

DAILY BUZZ

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Powered by Country Aircheck



You Don't Even Know Who I Am

Do programmers understand radio listeners? Short answer, no. At least according to **Mark Ramsey Media's** namesake, who Thursday morning presented **CRS 2020's** most talked-about non-music session so far. The annual CRS research presentation became what one attendee likened to *The Newlywed Game*. Repeatedly, Ramsey would present a topic and questions with graphs representing how PDs thought listeners would respond. Repeatedly, listeners seemed to reply, "Wow, I thought you knew me better after all this time!"

The disparity started right off the bat with the very definition of radio. The 152 surveyed PDs said listeners would have a somewhat expansive view of what constituted radio, but less than 10% thought they would identify DSPs – Amazon, Pandora, Spotify – as radio. Surprise! Roughly 40% of the 800 Country radio listeners surveyed consider streaming platforms to be radio. Other disparities: Programmers think listeners spend more time with radio via apps. Listeners use smartphones more and car radios less than PDs thought. TV and video games are much bigger competitors for listeners time with radio than PDs figured.

The differences also offered a fair bit of good news. Radio is more important to listeners than it used to be and PDs figured it would be less important. Listeners believe they are spending more time with radio; programmers assume they are spending less. Of course, that differential circles back around to the broader listener definition of radio as music delivery platforms. Overwhelmingly, listeners want music, lots of it, new and classic, balanced by gender and uninterrupted.

Significant portions of the research showed enough lack of alignment as to be alarming.




Spoke A Little Spoke: EMI Nashville's Eric Church spoke Thursday (2/20) and grabbed a photo with CRB's RJ Curtis (l) and Kurt Johnson (r).

"Let me make a couple of points that are going to be controversial," Ramsey said. "DJ-hosted shows are a competitive advantage when they are great. They are an obstacle when they are not. Ditto, local. Local is not an advantage." Come again? "Local is not an advantage ... unless it's a benefit. The fact that you're located down the street means absolutely nothing to me. The fact that you create a benefit in my life because of it may be very meaningful." Other bombshells: PDs are way off from listener

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YOUR CRS NEW FACES OF COUNTRY MUSIC 2020





*You & me...
Ain't it good to be alive?
Ain't no better place
Ain't no better time*

**KENNY
CHESNEY**
**HERE AND
NOW**

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

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

Arriving Feb 21
IMPACTING IMMEDIATELY

KEITH URBAN

New music from
 Keith Urban
 Add Date: 3/2

KEITH URBAN.NET



Let The Flames Begin: Black River's Kelsea Ballerini (c) with Amazon Music's Emily Cohen (l) and Kelly Rich at Amazon Music Presents: Country Heat at CRS 2020.

preference when it comes to pop collaborations. The audience likes them much more than programmers think. Also, websites and Twitter have negligible impact. Contests are not compelling. Ramsey's closing action steps centered on creating experience, not radio, and offering value and engagement to consumers, not listeners.

—Chuck Aly

Gimme Fuel, Give Me Fire, Give Me Reba McEntire

"If God played country music, he'd probably only play at the Ryman," mused **Parker McCollum** as he stepped onto the Mother Church's stage for his "Team UMG at the Ryman" debut. With EVP/Promotion **Royce Risser** returning as emcee, the label group's annual CRS event offered debuts and firsts paired with nostalgia and wrapped in ... a crop top and unzipped acid wash jorts. The newest, oldest band, **Hot Country Knights**, hip-thrusted '90s country back into the spotlight with a performance of "Pick Her Up." "That's the riskiest thing to be done in this town in decades," declared Risser. "And I love it."

A string of performances followed, including **Brandon Lay**, **Jon Pardi** and **Sam Hunt**, who sang "For My Money," "Ain't Always The Cowboy" and the previously-unreleased "2016," respectively. Contemplating Pardi's past successes, Risser concluded the name of his next single will be changed to "Boots, Boots, Heartache And Boots," followed by "My Boots Have A Heartache." Receiving the first standing ovation of the night, **Mickey Guyton** asked the congregation of radio and industry folks, "What Are You Gonna Tell Her?"



Mickey Guyton

Risser's introduction of **Travis Denning's** "Abby," which by the way is not a love song about a girl named Abby, was interrupted with the delivery of an updated script: "He's Mike Dungan's favorite artist on the label, and there's not a person in radio that doesn't think he's the most talented artist to come along in years."

Caylee Hammack traded her full band setup from last year for a stripped down version of "Small Town Hypocrite." "This time, I just come with a story," she confessed. "This is the story of the heartbreak that got me here." Risser broke out his best Jeff Spicoli impression to introduce **Kip Moore** — who took a break from surfing to deliver "She's Mine" — then **Adam Hambrick's**

"Forever Ain't Long Enough." "His vocals are steel, his songs are bulletproof and his lyrics move through you like X-ray vision," said Risser of the Clark Kent look-alike.

Certified yoga instructor **Kylie Morgan** made her Ryman debut with "I Break Things," but not before Risser pointed out fellow yoga masters in the room. "Johnny Chiang is exceptional at the disappearing pose, Brian Michel is perfecting the 'I have an opinion and you need to hear it' pose and Chris O'Kelley is still working on the paper add pose." **Brothers Osborne** debuted a song that *might* be called "Skeletons In Your Closet" that *might* be the new single. Prefaced by T.J., "If you feel so inclined to add it."

Country Aircheck Most Heard Artist of the Decade **Luke Bryan** dropped "Born Here Live Here Die Here," thanking everyone in the room for "relationships and experiences." "I'm so blessed and happy to get to do what I love for one decade, much less the rest of my life." Read our interview with Bryan about the honor [here](#).

"I've been waiting for this moment for three years, and — as her manager can attest — I have *not* been very patient about it," said Risser in introducing **Carrie Underwood**, who sang "Spinning Bottles," a song not often performed live because "it's a little too personal." Underwood also joined **Keith Urban** for "The Fighter" after the latter debuted "God Whispered Your Name."

Surprising the crowd with news of her return to UMG/Nashville, **Reba McEntire** took the stage for three songs, including a "Fancy" finale. "Being back with the Universal Music Group ... they treated me so fairly, so nicely, so sweetly and so much like family throughout the years." —Caitlin DeForest

Follow The Leaders

Reynolds Group owner and talent coach **Steve Reynolds**, WME Nashville Partner/Co-Head **Scott Clayton** and UMG/Nashville Chairman/CEO **Mike Dungan** joined moderator Midwest Corporate Country Brand Strategic **Tom Baldrice** for a **CRS 2020** morning session, "Leading Your Leaders In 2020," discussing leadership philosophies and challenges, cultivating culture



Tom Baldrice, Steve Reynolds, Mike Dungan and Scott Clayton (l-r).

and finding and growing the next generation of leadership. Key strategies centered around Duke basketball coach **Mike Krzyzewski's** five yearly leadership goals: Build out trust, create a sense of honest communication, foster a sense of collective responsibility, instill a sense of pride in what we are doing and assert that we should care about one another as people.

Dungan emphasized leading with joy and empathy, saying, "I try to spread kindness and find humor in everything I do and make sure my people feel the same way." Reynolds also centers his strategy on impacting people via personal relationships and building trust. "'You changed me as a person' is the highest compliment I can receive," he says. Clayton also wants employees to feel protected and encouraged, explaining that great leadership means excellent communication. "Leaders need to articulate the mission...you can't bullshit your people," Clayton explains.

The three panelists shared personal anecdotes of success and growth from throughout their careers as they have built teams and cultivated a thriving culture by leading with empathy and kindness, breaking down silos among internal teams, fostering relationships and empowering employees. While Dungan says he only reads two magazines and would suggest anyone looking for books about leadership take a trip to BMLGR Pres./CEO **Jimmy Harnen's** office for such materials, Clayton and Reynolds recommended *Daring Greatly* by **Brené Brown** as extracurricular reading material, and Reynolds added a referral for *The Power Of Moments* by **Chip & Dan Heath**. —Monta Vaden

Adopting The Metrics System

Stone Door Media Lab's **Jeff Green** presented results from his third Country radio research project seeking the top 10 metrics that can help predict a radio hit. MCA's **Katie Dean** moderated as panelists **Grover Collins** (WUBE/Cincinnati) and **Matthew Hargis** (BMLG Records) offered insight from the programming and label sides. "You don't need to see big numbers on all 10 for a single to get a sense of its potential," Green said. "But if you see five or more, that record is likely to become a hit."

Those metrics are:

- High Most Added rank: Most Added singles have delivered 96% of No. 1s.
- High one-week add total: No. 1s average at least 50+ adds in one week.
- Four or more consecutive weeks in top 10 Most Added.
- Shazams: Per spin Shazams of 8.1 or higher.
- Heavy early streaming activity.
- High streams per Country radio spin.

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Country Radio!

Contact **Larry Pareigis**, President
larry@ninenorthmail.com or 615-332-5511

- High consumption per spin.
- High consumption per spin rank.
- Top 5 in Pandora country airplay rank.
- High Pandora "thumbs-up" ratios.

Hargis and Dean agreed that building momentum over consecutive weeks is important. "We want to see consistent momentum and growth with streams," says Hargis. "We look at all the early indicators because like radio, we want hits."

Case studies on top songs from the past three years, and three songs from 2020 showed strong numbers on a majority of the 10 metrics. Gabby Barrett's "I Hope" is currently on the chart and projecting to go to the top based on the metrics. Collins said he wasn't on the single until he saw some of the consumption numbers. "If you are a PD and you don't get the consumption chart, you can get them from your label rep," he says. Green adds, "All this information, except for Shazaam spins, is available for free from various resources."

Collins likens app and consumption metrics to any other tools programmers have at their disposal. "Thumbs up is like a request line, with people letting you know they want to hear the song more," he says. Get the presentation deck [here](#). —Sue Wilson

Breaking The Singles, Ladies

The lack of females on Country radio has been a hot topic for several years. Addressed this year on a panel titled "All The Singles Ladies," the issue is framed by new data both in the CRS research presentation and the recent CMT/Coleman study. MCA's **Katie Dean** moderated a panel in two segments. On one hand, programmers who have been advocates for playing women: WKLB/Boston's **David Corey**, KKBQ/Houston's **Johnny Chiang**, KRTY/San Jose's **Nate Deaton**, and Radio Disney's **Kris Daniels**. From the industry side, the group included Mercury's **Damon Moberly**, Amazon's **Emily Cohen** and artist manager **Marion Kraft**.

The programmers quickly dispelled misperceptions like reluctance to play two females back-to-back, or that women don't want to listen to other women. Chiang says his aim is to balance the sound, styles and flow on his station. And his airstaff is comprised of all women. Corey, who came from pop radio said "playing women back to back was never an issue." Daniels noted that labels are the ones that start the trend in what is presented to radio, and country is guilty of chasing trends. Chiang agreed. "Bro-country happened, and then country started signing lots of bro acts," he said. "Sam Hunt happened and labels wanted to sign

the next Sam Hunt. Not as many females were being signed over a period of years due to these trends."

On the subject of women not researching, Daniels believes callout is obsolete. "We can find so much data in so many places, like Spotify, Pandora and other streaming platforms." Corey added, "If a song by a female artist isn't testing it may be because they have not received enough exposure." Deaton agreed, "You have to play a song a lot to see how it tests, playing it just overnight will not work."

Cohen said women do want to hear other women. "From July 2019 to January 2020, we saw a 50% growth in customers asking Alexa for songs by female artists." She said songs by women were not "skipped" more than songs by men on Amazon Music. Kraft pointed out the programmers on the stage were all advocates and had lots of autonomy in making decisions about what their stations play. "This format needs shepherds and less sheep," she said. Kraft and Moberly both said there is a lot of pressure on artists to have No. 1s and to achieve success quickly. "Very few careers are built in a short amount of time," Kraft said. "We need to give artists time and a song time to develop." Moberly added, "Bottom line, male or female, the material has to be there. It has to be a great song."

—Sue Wilson

Buy Hear

Following the Team UMG at the Ryman luncheon, **CRS 2020** afternoon panels (2/20) kicked off with "Why I Use Audio: The Advertiser's Perspective." Moderated by iHeartMedia Area SVPP **Tom Hanrahan**, the session featured Mind Dance Marketing Pres. **Tina Murray** and Amplifi USA EVP/Managing Dir. Local Video & Audio Investment **Jennifer Hungerbuhler** speaking on the importance of audio – and specifically terrestrial radio – advertising campaigns for national level clients.

Murray, who places local-level buys on behalf of **Chick-Fil-A** restaurants in 17 markets, explained the core goals of each client may be different, but the heart of their advertising needs will always



Tom Hanrahan, Jennifer Hungerbuhler and Tina Murray (l-r).

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Vice Age: Warner/WEA artists and staffers gather at the label's Miami Vice-themed cocktail party. Pictured (l-r) are Diane Monk, Shari Roth, Adrian Michaels, Stephanie Haggerty, Devin Dawson, Michael Ray, Kate Myers and Ray Mariner.

be supporting franchise concepts as they grow their brand, and capturing a moment where the listener hears the message, believes it and acts. The best account executives, she says, "are realistic about station assets and don't present something because they need to push it; they find what problem they can solve for me."

Similarly, Hungerbuhler advocates on behalf of radio for her clients – including **Home Depot, Longhorn Steakhouse, General Motors** and **Jack In The Box** – to increase branding and awareness. "Audio is ubiquitous," she says. "It is going through a true renaissance right now, and my job is to educate my clients on how best to use audio." Hungerbuhler does note that, since digital has opened the door to increased data and metrics

in real time, radio's biggest drawback is the lack of real-time reporting and data to analyze the RIO for her clients. "In order to future-proof, the more granular radio can get when providing analytics regarding a station's audience and their behaviors, the better," says Hungerbuhler. —Monta Vaden

Crystal Ballin'

If you are the type who finds metadata and geofencing fascinating, CRS 2020's "Tech Crystal Ball" panel was a can't miss. CX05 Principal **Jeff James** moderated a conversation with Patterson Advisory Group's **Jim Patterson** and Vizsence's **Dan Shuff** focusing on

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STEPHANIE QUAYLE

WHATCHA DRINKIN 'BOUT

DEBUTS 59 BB

KATM KCCY KHGE KJKE KNUC KPLM KRTY KSOP
KTEX KTOM KUPL KWBL KXLY KZSN WAMZ WCOL
WCTQ WDAF W1HC WGH WGNE WJVC WKLB WNOE
WOGI WPAW WPOR WSOC WTHT WTQR MUSIC CHOICE



utilizing dashboards and devices to harness listeners.

Shuff, whose work focuses on mining data from consumer ecosystems and microinfluencers, shared case studies surrounding the new thinking behind bottom-up marketing. "The loudest voices are those you've never heard," says Shuff. "Consumers want to learn from their peers, not faceless companies." Using the current



Jeff James, Dan Shuff and Jim Patterson (l-r).

Keto diet trend as an example, he explained that people recruiting like-minded people to join their movement could be a powerful resource for marketing and advertising.

Patterson noted that, in today's landscape, everyone is a content creator. "If you don't create demand and create profit, no one will want to invest in your company." Utilizing metadata from mined sources can help drive consideration and conversion of new clients. Applications for radio include placing emphasis on talent as influencers and creating a community of microinfluencers on a local level to support and propagate your brand. —Monta Vaden

Chief: Chasing Creativity

"I'm not going to touch that," EMI Nashville's **Eric Church** responded when **Country Aircheck** and **Country Countdown USA's Lon Helton** inquired, "Are you really a badass, or do you just play one in country music?" Wrapping day two of **CRS 2020**, Church offered attendees a candid look at his creative process and its role in his career journey. "I've always been a guy who did something differently and played different music," said Church. "That has always been what's driven me – putting myself in a situation to be the most creative."

Church spoke honestly about how his artistic vision has helped him stay the course while also keeping him slightly left of center. Noting early struggles at radio ("I don't know why a song about teen pregnancy didn't work," he joked) and the evolution of his personal brand and identity as The Chief, Church also highlighted his gratitude for his label, specifically UMG/ Nashville Chairman/ CEO **Mike Dungan**. "I was very lucky; I don't think it would've worked at other places, because I've always had a vision, and Mike Dungan trusted my vision," he said.



Lon Helton and Eric Church

In fairness, that vision included skulls, snakes, aviators, songs about smoking pot, three-hour shows on tours where the setlist changes every night, different artwork for varying posters at every tour stop, six-minute "progressive rock opera" tracks sent to radio, surprise album releases shipped directly to fans on vinyl and always doing it his way. "You can have 20 No. 1 hits – you can, but I don't know what that's like – but you can have those 20 No. 1s and none of them stand out," Church explained. "I've spent my career trying to be different ... I never want someone to hear something from me and say it was what they expected."

To expect the unexpected is to recall Church's **CRS New Faces** performance from 2007 ([watch here](#)), wherein he expertly wove his personal story with tracks from his debut album and a selection

of cover songs to fill the 20-minute performance slot. Twelve years later, a similar performance would prevent him from national television exposure. Church explained that, when asked to perform at **CMA Fest** in 2019, he didn't want to "play five songs and walk off" after having just played the stadium within a month's time. "I decided I would do an 18-song medley, so I sent my band home," he told Helton. "But, since I didn't stop, there was no place for them to cut it for television. It was great in the room, and it is one of my favorite performances I've ever done. It just didn't get on ABC."

Shining a light on unexpected successes and the road to packed stadiums, Church touted his single, "Smoke A Little Smoke" as the turning point in his career. The song was his final single from *Carolina* and set up all that was to come with *Chief*. "I was told, 'You can't wear a hat because you have hair, and you can't wear shades because you have pretty eyes' – which was weird," admitted Church. "But that is what fans had been seeing on stage, and I wanted it to finally be what was everyone saw everywhere else." "Smoke A Little Smoke" would be the first time he donned the cap and shades in a music video.

Moving through his career, Church wrapped with how his forthcoming album will be his boldest creative move yet. He packed up his band, co-writers and producers and found retreat at a restaurant in the mountains of North Carolina with the goal to write and record 28 songs in 28 days. "For me, it's as far out there as I've gotten on the limb," he said of the project. Church concluded the session with an acoustic performance of one of the songs that came from that session, which he wrapped just last week, "Jenny." —Monta Vaden



Lon Helton and Eric Church

Museum Piece

Sony/Nashville's perfectly timed "CRS At The Museum" gathering in the event space above the Country Music Hall of Fame offered a beautiful sunset-into-night Nashville skyline backdrop for three performances. Arista's **Adam Doleac** played a six-song set that included "Wake Up Beautiful," "Solo," single "Famous" and a solo acoustic version of "Mom And Daddy's Money." He closed with "Whiskey's Fine."

Columbia's **Tenille Townes** played "White Horse," "Where You Are" and "Jersey On The Wall" prior to covering Eddie Rabbitt's "I Love A Rainy Night." She finished with first single "Somebody's Daughter." Final performer **Niko Moon** represented the RCA label with "Paradise To Me," "Way Back," "Drunk Over You" and "Good Time." In the midst of his own tunes, he worked in a medley of songs he's written for others including "Keep Me In Mind," "Back To Life" and "Homegrown."

Prior to the pros, an original song performed by Nashville area high school students highlighted the museum's education efforts and reminded attendees that the power of music extends well beyond the power to produce hits, ratings and revenue. —Chuck Aly

The Day Ahead

7:30-8:50am

Women Mentoring Breakfast

Sponsored by NuVoodoo Media Services

Ali Matkosky, Trudie Daniell, Ashley Sidoti, Shari Roth, Ashley Stegbauer, Brittany Schaffer, Cindy Spicer, Nicolle Galyon, Brooke Antonakos, Jensen Sussman, Lois Lewis, Monta Vaden, Amanda Kingsland, Jenn Dalen, Morgan Kenney, Elaina Smith, Jackie Stevens, Martha Earls, Annie Ortmeier, Heather Davis, Meg Stevens and Missi Gallimore
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 5-6

7:30-8:50am**Label Mentoring Breakfast**

Lesly Simon, Tom Martens, Erik Powell, Tyler Waugh, Allyson Gelnett and Cindy Mabe
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 3-4

8-11am**SBG Recovery on the Row**

Omni

8am-5pm**Riser House Entertainment Lounge**

Omni, Level 2, Music Row 1

8am-6pm**Big Loud Lounge**

Omni, Level 2, Music Row 2

8:30am-5:30pm**SpinIntel: Airplay Analytics Reimagined**

Omni, Level 2, 5th Avenue Pre-Function

9am-5pm**Six-String Soldiers**

Omni, Level 2, Music Row 3

9am-5pm**United Stations**

Omni, Level 2, 5th Avenue Pre-Function

9-9:50am**Miles Adcox: Say Yes To Stress?!?**

Miles Adcox

Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

10-10:50am**Doing Good In Your Hood: Localization Matters**

Moderator: Tom Hanrahan; Panelists: Earl Jones and Dale Carter
Omni, Level 3, Cumberland 1-2

10-10:50am**Programmers: What Keeps You Up At Night?**

Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

11-11:50am**Radio in the New Decade: What's Next?**

Moderator: Erica Farber; Panelists: Bill Hendrich, Ginny Morris and Kurt Johnson
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

11-11:50am**Reading The Teen Leaves: Staying Relevant Now and in the Future**

Moderator: Katie Dean; Panelists: Ginny Brophey, Tom McCarthy and Matt Sunshine
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom A-C

11:45am-12pm**Jennifer Grant Performance**

Mayne Stage

12-1:50pm**Big Machine Label Group Lunch + Performance**

Sponsored by BMLG

Florida Georgia Line, Lady Antebellum, Danielle Bradbery, Payton Smith and Avenue Beat
Omni, Level 2, Broadway Ballroom

2-2:50pm**Defending Your Audience Share: Exclusive Research Findings**

Daniel Anstandig and Randall Wright
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

2-2:50pm**In Pod We Trust**

Moderator: Tom Baldrice; Panelists: Jared "Jingle Jared" Gutstadt, Ashley Eicher and Armand Wilson
Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom A-C

3-4pm**CRS Artist Interview with Carrie Underwood: Find Your Path**

Carrie Underwood

Omni, Level 2, Legends Ballroom D-G

4-5pm**Sun Broadcast Group Bar + Lounge**

Sponsored by SBG

Omni, Level 2, 5th Avenue Pre-Function Area

5-6pm**SSM Nashville Happy Hour**

Omni, Level 2, Music Row 1

5:15-6:15pm**New Faces Cocktail Reception**

Sponsored by One Vision Music Group

Powered by Elite Multimedia

Performance from Kree Harrison

Omni, Level 2, Broadway Ballroom Pre-Function Area

6:30-10pm**New Faces of Country Music Dinner and Performance**

Sponsored by ACM and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

Performances powered by Live Nation

CRS/Country Aircheck Awards Presentations; Ingrid Andress, Morgan Evans, Riley Green, Runaway June and Mitchell Tenpenny

Omni, Level 2, Broadway Ballroom

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