summer, Byrd knew she wanted to get an internship, but she also wanted to do something fun with one of her last summers before entering the working world. "I know I'm a creative, and I know I love to be around creatives," Byrd explains, but she was initially uncertain as to how she might fit in the music industry. Upon finding the CMA Diversity & Inclusion Fellowship, Byrd was able to marry her love of creativity with her academic focus. During her fellowship, she worked closely with CMA's Communications team during CMA Fest and interned at Universal Music Group in Nashville, which opened her mind to the possibility of working in the industry.

Byrd recalls the first day of her fellowship at CMA, and the advice that CEO Sarah Trahern gave—
"humility and relationships are important." Byrd elaborates, "I could talk all day about the music and the art, but you won't have art without people, on both ends." For Byrd, building relationships proved to be the most valuable takeaway from her time in Nashville.

Professional development sessions each Friday were a highlight of her time during the fellowship, Byrd shares. "We would come in with the team and listen to different people who do what we want to do."

Hearing from the CMA staff provided her with valuable lessons and pearls of wisdom for her career. "I'm nerdy about stuff like that, so I was excited. You want to talk to me about crisis management? Yes, let's do it!"

Working at CMA Fest is an experience Byrd will never forget. She echoed the advice given to her by the rest of the CMA staff: "Wear comfortable shoes, seriously." Last summer, CMA Fest became her first music festival, and attendees' energy made the experience extraordinary.

"That's the beautiful thing about music, regardless of the genre, when people come together for a concert or for a festival, it's because of that song they are waiting and holding their breath for the artist to sing or perform. It's the song they listened

to when they fell in love with their partner, or it's the song they listened to when they were on that long drive to see family. The song mattered to them at some point in their life, and they want to feel that nostalgia from the stage with other people. It's a unifier."

Byrd recalls how beautiful it was to see so many people forget about their differences and come together for that song. "Country Music has so much depth," says Byrd. She was pleasantly surprised to find so much diversity in Country. "There's something for everyone," she says.

Meeting with as many people as possible, Byrd has put the best career advice she has received into practice, and she is thankful that industry professionals welcomed her requests for coffee or a quick bite to eat. "That mattered to me because they cared."

She was able to grasp the hard work involved with employment in the industry, but also picked up strategies to handle stress. "On the hard days, remember your why," she says. "While the days may be grueling, they are also blessings and gifts." To sum up her experience and what she has seen in others, she says "tenacity" is the most important trait to have.

As a CMA Student Tier member, Byrd was excited to learn that CMA has mental health resources for its members. "I might talk about grind and the whole mentality of tenacity, but in order to do the work, you have to realize that you have to take care of yourself first. The work does not come before your health."

Byrd nurtures her own mental health through self-care. For her, self-care includes working out, practicing mindfulness, and being intentional with her coursework. To other students who still have elective hours to fill, Byrd recommends seeing if your school offers a stress-management course. "I took advantage of that this semester to have more tools in my toolkit" for dealing with stress. She also leans on her support system. "We need each other," she says, and they remind her that "I'm not alone, and it's going to be okay."

To learn more about CMA student membership, visit CMAmember.com.



POLLSTAR LIVE! PANEL: GENRE SPOTLIGHT, COUNTRY!

This February, Milly Olykan, CMA Vice President of International Relations and Development, moderated a panel at the Pollstar Live! convention in Los Angeles, CA. Titled "Genre Spotlight: Country!", the panelists included promoters, agents and managers of some of the key organizations and artists in Country Music—Jeff Krones (Co-Head of CAA's Nashville Office), Mandelyn Monchick (Artist Manager at Red Light Management), Curt Motley (Agent, UTA), Tara Traub (Senior Vice President, Global Touring, Live Nation) and Stacy Vee (Executive Vice President of Talent, Goldenvoice). During the discussion, Olykan highlighted the international growth of the genre, noting the major potential in markets like Canada, Australia and the U.K., where yearly growth rates for Country listeners are over 30%.

THE CMA FOUNDATION VISITS CAPITOL HILL

On Monday, March 11, the CMA Foundation partnered with the National Association for Music Educators for their congressional briefing, titled "Harmony on Capitol Hill." During the briefing, CMA Foundation Executive Director Tiffany Kerns moderated a panel on music education with three former Music Teachers of Excellence including Jared Cassady (K-12 Performing Arts Coordinator, Lexington Public Schools, Lexington, MA), Shawna Longo (District Supervisor of Visual and Performing Arts, Westfield Public Schools, Westfield, NJ), DaJuana Hammonds (Music and Choral Teacher, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Nashville, TN), as well as Jenna Dietrich (Student and President of the University of Maryland NAfME Chapter #225).



Photo: CRS/Kayla Schoen

CMA AT CRS

This year's Country Radio Seminar kicked off with an event hosted by CMA Senior Director of Industry Relations & Inclusion, Mia McNeal called the "Y'all Means All: Diversity Breakfast." During the panel, McNeal presented information about how to promote diversity within organizations and spoke with panelists Jaye Albright (partner, Albright & O'Malley & Brenner), Country artist Frank Ray, Jon Loba (President, Frontline Recordings, BMG North America), and Country artist Lily Rose.

During CRS 2024, Sarah Trahern, CMA Chief Executive Officer, also moderated a panel discussion between the heads of five Nashville labels. The panel, titled "Leadership, Strategy, And Optimizing Country's Surge In 2024," brought together Randy Goodman (CEO and Chairman, Sony Music Nashville), Cris Lacy and Ben Kline (Co-Presidents, Warner Music Nashville), Cindy Mabe (Chair, Universal Music Group Nashville) and Jon Loba (President, Frontline Recordings, BMG North America) to discuss leadership strategies and the climate for Country Music consumption in 2024.



support or help navigate as much as we can, so don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or want a recommendation on a resource.

What do you enjoy most about your role at CMA?

There is a lot that happens within our department and within the organization, so I love getting to see the progression of professionals in our business. There are CMA EDU students I worked with when I first started at CMA who are now professionals in the business, CMA members and engage with us in a totally different way! No two days are the same here, so it's nice to always be working on different things and being able to engage with different aspects of the business.

Tell us about your journey to becoming Senior Manager of Industry Relations at CMA.

My great grandparents started a talent buying agency 94 years ago that has been passed down through the generations, so growing up in music, the industry was a huge part of my life. I started working for my family business as quickly as I could and got bit by the music industry bug right away. I went to The Ohio State University for a degree in marketing and while I was there, I discovered CMA EDU, CMA's collegiate professional development program for students pursuing careers in music. My involvement in EDU connected me with some amazing people at CMA, including my current boss, Tiffany Kerns. It also provided incredible experiences like working CMA Fest and the CMA Awards, and ultimately led to interning with CMA for a summer. After graduating and going on the road with my family business for a while, CMA was hiring someone to oversee that CMA EDU program and other collegiate engagement, which felt like a perfect fit for me. After working in that role for about two years, the department merged with Membership and we took on membership and industry relations for the organization, landing me in this role about three years ago!

As a trade association, industry relations is at the heart of CMA's mission. What are some of the key ways you support this in your position?

I LOVE this industry and all the people in it. I feel it's my job to wake up every day and think about how we can make the music industry better, stronger, more sustainable, more inclusive and a hundred other "betters." The best way I've found to do this is to listen to people. I can't be in every role in the industry, but we do have them all within our

membership, so I make it a point to talk to people and really listen when they tell me about their careers, their daily lives and their challenges in their roles. I love problem-solving, so I love taking that information and utilizing CMA's resources to help solve challenges or produce helpful resources on behalf of the industry. Whether it's educational videos, thought-provoking events, discounts on daily purchases or programs like our Touring Mentorship Program, we've created a suite of benefits that we hope allows our members to find something useful for them. Of course, it's always a work in progress, so reach out and tell me what you want or need!

You advocate strongly for the importance of mental health, particularly in the music industry. What do you wish CMA members knew about mental health and the resources available to them?

I like to treat mental health like any other aspect of my personal health, which to me means consistently finding ways to take care of myself and not waiting for a crisis or sickness to think about it. Whether it's talk therapy, journaling, meditation or any other form of self-care or mental health, I think it's important to find something that helps you stay healthy that you can implement into your routine. That said, I think self-care is often easier or more accessible than finding therapy or treatment, which can be confusing and often carries additional stigma. We have spent a lot of time talking to organizations doing work in this space, specific to the music industry, to understand the landscape and have information about what each organization does. We've compiled all that information on our member site (cmamember.com/mental-health-resources) in hopes our members can navigate and find the resources they need, but also know we are here to

What has been the most memorable experience you've had in your time at CMA?

Having a family that works in live entertainment and a tour manager husband, the pandemic and lack of live events was particularly challenging. I will never forget CMA Fest 2022 – walking across the pedestrian bridge while the Riverfront Stage was kicking off on Thursday and hearing all the fans go crazy. It was such a relief to feel like live music was finally "back." I love CMA Fest anyway, but getting to watch fans and industry alike be so happy and grateful for live music that weekend will be a CMA Fest I'll never forget.

What do you like about Country Music - as a genre, an industry, or both?

As a genre, I love the storytelling aspect and the breadth of sounds and stories that are available within Country. I have always been a fan of great lyrics so the songwriting and storytelling in Country are my favorite. As an industry, I think Country does community so well. This industry is not afraid to celebrate each other in the greatest moments, support each other in the lowest, and everything in between. People often say the music industry is a lifestyle, so I can't imagine living this life without the community that exists in Country Music.

Outside of work, how do you like to spend your free time?

I love to read and I'm obsessed with my cat, Fitzgerald. I'm a huge college football fan (go Bucks!) so Saturdays in the fall are usually spent watching games. My husband and I just bought our first home last summer, too, so there is no shortage of home projects to keep me busy!

